

Knowledge Review: Collective and Collaborative Place Based Initiatives

*What Works, What Matters, Why
and
Guidance for the
Peter McKenzie Project*



**Prepared for JR McKenzie Trust
June 2014**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ▶ The Peter McKenzie Project provides a fantastic opportunity for the JR McKenzie Trust to make a strategic, innovative, and catalytic investment to reduce child poverty and inequality in Aotearoa, New Zealand.
- ▶ There is a strong relationship between people, place and wellbeing outcomes. Inequalities in access to resources and opportunities clearly have a spatial dimension. This makes 'place' a useful intervention locus for poverty reduction efforts.
- ▶ Poverty is a complex issue shaped by multiple forces at multiple levels. Solutions will require effective collaboration between multiple stakeholders, careful attention to both local contexts and macro influences, a long term investment horizon, a commitment to learning, and patience and time to see transformative results.
- ▶ Collaborative and collective place-based initiatives have emerged as useful approaches for addressing the diverse and interconnected challenges that many communities now face. They typically involve multiple partners working creatively together with local communities to enhance priority quality of life outcomes. Working in these ways however is challenging, messy and there are no guarantees of success.
- ▶ Compared to more traditional collaborative place-based initiatives, collective impact initiatives have a much stronger focus on shared measurement. Data intentionally drives alignment of key stakeholder plans and actions which are focused around tight goal areas. Identified pre-conditions for collective impact include influential champions able to lead collaborative efforts, adequate resourcing and a strong, shared sense of urgency to address an identified local issue.
- ▶ International experience to date provides useful guidance on a broad range of success and risk factors for this field. There are also a number of New Zealand specific considerations that should be noted including our political/governance context, relative lack of experience in large scale place-based approaches, the Treaty of Waitangi, and appropriate place-based scales. Paying attention to these in both establishment and implementation phases will also assist the potential for success.
- ▶ International evidence that demonstrates the value and impact of collaborative place-based ways of working is patchy. However many researchers point out that uncertainty around results is more an issue of an 'absence of evidence' rather than the 'evidence of absence.' Positive impacts noted in the literature include improving the human, physical and economic development of poor neighbourhoods, strengthened community capacity and some degree of policy and systems change.
- ▶ Given their clear focus on data and shared measurement, more recent collective impact initiatives in the US are generating some new evidence of impact and change. These initiatives are very expensive however, and will likely not be appropriate for every context.
- ▶ The Canadian Vibrant Communities initiative, which umbrellas both local change efforts and a national focus on systems change, provides a useful approach for the Peter McKenzie Project to consider. The approach features a 'nested backbone', with Tamarack

as national convenor providing a range of coaching, evaluation and learning supports for local poverty reduction efforts. Local backbone organisations convene collaborative poverty reduction efforts within each community.

- ▶ Over its ten year duration, Vibrant Communities has positively impacted on 203,000 low income households and has driven over 50 substantial policy changes. A \$10 million investment in Vibrant Communities by the J.M McConnell Foundation has also leveraged a further \$23 million investment in local poverty reduction efforts. McConnell CEO Stephen Huddart considers Vibrant Communities Canada to have been “value for money”.
- ▶ Measuring and evaluating collaborative and collective place-based change efforts is challenging and requires approaches that begin with a clear results framework, evaluation methods that match their purpose, and processes that draw evidence from a wide range of sources in order to make meaning, capture change and distil core components of success.
- ▶ Learning and evaluation frameworks should be incorporated into any project establishment phase, with flexibility for ‘best fit’ approaches and measurement tools able to evolve and change as local initiatives develop. Both poverty line measures and broader wellbeing outcome indicators should be part of evaluation frameworks that again, are contextualised for local conditions and priorities.
- ▶ If the Peter McKenzie Project decides to invest in place based approaches to poverty reduction, a number of useful potential next steps could include preparing a clear values proposition and project statement, engaging relevant stakeholders and potential partners, and convening a national advisory group to help shape and guide both establishment and implementation phases.
- ▶ The fact that the Peter McKenzie Project already has a defined goal of reducing child poverty/inequality is unlikely to be a barrier to take up or success of place-based action. ‘Tight’ outcomes however would need to be matched with ‘loose’ pathways in order for local communities to flexibly tailor action plans and solutions to their contexts.
- ▶ In determining which and how many communities local poverty reduction initiatives could be based in, careful attention will need to be paid to available resourcing, community readiness factors and the risk profile for the project.
- ▶ However, before considering parameters for any new place-based poverty reduction initiative, the JR McKenzie Trust will first need to consider whether both the organisation and Trustees are prepared and ‘ready’ to be a key anchor funder in this field. Key elements for reflection could include a long term investment commitment (5-7 years at least), the ability to live with uncertainty and risk as initiatives develop, having the right skillsets ‘on board’ to assist with project set up and organisational flexibility that enables project parameters to be adapted and adjusted as things evolve.

1. Background and Overview

1.1 Background to this Knowledge Review

The Peter McKenzie Project is a new initiative of the JR McKenzie Trust (JRMT). The initiative seeks to make a new strategic long term investment to create social change in Aotearoa, New Zealand. While final decisions on project focus and direction have yet to be made, in line with JRMT strategic objectives, the overarching aim of the project will be reducing child poverty/ reducing inequality. The proposed down-spend of Jayar Charitable Trust capital is expected to provide the Peter McKenzie Project (PMP) approximately \$13 million to invest.

Following considerable engagement with experts in the social change field over 2013, the PMP has identified two potential approaches to reducing poverty/inequality for further investigation. These are:

1. ***Lifting the importance of investing in children to one of national value*** – changing hearts and minds of New Zealanders to positively influence policy, investment frameworks and cultural norms in terms of how we value, nurture and support all New Zealand to reach their full potential.
2. ***Collective impact/place based collaborative initiatives*** – with one or more geographic communities potentially being chosen to invest in and support local change efforts to reduce inequalities/child poverty.

This knowledge review is one of two papers that the PMP has concurrently commissioned to build the Trust's understanding and knowledge in terms of the approaches above. It should be noted that both approaches are not mutually exclusive, with outcomes for local places and people for example also dependent on national level systems, policies and values. These essential linkages will be further discussed later in this review.

1.2 Content Overview and Approach

This report focuses on learning and evidence around collective and collaborative place-based approaches to reducing poverty and inequality. We seek to bring together both insights and experience from international and New Zealand contexts and to offer our advice to JRMT in terms of:

- why collective and collaborative place based initiatives provide a useful approach for addressing complex social issues such as child poverty
- key components of collective initiatives and collaborative place based working
- expected benefits, impacts and challenges from working in these ways
- best strategies for evaluating change, outcomes and continuous learning
- key considerations in the establishment of and/or investment in collective and collaborative place based approaches.

Rather than generate new research or provide a detailed analysis of the broader collective/ collaborative place-based field, this review builds on the existing knowledge of review authors. We aim to summarise and communicate key concepts, frameworks and learning which we hope will in turn inform both further inquiry and next steps thinking by PMP trustees. For more about Knowledge Review authors Inspiring Communities and Tamarack – an Institute for Community Engagement see Appendix 1.

1.3 Why Place Matters

There are many ways to define community, including by geography or place.¹ Whanāu, hapū and iwi², along with everyone who lives, works, plays, cares and invests in a 'place' share some common elements and often have unique understandings about that area's unique past, present and future. When people have a strong sense of place, they have an understanding about how that place functions which 'outsiders' simply cannot know. Generally speaking, they have a vested interest in caring for and improving their place as somewhere to, for example, safely raise children, grow a business, go to work, or enjoy the local environment. 'Place' is one key context in which we exist and experience life.

Place is important because it provides infrastructure, facilities, goods and services for its residents and shapes its members' experiences and wellbeing. Place can be a rural area, neighbourhood, suburb, town, city or region. However, more important than population size or geography is that a group of people often share a sense of shared purpose and common good³.

5 Reasons to Invest in Place:

1. Where many quality of life issues are "concentrated" and "reinforced".
2. A more manageable scale to deal with interconnected factors underlying quality of life.
3. Taps into underutilized resources, skills, knowledge and networks.
4. Can help kick start a self-refueling process of renewal.
5. Involves the people most affected by quality of life issues.

"The evidence is clear: people in communities with active residents, diverse and vibrant institutions, live longer, are better off economically, are healthier and safer."

Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*

As seen from the [New Zealand Social Deprivation Index](#), inequalities in access to resources and opportunities clearly have a spatial dimension. The relationship between people, place and wellbeing outcomes has long been recognised. Living in neighbourhoods of concentrated social disadvantage impacts on the health and wellbeing of local people⁴ including:

- lack of access to social networks and job opportunities;
- prejudice and stigma associated with living in an area perceived as negative and undesirable;
- decreased access to a range of health, education and community services; and
- lack of possibility and hope that the future can be different.

Place can play a key role in bringing together and driving the collaboration and cross-sectoral leadership and investment required to address complex issues like poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Place is an organising vehicle through which multiple lenses, relationships and contributions can be strategically brought together to unlock resources⁵ and catalyse new energy and action for positive change.

¹ Others include communities of interest, ethnicity, gender, online communities etc.

² There is no easy or direct translation of place for Māori. Most aligned concepts are 'whakapapa' - which implies a deep connection to land and the roots of one's ancestry and tūrangawaewae which is often translated as 'a place to stand', where people feel especially empowered or connected.

³ Canadian CED Network. Place-Based Poverty Reduction Literature Review June 2007; page 7.

⁴ Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania. Place- Based Approaches to Health and Wellbeing; page 35.

⁵ Resources include a broad range of elements such as information, physical assets like buildings, funding, networks and connections, leadership, mana, etc.

“The development of place-based approaches has been prompted by a number of factors. These include evidence of the importance of geography, evidence that place matters for people’s well-being, and for children in particular, evidence that social networks and social connectedness matter for people’s well-being, evidence of growing health and social inequities despite the overall growth in economic prosperity, evidence that locational disadvantages exist and that they lead to poorer outcomes for children, the economic collapse of certain localities, the failure of orthodox approaches to reducing inequalities and prevent problems, the inability of local services to respond effectively to the complex needs of families and communities, the difficulties in engaging vulnerable families, and the push for social inclusion of marginalised members of society.”

Place-based approaches to child and family services: A literature review. Page 62

1.4 Understanding Child Poverty and Inequality as Complex Issues that Require New Ways of Working

As noted above, over the last few decades, policy makers have sought new ways to solve the complex social issues that have become entrenched in many communities. Complex issues⁶ are those for which there are no easy solutions and no ‘straight line’ between cause and effect. They cover a broad range of problems such as poverty⁷, homelessness and family violence. Internationally now, policy makers, business leaders, governments and communities are recognising that traditional approaches, strategic planning, and management tools are of limited use.

Complexity thinking and [complex systems](#) have emerged as a useful driver of new approaches. They assist with fundamentally changing our understanding about different kinds of issues, how change happens and why different ways of working are required. For example, Aspen Institute’s extensive research has shown that nationally driven ‘top down’ fragmented approaches that result in stand-alone policy changes and/or contracts for agencies to provide yet more services for people, will not bring the break-through solutions to big social issues like poverty that both local and global communities have been seeking⁸.

In terms of framing child poverty and inequality as complex issues, it’s

Poverty is a complex problem because:

- it is shaped by multiple intersecting and cumulative drivers - from global economic trends to local pay levels, from shifting labour markets to social exclusion;
- the roots of poverty – and the profile of people and communities most likely to be poor – is much affected by wider structural trends in the labour force, economy, and society;
- these trends, and the resulting shape and scale of poverty, are constantly changing;
- efforts to address the impact of poverty and to reduce its level and severity involve many stakeholders from a range of community, government, and other sectors; and
- the public policy environment for poverty reduction is also incredibly dynamic - not just in terms of a constantly changing array of programs and strategic directions, but all of them working across jurisdictional boundaries, with varying degrees of autonomous action, co-ordination, and competition.

**Source: Bob Gardner,
Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Promising
Directions for “Wicked” Problems?**

⁶ Issues can be usefully categorised as simple (a standard solution can be applied with guaranteed success each time eg. re-roofing a kindergarten to stop leaks), complicated (require significant technical input and resources to find the solution eg. building a motorway flyover in Christchurch) and complex (solutions to problems cannot be replicated with any guarantee of success eg. Auckland’s housing affordability strategy will not work on the East Coast.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion on why poverty is a complex issue tap see Tamarack’s Liz Weaver and Mark Cabaj frame: <http://vibrantcanada.ca/content/framing-poverty-complex-issue-0>

⁸ For a short example of how this manifested in the US education system see Appendix 2.

understood that a large number of inter-related factors drive inequality and child poverty. These include high housing/living costs, low income levels, social isolation, lack of local networks and support, intergenerational disadvantage, health and mental health, changing family composition, availability of local employment and lack of education, skills and training opportunities. This means that a large number of potential stakeholders,⁹ including families themselves, have to be engaged and brought together to understand, develop, get agreement on, and implement joined-up solutions. A broad range of voices and stakeholders at the table is important. Breakthrough thinking is more likely when diverse sector perspectives are brought together as this enables new thinking conversations, and contributions to be unlocked.

Each town, city and region in New Zealand has a different demographic make-up, context, history and way of working. This means effective solutions to child poverty will be not solved by stand alone policies, programmes and ‘one size fits all’ models that are ‘scaled out’ to all communities. There are no quick fixes. Working on complex issues means understanding that lasting solutions will be emergent, with best pathways for each community learned through ‘trial and error’¹⁰ and intentional experimentation at multiple levels (local, regional and national). Taking a developmental (or adaptive) approach¹¹ that involves multiple stakeholders and partners (government, residents, business¹², media, academic, iwi, etc) also requires a focus beyond projects to ensure that local leadership skills, high trust relationships and effective collaboration infrastructure¹³ are developed and maintained. Getting the ‘right people’ to shared decision making tables is one thing – keeping them there for the length of time it takes to make transformational change is often another!

Success will also be strengthened by actively involving those with direct experience of poverty in generating

Making Sure Voices are Heard

An example of why those with experience of poverty must be in the room.....

In Ontario, children of families on social assistance who are employed in part-time jobs have their income clawed into the family income. This prevents these children from saving to be able to afford post-secondary education. When this was presented to the Minister of Children and Youth Services of the Government of Ontario during a consultation session, the Minister understood the challenge facing these families.

Education is a pathway out of poverty and preventing children from being able to save to afford post-secondary education places an unfair burden on both the child and the family.

This policy was changed as a result of the mother effectively explaining how her family was impacted.

⁹ Such as business, iwi/Maori, local government, health, education and social service agencies, MPs and Cabinet Ministers, families, media, community members etc. While desirable, it’s often not possible to get everyone at the table at once. In his 7 Habits of Highly Effective Communities, Jay Connor notes the importance of “going with who ya got” and “keeping the circle open”, noting the importance of keeping collaboration tables intentionally open to enable key stakeholders to join as they are ready/able to.

¹⁰ Drawing on the experiences of other communities, and lessons learned from collective impact approaches and innovative practices is a way to shorten or minimize the learning curve. While there is an emerging body of practice that can be used to scale community change efforts more quickly, the local community context must always be considered. This context includes the pre-existing relationships between community leaders; a history of prior collaborative successes; a willingness to look beyond their individual organizations and services to the systems barriers that prevent individuals and communities moving forward, and the willingness to use data to inform the context of the issue and to track progress.

¹¹ This means rather than being prescribed in advance, strategies and best courses of actions emerge as people work together.

¹² In the Canadian experience, the business sector has been the most difficult to involve in comprehensive community planning work.

¹³ Governance structures, integrated planning and action, convening support and communication processes that support shared decision making and doing.

and implementing solutions. Their insights, experiences of poverty, and first-person knowledge are essential in understanding barriers, exploring and creating solutions that are both grounded and practical. We need to see local people as experts rather than as consultation subjects or clients whose problems need to be fixed. They are a key part of the poverty system and as such, need to be active participants in any process. In some communities, this means proactively helping **build capacity** so that individuals, families and communities can meaningfully participate in both decision making and ‘doing’ over the long term.

Commitments to measure and evaluate change must also be supported by investment in learning to ensure new understandings and insights are proactively incorporated into ongoing action phases in ‘real time’ ways. International experience tells us that transformational change in complex issues like child poverty and inequality are 10 year + processes.¹⁴ This means long term funding approaches are essential, as is perseverance from everyone involved. Progress is likely to be seen in small steps rather than big leaps, with the concept of ‘relentless incrementalism’ important to ensure that initiatives continue to build off and from each other in an intentional way.

1.5 Overview of the Field: What are Collective Impact and Collaborative Place-based Initiatives?

As noted above, complex issues require new ways of working. Over the past few decades, collective and collaborative place-based initiatives¹⁵ have been emerging as practical and useful approaches to address the multiple challenges that communities often face.

Language is messy. There are definite similarities and overlaps between collaborative place-based initiatives and collective impact ways of working. In a ‘purist’ sense¹⁶ however, true collective impact initiatives tend to have a much stronger focus on shared measurement which sees data rigorously driving action and alignment of goals and action plans across large stakeholder organisations¹⁷ (see below for more detail). A tight goal area (eg. reducing unemployment) drives collaboration efforts which are also usually tied to a locality (city, region etc), with change efforts intentionally led by influential champions.

While utilising and building from available data, collaborative place-based initiatives tend to be more bottom up, less prescriptive, less data driven, and more intentionally involve capacity building/community empowerment approaches alongside local change efforts that span a number of sectors and goal areas.

Key Concept Definition: Collaborative Place-Based Initiatives

While they vary widely in size and scale, these kind of initiatives can be generalised as those where people who live, work, play, care and invest in a place are intentionally brought together

¹⁴ When regular monitoring and evaluation processes are built into an initiative, a range of changes and short term outcomes can realistically be expected during a 10 year timeframe. See Appendix 3 for change indicators included in Vibrant Communities evaluation framework which seek to capture both small steps and larger systems changes.

¹⁵ See Appendix 4 for descriptions of related and commonly used terminology in this space.

¹⁶ Over the last two years, collective impact has become something of a ‘buzz word’ internationally and there are many well established and very promising models operating especially in North America. We notice in New Zealand however that the while the term ‘collective impact’ is increasingly being used, it’s often actually referring to strategic collaboration. While the principles of collective impact may be in use, the five conditions of the collective impact model frequently are not, with one of the biggest gaps being the significant resourcing required to really drive collaboration efforts and alignments.

¹⁷ One of the criticisms of collective impact is that ‘grassroots’ community are often left out as the model’s emphasis is on alignment of data, plans, investments, and services of large stakeholder organisations.

to develop local visions and plans for addressing important local issues and enhancing local quality of life.

While leadership to initiate new collaborative approaches and projects can emerge naturally from the 'bottom up' within a community (eg. a group of residents decide to undertake a joint project and invite the local school, the Council and businesses to work with them), initial leadership can equally come from the 'top down' - for example from a funder or local or central government. In the latter case however, addressing issues of power and control are critical to success, with special attention required to ensure that:

- local people are proactively engaged and involved in planning, decision making and doing phases;
- processes and structures to enable 'working together' are co-designed and decision making shared;
- approaches and interventions build on existing strengths and assets within the community; and
- there are high trust relationships between participants.

Common Characteristics of Place-based Approaches:

- ▶ are designed (or adapted) locally to meet unique conditions;
- ▶ engage participants from a diverse range of sectors and jurisdictions in collaborative decision making processes;
- ▶ are opportunity-driven, dependent upon local talent, resources and constraints;
- ▶ have an evolving process due to adaptive learning and stakeholder interests;
- ▶ attempt to achieve synergies by integrating across silos, jurisdictions and dimensions of sustainability;
- ▶ leverage assets and knowledge through shared ownership of the initiative; and
- ▶ frequently attempt to achieve behaviour change (such as child friendly investment frameworks, partnering with others, belief and optimism in a better future etc).

Source: Evaluation of Place Based Approaches, Policy Horizons Canada; page 1.

Collaborative place-based initiatives typically focus on a suite of strategies that frequently include a mix of initiatives aimed at improving:

- skills, training and educational opportunities
- housing quality and affordability
- local economic development and employment outcomes
- access to transport
- community safety
- integrated health, social and community services, facilities and activities.

Key Concept: Collective Impact Initiatives

Collective Impact too is based upon the principle that social change requires a cross-sectoral collaborative approach. It involves multiple stakeholders coordinating their change efforts and working together around a clearly defined set of goals to address a specific issue (eg. education, youth achievement) and is typically quite data driven.¹⁸ Collective impact is getting traction and

¹⁸ Data is wide ranging and can include statistical measures (eg. the Vibrant Communities initiative in Canada asked communities to use a poverty matrix to identify the demographic impact and depth of poverty in their community) and an environmental scan of who is already working in the field so that these resources can be linked and leveraged.

attention internationally and here in New Zealand because of how it is framed and the simple rules that it presents to deal with more complex community issues. It also allows for local context and emergence.

Successful Collective Impact initiatives¹⁹ typically have five conditions that combine to build greater alignment and more successful results:

1. **A common agenda** that's based on a shared vision, agreement on issues and accountabilities;
2. **Shared measurement systems** with an agreed set of shared indicators to measure progress and change;
3. **Mutually reinforcing activities** enabling all stakeholders to work to their strengths in a joined up way;
4. **Continuous communication** through meeting regularly and developing shared understandings, common language, and trust; and
5. **Backbone infrastructure** from a dedicated coordinating organisation.²⁰

While there is a growing [body of evidence](#) that points to success from collective impact ways of working, it can be a challenging process to 'get right'.²¹ Learning from doing in this field points to three key pre-conditions²² that need to be in place for collective impact approaches to really take hold and deliver results:

- a. **Influential Champions** - a small group, with a broad sphere of influence, who command the respect necessary to bring CEO-level cross-sector leaders together and keep them actively engaged over time. As early adopters of change efforts, they are able to move their own organisations towards the change first.
- b. **Adequate Financial Resourcing** - adequate financial resources to last at least two to three years and generally involving at least one anchor funder to support needed infrastructure and planning.
- c. **A Sense of Urgency for Change** - a new opportunity or crisis that convinces people that a particular issue must be acted upon now and/or that a new approach is needed.

“The alignment that is needed is about fundamental ways of working and addresses goals, activities, capacities, relationships and learning priorities. It also needs regular recalibration as the work proceeds”.

Aspen Institute. Community Change Initiatives from 1990-2010

¹⁹ For more on Collective Impact see <http://www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/211/Default.aspx?srpush=true>.

²⁰ For more on backbone organisations and the key role they play see Appendix 5 and http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact

²¹ Including inherent difficulties around developing effective shared measurement tools, getting buy-in and participation from diverse funders and meaningfully involving communities themselves in direction-setting processes. For more see http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emmett-d-carson/rethinking-collective-imp_b_1847839.html, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-schmitz/collective-impact_b_1920466.html and http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/putting_community_in_collective_impact.

²² This Tamarack [podcast](#) shares more from FSG's John Kania on making collective impact work.

1.6 Success and Risk Factors in this Field

Collaborative place-based approaches and collective impact models involve hard work, long term strategic investment, and committed cross-sectoral collaborative leadership for change. As discussed in section two, while working in these ways has the potential to positively impact on child poverty and inequalities, there are no guarantees of success. This is a high risk field.

In addition to the conditions and pre-conditions for collective impact noted on page 11, experience in this field to date highlights the following success and risk factors²³ that need to be fully considered, both before getting started and as things progress:

Success Factors:

1. Time – to develop strong trusting relationships, co-design effective ways of working and see results.
2. Realistic long term resourcing of ‘achievable’ goals and collaboration infrastructure to drive the work forward.
3. An inspiring vision and strategy that’s clearly defined yet incorporates a ‘tight’ - ‘loose’ approach to enable local places to define best pathways to success.
4. The ability to maintain a comprehensive lens to an overall work programmes, while still implementing targeted and high quality programmes/projects within specific sectors.
5. Data – that informs shared understandings of issues and contexts being tackled; that set targets for change; that drives population level indicators to measure progress and success and assists evaluation and learning of outcomes against intent.
6. Critical mass of key local leaders and stakeholders willing to work with uncertainty, and proactively ‘untie the knots and join the dots’ to achieve shared goals.
7. Effective stakeholder management processes, including reporting, accountability and communications.
8. Building on and leveraging existing local assets, strengths, initiatives and research, and also seizing new opportunities as they arise.
9. Evolving and adapting to changing conditions and new learning and building these quickly back into strategy, planning and action.
10. Attempting to change behaviour and norms in a location.
11. Concurrently linking local change efforts with systems and policy changes to enable greater impact, and momentum to be sustained.

As one would expect, paying attention to success factors at both project establishment and implementation stages will assist in minimising some of the risk factors noted below. However, some risks factors will be impossible to pre-determine up front (eg. community politics, policy changes, and leadership changes) and will need to be carefully and proactively managed as and if they emerge.

Risk Factors:

1. Short term project focus rather than a long term view.
2. Premature discontinuation of investment and interventions – many funders (especially government) wish to see substantial progress much earlier than the anticipated 10 years+ timeframe. Having to complete significant chunks of work within three year political cycle can create pressure and unrealistic expectations of change and success.
3. Unwillingness of government partners to be actively involved in explicitly branded ‘poverty reduction’ efforts.

²³ Advice compiled from a range of sources including Place Based Approaches to Health and Wellbeing, Community Change Initiatives from 1990-2010, and Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Lessons learned, potential and opportunities moving forward.

Risk Factors continued:

4. Selling the concept and getting buy-in and traction at multiple levels for a different, long term way of working.
5. Evaluation and measurement challenges - including defining and measuring poverty and availability/accessibility of local data (baseline, impact and outcome tracking).
6. Community factors-including under-investment in capacity building, poor understanding of local needs, messy local politics and/or lack of local community engagement, participation and ownership.
7. Aligning and managing a complicated web of multiple stakeholder interests, plans, investments, communication and reporting requirements.
8. Lack of/loss of critical leadership mass – key leaders need to stay with the initiative for three to five years, at which point transition points are actually healthy and should be encouraged to renew energy and approaches etc.

The success and risk factors noted above relate to the broad field of collaborative and collective-place based collaboration internationally. There are also New Zealand specific considerations that need to be noted:

- political structures, functions and responsibilities: New Zealand does not have the dual federal-state/provincial levels of government that exist in other countries like Australia, Canada and the US. Though a regional tier of government exists in New Zealand, its core functions focus on resource management, land-use and transport planning/delivery. While City and District Councils play key roles in articulating, overseeing and contributing to local wellbeing outcomes²⁴, Council involvements and investments in social wellbeing functions do not generally involve a large social service provision role that is commonly seen in the UK and Australia for example. In New Zealand it is central government who has the prime responsibility (eg. policy setting, investment frameworks etc) for provision/funding of health, education, social services and economic development outcomes.²⁵ Because these functions are not devolved, central government must be part of local poverty reduction collaboration tables in NZ and be prepared to work in very different ways - which is often challenging due to embedded systems and existing skillsets/capacities within the bureaucracy. New ways here could include

Municipal Roles in Poverty Reduction
Though Canada's federal and provincial governments control the majority of the policy levers that influence prosperity, the full benefit of those policies cannot be realized without coordination at the city-region level.

Municipal leaders have the advantage of understanding local needs. They decide how to invest finances, deploy staff, modify procurement practices, boost local hiring and develop growth strategies that intentionally create opportunity and benefits. They have the power to create circles of prosperity.

Source: Vibrant Communities Canada, Creating a Shared Prosperity

²⁴ For example Councils are large local employers, they own and manage extensive community assets and services (libraries, parks, facilities, roads etc), they provide funding and support for community focused activities, they undertake advocacy and political leadership roles on behalf of and with their communities. Local government procurement policies can also have a big impact on local economic development outcomes.

²⁵ Note there are a range of institutional arrangements through which outcomes are managed and delivered through eg. Schools, District Health Boards, contracted pan tribal/Iwi authorities and social service organisations.

according greater priority to local goals and visions, new locally determined governance models, being able to make/pilot changes to social assistance policies etc.

- our relative lack of experience in collaborative place-based development. Large scale comprehensive urban renewal initiatives²⁶ and investments which have been common overseas have not happened in New Zealand. This means many larger institutional actors (Councils, central govt agencies, District Health Boards etc) do not have direct experience of comprehensive and collaborative place-based planning and practice²⁷ or the established systems, people or processes generally needed to facilitate decentralised and holistic/joined up ways of working. There will be similar capability/capacity issues within communities also. While these systems barriers can be worked through, they need to be acknowledged in any project risk profile, anticipated and proactively planned for.
- community-led processes in Aotearoa must pay attention to Tiriti o Waitangi relationships. Growing understanding of the many ways in which colonisation eroded the intention of Te Tiriti has led to political and systems change during recent decades, including Treaty settlement processes, policy initiatives like Whanau Ora, and new working together arrangements in local communities. Much of this is still ‘work in progress,’ with local iwi and Māori-led wellbeing frameworks and strategies currently in different stages of development/implementation across Aotearoa. While Treaty settlements have increased capacity for iwi/Maori to partner and lead locally, priorities, arrangements and processes and established relationships that enable ‘doing together with others’ vary widely across the country.
- scale and approach. The vast majority of international collaborative place-based and collective impact experience and learning is focused in large urban areas – many of which are at a scale and density²⁸ not found in New Zealand. While numbers of people experiencing poverty are primarily located in New Zealand’s urban areas, two larger rural areas (Northland and East Cape) are also identified as experiencing high relative rates of social disadvantage. Strategies, interventions, and institutional arrangements for working in collaborative community-led ways across dispersed rural communities would need to be quite different than for efforts focused in urban communities. In many smaller rural communities in the US, the Community Capitals Framework²⁹ is increasingly being used to uncover the various resources or ‘capitals’ embedded in rural areas.

“The centrality of the Treaty of Waitangi and the increasing occurrence of partnerships between Maori and the Crown have a number of implications for collaborative work in New Zealand”.

***High and Complex Needs Unit. 2007.
Better at Working Together-Interagency Collaboration: page 5***

²⁶ There has been some tentative experimentation eg. Government initiated a large scale Tamaki Transformation Project (TTP) in 2007 that was to involve ‘all of government’ working in partnership with Auckland City Council and the local communities of Panmure, Point England and Glen Innes to develop a comprehensive long term renewal plan for the area. The 2010 Action Plan project partners developed indicated a \$1.9billion investment was needed for implementation phase. With government unwilling to make this commitment, the project was largely disbanded. Instead a smaller scale initiative which focuses largely on housing redevelopment was recatalysed in 2012 with the creation of a new Tamaki Development Company (jointly owned by the Government and Auckland Council).

²⁷ While there are many examples of integrated planning and service coordination happening different parts of New Zealand, they generally don’t involve community-led or partnering frameworks with local communities.

²⁸ New Zealand cities are generally of much smaller size, with most people tending to live in single level (as opposed to multi storey) dwellings in suburban areas.

²⁹ The capitals framework has many similarities to [Asset Based Community Development](#) thinking and approaches.

2. Learning Around Collective and Collaborative Place-Based Initiatives

“While the evidence-base for place-based approaches is still being built, it is important to remember that the uncertainty that exists reflects an absence of evidence rather than the evidence of absence.”

*Department of Health and Human Services,
Places Based Approaches to Health and Wellbeing, Tasmania 2012*

2.1 What the research is telling us

There has been much written about place-based initiatives in Canada, the United States and internationally. One of the most [significant studies](#) was that undertaken by The Aspen Institute, Roundtable on Community Change which reviewed results achieved by more than 43 major place-based, comprehensive initiatives in the US and provided some recommendations to the field for moving forward.³⁰

They identified that these comprehensive community change efforts had impact across three major areas:

1. **Improving the human, physical and economic development of poor neighbourhoods** – ‘best practice’ approaches put in place (health, housing, employment, income levels etc) with improvements for individuals receiving services.
2. **Strengthening community capacity** – new leadership emerged, social capital (trust, relationships, networks, connections etc) strengthened, organisational and civic (collective planning, voice and advocacy) capacities built.
3. **Generating some level of policy and systems change** – legitimisation of place-based work attracted and leveraged new funding, influenced government policies and changed conversations/ways of working.

However, the Roundtable on Community Change noted that this evidence was not consistent across all initiatives and that it was weaker when it came to influencing policy and systems change, population-level changes and economic development outcomes at a neighbourhood level.³¹ These limitations perhaps a result of working at neighbourhood scale, where ‘macro conditions’ are generally outside the control of neighbourhood actors and many initiatives not intentionally focused on larger systems changes.

The Round Table also identified a number of recommendations for practitioners of place-based change to consider. These included:

- better alignment of mission, action, capacity, collaboration and learning;
- increased clarity about mission, desired outcomes, and operating principles;
- intentionality in action;
- assessing and building capacity particularly in the area of systems thinking and change;
- effective management of partnerships and collaborations; and
- learning and adapting of the collaborative effort along the way.

³⁰ Over a 20 year period, this involved \$1 billion in philanthropic investment and more than \$10 billion in public sector investment.

³¹ Kubisch, A., Apsos, P., Brown, P., and Dewar, T. Community Change Initiatives from 1990 – 2010: Accomplishments and Implications for Future Work. *Community Investments*. Spring 2010. Volume 22, Issue 1.

This review of the field was reinforced by findings from Wellesley Institute who were commissioned to undertake an [extensive review](#) of comprehensive community initiatives in Canada. Their research also looked at the potential of place-based comprehensive community initiatives to move issues up a policy agenda, build collaboration, build community capacity, improve the circumstances of individuals impacted by the issue of poverty and inequality and address root causes. Again, their conclusions were similar to those of the Aspen Institute. They noted that while evidence was emerging that this approach to community change was showing promise, it still needed time to seed.³²

The recommendations identified by both the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change and Wellesley Institute in Canada align significantly with the core conditions now identified in the design of collective impact, including a common community agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communications and backbone infrastructure.

Building on this, some of the key requirements from the literature for building a comprehensive place-based approach to reducing poverty are noted below.

Requirements for Building a Comprehensive Place Based Approach to Reducing Poverty:

- ▶ minimum design components for scaling across multiple communities ;
- ▶ effective leadership and governance of the collaborative effort;
- ▶ engagement and inclusion supports including training and resources for key leaders including individuals with the lived experience of poverty;
- ▶ dedicated staff to enable the collaborative effort;
- ▶ development of a shared aspiration (vision) and common agenda;
- ▶ local data to inform common agenda and measure progress;
- ▶ leverage of existing local programs and services in a way that advances the collective efforts;
- ▶ a focus on the systems change and policy environments; and
- ▶ sufficient financial and human resources to enable the collaborative .

Source: Wellesley Institute. Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Lessons Learned, Potential and Opportunities Moving Forward.

2.2 Evidence of Success

As noted above, research by the Aspen and Wellesley Institutes note the evidence of success of place-based comprehensive community initiatives is variable. Under the right conditions, there have been promising steps forward and notable improvements in the lives of individuals and families in the communities where these initiatives occurred.³³ There has also been increasing evidence of how growing collaborative infrastructure strengthens the capacity of local citizens and organisations to actively participate in their communities on multiple levels – especially those traditionally marginalised from decision making processes.

Engaging Parents in Ways that Build Trust and Participation in their Children’s Learning

“In Hamilton we noticed that many teachers used a ‘middle class’ lens when judging parents in low income communities. If that low income parent had a very negative experience in school,

³² Gardner, B., Lalani, N., Piamadeala, C. Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Lessons Learned, Potential and Opportunities Moving Forward. Wellesley Institute. May 2010.

³³ It is interesting to note that the Annie E Casey Foundation who have invested heavily in family and community change efforts in the USA (\$500 million over 22 communities) are now advocating for “two-generation” strategies to guide community change efforts. They recommend strategies that address the needs and challenges facing **both** children **and** parents simultaneously. For more on their latest learning see <http://www.aecf.org/work/past-work/making-connections>.

they were often fearful that a parent teacher interview was a place where they would be punished again. Providing opportunities for low income parents to positively interact with their children in their local school environment ahead of parent-teacher interviews enabled trust to be built and more positive outcome for parents, teachers, and children’s learning.”

Liz Weaver

More recently, the collective impact approach is showing more evidence of community impact and systems change. For example, the Vibrant Communities approach (see more on page 18) has intentionally sought to influence government policies related to poverty. Approximately 120,000 asset benefits³⁴ (38% of the total) to low income individuals were the result of policy changes. In Alberta, the Fair Fares programme has benefitted more than 10,000 low income Calgarians and in British Columbia, the creation of a regional housing trust fund has generated more than \$51 million for affordable housing.

Those collective impact efforts in Canada and the United States which focus on a shared measurement system and use data as a key component to framing the issue or problem are reporting positive progress.³⁵ Perhaps most notably in the United States are place-based cradle to career educational initiatives such as the [Strive Partnership](#) in Cincinnati which has achieved some impressive results over a short period of time – primarily as a result of significant investment in its efforts which has brought significant partners to the table. Data is also actively being used to drive decision making and change.

“This approach is generating results. While we still have a long way to go, 89% of the indicators the partnership tracks and reports on annually were trending in the right direction in 2012-13, compared to 81% the year before, and just 68% three years ago. The partnership also measures its success by its ability to align resources around what works and key value judgments from our partners.”

<http://www.strivepartnership.org/about-the-partnership>

Similarly [Erie Together](#) is a movement in Pennsylvania, USA involving of hundreds of local individuals, organizations, and businesses working together in strategic ways to prevent and reduce poverty, elevate prosperity, and make the Erie region a community of opportunity where everyone can learn, work and thrive. Having developed a [Vital Signs](#) indicators project in 2009, both funders and communities are able to assess their progress against chosen goals areas and better target next steps action. There are many initiatives underway. For example the Erie Together task team focusing on easing children’s transition into primary school has collected transition practices data from all Erie County school districts and is analyzing the data to identify and share local “best practices” and areas for improvement so that school districts in the county can learn from each other.

At Vibrant Communities and in other collective impact approaches, smaller, incremental changes occur as early as the first or second year: new funding opportunities, some small policy shifts, etc. However, data for the larger population level changes, such as poverty rates, is

³⁴ Vibrant Communities utilises the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to assess progress in poverty reduction efforts across communities. This technique maps the specific attributes an individual or community might have including financial, social, personal, physical and human assets. Asset benefits in this context are the improvements noted for households as a result of poverty reduction efforts. For more see [Evaluating Vibrant Communities](#); page 20.

³⁵ The collective impact emphasis on shared measurement/data collection likely denotes a step change from previous collaborative place-based efforts the Aspen Institute measured. ie. it’s hard to cost effectively measure effectiveness if that right data hasn’t been collected/analysed in real time ways.

collected and reported by Statistics Canada on a five year cycle. This means that local communities can only assess their larger impact every five years. However, depending on the indicators selected and the frequency of reporting, collective impact initiatives may start to see changes more quickly. If the indicator of change is reported annually, then the collective impact group will be able to look at their results and impact on an annual basis and determine which of the strategies has the greatest impact.

2.3 A Learning Example – Vibrant Communities Canada

By the early 2000s, efforts to reduce poverty in Canada had largely stalled, with social service agencies struggling to meet community need as they simultaneously faced increased demand and decreased funding. It was recognised that innovation, leadership and collaboration were needed to regain momentum.



Similarly, results from a community group in Waterloo, Ontario called Opportunities 2000 too had plateaued after having creatively worked with over 80 different organisations to design and implement 50 new poverty reduction initiatives in their region. Initiative leaders Paul Born and Mark Cabaj could see that there was much to be learned from their success, with potential to scale out principles and practices to other Canadian Communities and in doing so create a much larger impact on the macro systems that impacted on poverty outcomes locally. Leaders from poverty reduction efforts were brought together to discuss replication, with a summit in 2002 resulting in decisions to launch pilot initiatives in 6 other Canadian communities. Around this time, Born and Cabaj, left Opportunities 2000 to create a new organisation (Tamarack – an Institute for Community Engagement) which would focus on sharing and scaling learning to help people collaborate and co-generate knowledge that could solve complex community challenges like poverty.

The six new national pilot initiatives (referred to as Trail Builders) became known as Vibrant Communities Canada. They were an experiment designed to test a specific way of addressing the complex realities of poverty through joined up local action. Rather than a set model, Vibrant Communities was based around a set of core principles adapted to local settings, plus a set of national supports to facilitate these efforts.

Tamarack became the ‘national backbone’ for the six Trail Builder initiatives, which each have their own collaboration table and ‘local backbone’ support. Tamarack provided community coaching, learning support and administration, and enabled the overall initiative to operate at a national scale. Other core project partners included the [Caledon Institute](#) of Social Policy who

Vibrant Communities: **Core Principles**

- A focus on poverty reduction - as opposed to alleviating the hardships of poverty.
- Comprehensive thinking and action – addressing interrelated root causes of poverty rather than its various symptoms.
- Multisectoral collaboration – engaging leaders from at least four key sectors (business, government, non profits and low income residents) in a joint effort to counter poverty.
- Community asset building – building on community strengths rather than focusing on deficits.

Source: Evaluating Vibrant Communities; page 15.

focused on policy issues, evaluation support and research. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (a federal government department) also provided some funding and links to government learning. The fourth key partner in Vibrant Communities was the J.W.McConnell Foundation who invested \$10million in the overall initiative over a ten year period.³⁶

Vibrant Communities Canada was able to report significant impacts on the lives of people living in poverty, including reducing the number of people below local poverty lines.³⁷ The results and learning from this cumulative effort can be found in the publication [Evaluating Vibrant Communities 2002-2010](#). Key evaluation results show impact across a variety of different measures including improving the lives and income levels of individuals and families, community capacity and policy and systems influence.

Together, Vibrant Communities Partners have:
439,435 poverty reducing benefits to 202,931 households in Canada
256 poverty reduction initiatives were completed or in progress by local Trail Builders
Drove 53 substantive government policy changes³⁸
\$22.8 million invested in local Trail Builder communities
2,278 organisations partnering in Trail Builder communities
1,539 individuals playing substantial roles, including 840 people living in poverty
Source: Vibrant Communities 2011.

Both the Hamilton (11%) and Saint John, New Brunswick (10%) poverty reduction initiatives have made significant progress in reducing the number of people below their poverty lines. However, some of the policy and systems decisions that lead to large scale poverty reduction also require the alignment of local, provincial and federal government investments. Progress has been made at the provincial government level in Canada with 9 of 10 provinces and all three territories developing poverty strategies. However, there is still work to be done on gaining federal investment and alignment.

As well as reducing poverty locally, Vibrant Communities has also generated tools, publications, and other process-improvement resources to help influence broader provincial and national awareness and systems change around poverty. For example, by 2010 Vibrant Communities had disseminated 223 reports, attracted over 2,500 media stories, and hosted 264 learning events. These efforts have captured the attention of politicians and policy makers, grown a national movement and increased capability in working collaboratively in place on poverty reduction

³⁶ Of the \$10 million invested, approximately \$6.5 million went to community change efforts, and \$3.5million went to Tamarack and Caledon for national learning support, community coaching, convening community initiatives on an annual basis, capturing stories and translating them into policy context and developing a common evaluation framework.

³⁷ Learn more about local Vibrant Community poverty reduction initiatives at Appendices 6 and 7.

³⁸ For example the Calgary Chamber of Commerce adopted a Living Wage policy. In St John, the roundtable lobbied federal government and secured a housing official to review their serious housing crisis. This review led to the creation of hundreds of new affordable housing units. In Manitoba, provincial policy was changed to allow individuals to maintain \$4000 in assets when they go on social assistance (approx 28,000 Winnipeggers were on social assistance.)

efforts across multiple sectors. As a result, the number of communities that were part of Vibrant Communities during the first decade increased from 6 to 13. By 2013 this number had grown to 55 and plans are now afoot to scale to 100 communities by 2020.

It should be noted that both the Vibrant Communities initiative and the [Strive Partnership in Cincinnati](#) have benefited from long term investments and a focus on evaluation and learning as key strategies. This longer term investment allows for the collaborative effort to understand how things are changing over time and to reshape strategies for the most effective outcomes.

Importantly too, while the JW McConnell Foundation's investment in Vibrant Communities has formally concluded, the initiatives themselves have largely continued – changing and adapting to what's needed locally for their next phases.

While formal cost benefit analyses of 'value for money' from the Vibrant Communities (and many other comprehensive community initiatives) are hard to find, two proxy measures are noted below:

In Hamilton, a city of 96,000 people, the number of people living in poverty has reduced by 10,500 (11%) over the last decade. The average social assistance cost per person is between \$6-10,000 per year (not including food bank use, transport subsidies etc). The annual saving would likely be around \$84 million per year. The annual investment in the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is \$300-500,000 per year.³⁹

Reducing Poverty –Big Four Learnings:

1. Poverty is better addressed by poverty reduction not alleviation.
2. Poverty reduction is more effectively addressed by multi-sector collaboration and leadership.
3. Poverty reduction is more effective when built on local assets.
4. Poverty reduction efforts are more effective when part of an ongoing process of learning, evaluation and change.

Mark Cabaj (Ed). Cities Reducing Poverty - How Vibrant Communities are Creating Comprehensive Solutions to the Most Complex Problem of our Times. 2011

Was it a good investment?

JW McConnell Foundation CEO Stephen Huddart reflects...

"When I joined the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation early in 2003, the Vibrant Communities program was barely six months old and faced an uncertain future. President Tim Brodhead and Program Director Katharine Pearson worried about philanthropic hubris in proposing to reduce poverty at a meaningful scale. Our partner, Tamarack Institute, was introducing a methodology called a 'comprehensive community initiative' that had been developed in the United States, and there were doubts it would work in Canada.

To underscore the point, the 'Trail Builder' communities selected to take part in the initial phase had held numerous meetings and discussions about poverty, but there was little evidence that they were engaged in its reduction. But if there were concerns, there were also reasonable expectations for success. Tamarack had produced groundbreaking work on poverty reduction in

³⁹ For more on Hamilton's story see Appendix 7.

the Kitchener-Waterloo area with Opportunities 2000, and the Foundation had experience funding a national community economic development program called CEDTAP.

Vibrant Communities would provide funding and coaching to local collaborative planning tables to reduce poverty according to local priorities. It would also engage the participants in a national learning community. A third national partner, the Caledon Institute, would distil the lessons learned into deeper reflections on the nature of, and solutions to poverty, thereby generating policy recommendations for governments.

This volume is evidence that these expectations were well founded. Vibrant Communities has had an enduring and beneficial influence on thousands of low income families in dozens of communities across Canada. It has also shaped the work of The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, and philanthropy more broadly, through the work of the Vibrant Communities funders group.

One lesson for us is that social innovations introduced at multiple levels of scale often involve different and considerable 'lag times' as actors in a system get to know one another and adopt new ways of working. All the more reason for funders to temper their insistence on results with patience, and to invest for the long term.

A second conclusion is that complex systems involve solutions that evolve over time. Vibrant Communities' evolution over the past decade coincided with the rapid spread of the internet. Webinars and downloadable resources have - many times over - multiplied the program's reach and impact. Finally, Vibrant Communities' architecture highlights the close relationship between social innovation and societal learning. It shows us that it is possible to transform complex problems such as poverty into evolutionary processes of continual adaptation.

In setting out to reduce poverty, Vibrant Communities has produced results of value to us all."

Stephen Huddart
CEO- The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
Foreword to [Inspired Learning](#), 2012.

3. Evaluating Change and Measuring Outcomes in Collaborative Placed- Based Initiatives - Strategies for Success

3.1 A New Paradigm Emerging

"The randomised control trial is a powerful perhaps unequalled, research design, but only to explore the efficacy of those components of practice that are conceptually neat and have a linear, tightly coupled, causal relationship to the outcome of interest."

Broader Evidence for Bigger Impact page 52.

As outlined in section one, collaborative place-based change efforts are complex, and far from conceptually neat, with solutions often far from linear in terms of direct cause and effect.

With resources now scarce, pressure is now on from policy makers and funders to invest in programmes and approaches that have demonstrated success, potential scalability and value for money, with the notion of an ‘acceptable evidence base’ still tending to be hung on a level of proof that only a randomised control trial can give. This has presented complex community change efforts with a problem – how to best track and measure ‘what’s changed, how and why’? To date, both producers and consumers of evaluation research seemed to have been intimidated into accepting narrow definitions of evidence as the only evidence. There has been a slowly growing recognition that no single approach to evaluation would allow us to learn enough from past interventions or enable us to predict the success of future efforts.⁴⁰

Recent experience around evaluation of complex issues has highlighted the importance of four key principles that, combined, signal a paradigm shift in evaluation thinking and practice:

1. **Begin with a results framework** by identifying the clear, measurable results from the interventions sought by children, families and communities;
2. **Match evaluation methods to their purpose** so that evaluation methods match specific types of intervention and different ‘needs to know’;
3. **Draw on credible evidence from multiple sources**, including programme evaluations, other research, practice and experience; and
4. **Identify the core components of successful interventions** as these are often a better guide to action than are model programmes.⁴¹

3.2 Useful Approaches Utilise a Range of Tools and Techniques

International experience also tells us evaluation cannot be an after-thought, tacked on at the end of a project to satisfy funding requirements. Rather it must be viewed as an essential ingredient within any project establishment, with resources, management and energy dedicated to developing an appropriate evaluation from the outset.⁴²

As noted above, evaluation of collaborative and collective initiatives which are seeking to address complex community issues also demand different kinds of approaches to monitoring and evaluation in order for the evaluation challenges noted opposite to be addressed.

Common evaluation challenges of place-based approaches:

1. Capturing long-term outcomes and change.
2. Attributions of outcomes in open systems /complex adaptive systems, as well as attribution of systems change.
3. Attribution and accountability within collaborative governance due to shared funding and decision making.
4. Accommodating evolving, multiple and diverse objectives.
5. Measuring capacity building, participation, relationships and behaviour change
6. Data gaps or logistical challenges in gathering data.
7. Competing evaluation philosophies eg. objective external processes vs. “experience based” community process.

Government of Canada. *The Evaluation of Place-based Approaches: Questions for Further Research*, Ottawa 2011.

⁴⁰ Schorr, Lisbeth. Broader Evidence for Bigger Impact. Stanford social innovation Review Fall 2012; page 52.

⁴¹ Ibid; page 54.

⁴² Wellesley Institute 2010. Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Lessons learned etc page 11.

Multiple inter-related projects and programmes, involving multiple players and time frames mean 'causality' and attribution are almost impossible to define with any certainty.

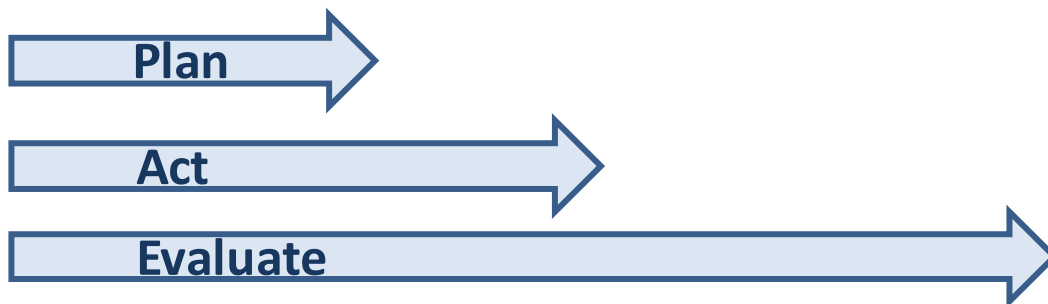
"Many activities contribute to community-led changes. In evaluation, there is a continual search for a direct cause and effect link. But in community-led development there are many interconnected networks and actions. We have found it more useful to focus on contribution (where and how an initiative helps achieve an outcomes) than attribution."

Inspiring Communities: Learning by Doing 2013 page 15

Traditional approaches to evaluation generally involve a reflective process of review after action has been taken:



As outlined in section 1, working with complex issues requires adaptive approaches to designing and implementing solutions. Communities are required to respond to what does/doesn't work as action happens, and quickly build this into next steps planning and action. For this reason, developmental evaluation⁴³ approaches are seen as very useful as they involve a continuous and simultaneous process of:



There are also other useful tools and techniques that are commonly used in evaluating collaborative place-based initiatives. Some of these include:

- ▶ [Theory of Change](#) -encouraging local collaborators to articulate short and long term outcomes as well as assumptions about how change will happen and indicators of success.
- ▶ [Contribution Analysis](#) -provides tools for assessing how a project or programme may have contributed to outcomes.
- ▶ [Splash and Ripple](#) -provides a framework for visualising outcomes measurement.
- ▶ [Outcomes Harvesting](#) -helps identify, formulate, verify, and make sense of outcomes they have influenced when relationships of cause-effect are unknown.

Inspiring Communities experience of [evaluating community-led change efforts](#) in New Zealand indicates that evaluation frameworks need to be 'custom built', with a 'pick and mix' approach generally best to allow communities to utilise evaluation techniques that best suit their particular situation.

⁴³ Developmental evaluation has been championed by Michael Quinn Paton, for more information and resource links see http://betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/developmental_evaluation

3.3 Evaluation of Complex Community Change Initiatives - the Vibrant Communities Experience

The evaluation approach evolved significantly over the course of the first 10 year phase of Vibrant Communities Canada. There were a number of key principles that drove the evaluation process over this period. The document, [Learning and Evaluation for Vibrant Communities Trail Builders: The Pan-Canadian Process](#), sets out the basic approach for Vibrant Communities partners. This included:

- a more fully articulated conception of poverty and poverty reduction
- a conceptual framework⁴⁴ that depicts poverty and poverty reduction in terms of:
 - multiple asset areas (personal, social, human, financial and physical)
 - multiple spheres of activity (e.g., employment, housing, transportation and childcare)
 - multiple sectors (eg. business, government, non-profit and low-income)
 - multiple levels of action (eg. individual and household assets, community capacity building and wider policy and systems change).
- a set of major research questions
- a research agenda is identified that explores three basic questions:
 - What are the different manifestations of a comprehensive approach for achieving deep and durable outcomes? What are the strengths and limitations of each approach?
 - What are the principles, processes, techniques and capabilities required to do comprehensive, multisectoral work well?
 - What is needed to create a more supportive environment for local poverty reduction?
- an expanded set of outcomes and indicators.⁴⁵
- a working set of outcomes and indicators that are specified at three levels of action:
 - enhanced community capacity for poverty reduction .
 - improvements in individual and household assets.
 - changes in policies and systems.

The learning and evaluation work is generally organised into three key components:

- Frameworks for Change – an evolving account of the key ideas guiding local initiatives.
- Change Profiles – documentation of the outcomes being achieved by initiatives.
- Reporting –mid-year updates and end-of-year reports prepared by communities.

Source: *Learning and Evaluation for Vibrant Communities Trail Builders, pages 2-3.*

Having a defined evaluation framework in place can be very helpful. A shared learning and evaluation framework guided the efforts of the thirteen Vibrant Communities initiatives across Canada and was instrumental in the design of a common evaluation approach. Community partners were required to submit their data every six months and an external evaluation team verified the results and developed the results reports. There were a number of sense-making opportunities embedded in the process. These included opportunities for community partners to review their individual and collective results, opportunities for the key partners to review

⁴⁴ See Appendix 8 for Vibrant Communities conceptual framework of change.

⁴⁵ Poverty is about income but also much more. Focusing on solely on income will get results, but may also miss out on addressing other broader determinants of health and wellbeing that are important to local people. A broader focus allows for different strategies to be utilised by a community. Note that poverty line measures selected need to also match the scale of community and data available. For smaller communities, population measures may not be available at the scale required which can hamper eventual progress and success.

overall progress, and opportunities for the community coaching team to assess community progress and determine interventions which would advance community efforts.

More recently, [FSG Social Impact Consultants](#) has released a series of three Guides to Evaluating Collective Impact. These guides provide a useful framework for designing an evaluation process for complex, community change initiatives. Each of the three guides has a different focus and provides samples of indicators and outcomes for the design and evaluation of community change. The guides are:

- [Learning and Evaluation in the Collective Impact Context](#)
- [Assessing Progress and Impact](#)
- [Supplement: Sample Questions, Outcomes and Indicators](#)

In the guides, FSG also provide some key recommendations for an evaluation approach, including:

- continuous learning is critical to collective impact success;
- collective impact partners should adopt a two -part approach to measuring progress and evaluating effectiveness and impact, including what progress the initiative is making and how and why the initiative is making progress;
- understanding that each of the three typical stages of a collective impact change process requires a different approach to performance measurement and evaluation:
 - *Early stage*: focus on understanding the local context and designing for implementation.
 - *Mid stage*: includes evaluating patterns of behavioural change and changes in public policy.
 - *Late stage*: includes evaluating meaningful and measurable changes including population level impacts, merit of the approach and value.
- performance measurement and evaluation are interlinked and bring indisputable value to a collective impact initiative and should be given sufficient funding and logistical support.

The guides also provide a useful set of measures which can be adapted to collective impact change initiatives.

3.4 Designing an Evaluation Approach for New Zealand

It is evident that an evaluation and learning approach is required to assess both the progress and impact of a community change initiative. Designing an evaluation framework early in the process will also help align efforts across different communities. The evaluation approach should provide a basic framework but also allow for local context and variation. A process for consistently collecting data, coordinating learning and sense-making opportunities and external verification will create fidelity in the evaluation. It is also necessary to provide adequate financial resources for the evaluation process. Vibrant Communities employed an evaluation approach that was designed centrally and where local communities contributed their data. This enabled for both a local and national perspective on how change was occurring over time and would be an approach recommended to the PMP.

4. PMP Project – Key Considerations for a Potential Establishment Phase

4.1 Setting up for Success

Based on emerging learning, practice and experience, this section offers some ‘high level’ advice for the PMP to consider if taking a collaborative and collective place-based approach to poverty reduction. It should be noted that the many factors below are inter-dependent, with the overall answer on what to do/what to do first etc requiring additional more detailed scoping once PMP has made its ‘next steps’ decisions.

4.1.1 A Clear Values Proposition and Project Statement

Disciplined implementation of these approaches is relatively ‘un-tried’ in Aotearoa. It will therefore be important for the PMP to frame up a clear (DRAFT) values proposition and outline for the project it envisages. This should include:

- ▶ a clear statement of PMP intent and a commitment to a long term, collaborative investment;
- ▶ partnering aspirations including: collaboration principles, co-design processes, shared accountabilities, risk, evaluation and reporting, collaborative investment frameworks, co-governance arrangements etc; and
- ▶ any important bottom lines/not negotiable matters.

Having a clear project statement will be essential to engage potential partners and stakeholders in early discussions. It would be expected that initial project documentation would be updated and refined following conversations and exploration around the opportunity the PMP offers.

4.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Given the scale and impact JRMT is seeking to make with its PMP investment, investing time into a process that enables early ‘low key’ exploratory discussions with key stakeholders and potential funding partners will be important. As noted above, while important for JRMT to have a clear framework and ‘bottom lines’ going into conversations, there will need to be flexibility for concepts and approaches to be adapted and refined as the project develops.

There are many key sectors and ‘like minds’ that the PMP could usefully engage with at an early stage to explore ideas and build potential alliances, including:

- **Child Poverty Action Group and other Expert/Advisory Groups** – over the last ten years, key in depth knowledge about national level poverty drivers and solutions has been proactively gathered/championed by a range of poverty focused advocacy groups and initiatives. Greater understanding about how national and local place-based efforts could strategically align and be mutually supporting will be important.
- **Central government** – as outlined in section 1, in Aotearoa, central government plays a key role in reducing poverty, especially in terms of directing/mandating supportive broader systems change. It’s highly likely that key cabinet Ministers and Departmental CEOs will be extremely keen to learn about PMP’s innovative approach and how government can contribute. In terms of being part of PMP initiatives however, it will need to be made clear that central government role’s role in local/regional initiatives would be as equal partner – not as specifier/driver. Top level national support and a commitment to ‘working differently’ as part of a PMP-led set of initiatives would make it easier for involvement and innovation from central government agencies at all levels- national, regional and local.

Seeking early alignment and active involvement may also help get to scale (i.e. more communities involved) faster if central government is on board from the ‘early days.’

- **Local government** – seek to strategically engage with the National Council of Local Government NZ to promote the concept and opportunity PMP is exploring⁴⁶. In the next stage, meeting with Mayors/CEOs of interested /invited places would also be important.
- **National social service providers** – many large NGOS (eg. Barnardos, Plunket, Salvation Army and other faith based service providers) are actively delivering services to children and families in many communities. Again, early discussions to seek commitment to the concept and their organisation being part of poverty reduction initiatives in local places once these are determined.
- **NGO Umbrella Networks** – ANGOA, Social Development Partners, NZ Christian Council of Social Services are all nationally linked and networked to a range of social sector community organisations and partners who care about child poverty.
- **Philanthropic Funders** – there are other family foundations and national/regional philanthropic funders who may also be interested in working alongside JRMT in this project. Again, seeking interest and in principle commitments to support/co-invest in funding PMP national infrastructure (learning, convening, coaching etc) and/or initiatives in XX⁴⁷ local communities.
- **Academic /Research Interests** – there may be policy institutes, knowledge centres and academics interested in walking alongside learning generated from the PMP. Their insights and networks could be useful in influencing broader systems change and pedagogy/training and growing the New Zealand evidence base around what works and why.
- **Iwi** – these conversations will be vital as specific place based interest is explored.
- **Business Networks, Trade Unions** and other potentially interested organisations.

4.1.3 Support Structures

It’s likely that there would be a number of structural elements for the initiative that may need to be brought together and ‘assembled’ in concurrent ‘real time’ ways with other partners.

For example, after initial individual stakeholder discussions there may be merit in forming a national advisory group of key project partners/funders⁴⁸ who meet to:

- inform and guide overall project parameters at a national level
- share areas of mutual interest and potential opportunity
- affirm commitment to working together as part of a ‘guiding group’

This group could usefully be brought together at key times to:

- review and reflect on local action, impacts, and learning ;
- strategise around national systems changes needed and best ways to achieve this; and
- discuss scalability potential and/or linkages with other major initiatives /opportunities arising.

The process above would likely be mirrored at a local level to get things started. After this point, JRMT may or may not be directly involved in local change efforts. Collaboration structures should be expected to all look quite different in different places, no attempt should be made to

⁴⁶ Tamarack has produced a great resource ([Cities that Lead Succeed](#)) aimed at engaging local government in poverty reduction initiatives. Key levers identified include leadership, convening stakeholders, providing information and data, cutting red tape.

⁴⁷ XX here referring to the initial number of place based initiatives PMP Trustees decide upon.

⁴⁸ Potential members could include social state sector champions, Philanthropy NZ, Local Government NZ, Child Poverty advocacy groups, community-led development experts, Children’s Commissioner etc.

‘specify’ these in advance as they would be one of the first ‘tasks’ within a local exploration/development phase.

4.1.4 Number of Communities

Large scale and intentional place-based collaborative and collective ways of reducing poverty and inequality are relatively new in Aotearoa New Zealand. There are no rules to follow or models of engagement/establishment that guarantee success. There are a number of factors for the PMP to consider in deciding how many place-based initiatives could practically be supported. Along with community readiness factors outlined in 4.2 below, other key considerations also include:

- funding availability
- the PMP risk profile
- timeframe for establishment phase/need to see results
- the need to pilot/test things before scaling out
- alignment/fit with other innovations happening in Aotearoa
- stakeholder/partner preferences and requests
- scale and desired impact (in large urban settings the volume of people experiencing child poverty is larger, more potential partners may invest to enable scale to be reached, meaning potential return on investment can be higher as a result.)

<i>Number of Communities</i>	<i>Some Pros:</i>	<i>Some Cons:</i>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logistics of one place/one set of relationships to manage etc is attractive. • initial community could be seen as ‘pilot’ that could later be scaled to more communities with knowledge of what works/doesn’t in place to minimise risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large amounts of money up front in a community can negatively impact on collaboration outcomes, surfacing pet projects and money grabs. • risks are not spread eg. if things fails to progress in the chosen community, the overall initiative may fail. • learning may be too place contextual, lessening the impact on systems change etc.
2-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows for some diversity and scale of community change efforts to be trialled. • some consistency in approach able more to be maintained. • manageable number of stakeholder relationships to develop/maintain. • communities can usefully learn from each other. • if the approach fails to ‘take off’ in one place, there are likely others where it will ie. spreads risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some communities who may well benefit/feel ready may miss out. • complexity increases with number of places/partners added. • costs grow with every community added.
6+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project would have large national profile. • greater diversity of project partners/approaches could be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very large number of stakeholder relationships to manage/maintain. • logically challenging/expensive to work across multiple sites – especially to bring

<i>Number of Communities</i>	<i>Some Pros:</i>	<i>Some Cons:</i>
	<p>tested out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'lighter touch' approach may encourage more local experimentation. • easier to demonstrate change/success when larger number of communities involved and learning mined. Also likely that some communities will progress at a quicker scale, enabling other communities to learn from their lessons to improve their results. 	<p>initiatives together, provide focused learning support/evaluation etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JRMT investment could be spread too thin – 'poverty trap.' • could become unwieldy; lose focus if there's too much diversity in communities/initiatives. • Less \$ to influence/leverage other partners and additional investment.

Rather than invest in just one place, learning from Vibrant Communities and other place-based initiatives here in Aotearoa New Zealand⁴⁹ would suggest that there is benefit in developing an investment approach that involves more than one community. Investing in a small range of places to see what works and why will help build New Zealand's child poverty reduction evidence base and also:

- demonstrate learning and success across a number of Kiwi community contexts;
- share and catalyse a broader range of solutions/responses that can in turn inspire action in other communities; and
- grow understanding about developmental evaluation approaches and their value in complex spaces in New Zealand.

4.1.5 Having a goal and deciding where to invest

Again, readiness within local places should be the major determinant for 'place' selection.

Within this however, there are a number of potential options open to the PMP including:

- intentionally choosing a community (ies) it wants to work with/ fund new poverty reduction initiatives in, and invite their participation;
- align/build the PMP initiative into existing related place-based collective/collaborative work already underway or in conceptual stages;
- seek initial expressions of interest from places wanting to be part of a new poverty reduction action cluster, and then invite selected communities to put in formal proposal (clear assessment criteria for participating places would need to be developed for both application stages); and
- an open competitive tender process.

There are pros and cons with each of the options noted above and the level of available resourcing should also factor into any final decision on best establishment approach. To help manage risks, build on existing energy/interest/relationships and avoid competitive tendering processes in the

⁴⁹ For example government initiated collaborative place-based projects for improving local wellbeing outcomes (Stronger Communities Action Fund (CYF led) and Community-led Development Pilots (DIA led) have experienced 'failures' in some communities they were seeking to invest in/partner with.

initial phase in which only a few communities would likely be chosen⁵⁰, it may be advantageous for the PMP to ‘shoulder tap’ communities it is interested in exploring a locally-led poverty reduction journey with. It’s also likely that potential community selections would be informed by initial stakeholder discussions.

The authors do not consider that having a high level strategic goal such as child poverty/reducing inequality need be a barrier to take up or success of place based initiatives. While clearly, working in community-led ways means that ‘top down’ or externally driven solutions cannot be imposed on local places, leadership from ‘outside’ in and of itself is not a bad thing. In the case of the PMP, external leadership from a well respected organisation that initiates and invites local participation to work collaboratively on locally-led solutions on child poverty(a concern that much of New Zealand shares) would be welcomed. In collaborative community-led spaces, it’s not what happens but how that makes the most difference. In the case of the PMP, this means:

- while end goals may be pre-determined, local pathways to achieving them would not be;
- special attention would need to be paid to ‘power issues’⁵¹ not just with JRMT but with other large partner organisations and funders—community-led approaches imply a redistribution of power;
- enabling timeframes and processes that work best for each local place; and
- being responsive and adaptive as both challenges and opportunities arise.

4.1.6 Branding

A catchy national brand could usefully umbrella the overarching concept and assist initial national level discussions with project partners, and locality initiatives that develop. To maximise impact however, it would also be important for place-based initiatives to have the flexibility to brand themselves locally. This would ensure local framing, priorities, and contexts were able to drive communications and engagement strategies locally.

4.2 Identifying Collaboration Readiness

There are a number of elements to readiness for collaboration. Two key aspects are outlined below:

4.2.1 Community Readiness

Local communities are key players in collaboration efforts. There are a number of factors that need to be in place in order for local residents to be active, effective and equal partners at collaboration tables. Just because funders or government partners may be ready to partner with communities, communities may not – and vice versa too! In his [recent article](#) in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Rich Harwood notes that “it is simply not possible to impose a strategy on a community” and identifies some key conditions of civic culture⁵² that assist in meaningful participation by communities in local change efforts⁵³.

The Harwood Institute’s work with diverse comprehensive collaborative initiatives has also captured various stages of a community’s life cycle. These stages in turn will impact

⁵⁰ Vibrant Communities experience shows that it’s prudent to invite a few more communities than the desired number as not all will make it through to partnership phase eg. due to community readiness factors, local match funding difficulties, general timing issues etc.

⁵¹ These may be addressed for example through co-designed principles for working together or additional resourcing to support and enable participation of community partners etc at collaboration tables.

⁵² Harwood defines civic culture as how a community works – how trust forms, why and how people engage with one another, what creates the right enabling conditions for change to take root and accelerate.

⁵³ See Appendix 9 for more detail.

considerably on local community capacity and capability to be effective participants and partners in large scale collaborative change efforts. This analysis encourages honest and critical thinking about where a community is currently at in order to:

- ▶ reflect on realistic timing and staging of any potential large scale new collaboration efforts, especially those led by outside partners;
- ▶ assess the kind of capacity building support that will be needed in any ongoing local development journey;
- ▶ create a baseline assessment of ‘readiness’ which will be useful to reflect against as things progress; and
- ▶ set establishment goals, targets and success indicators that are realistic, including a mix of both aspiration and practical reality.

While a community can be engaged in poverty reduction efforts at any stage below, there will be a much greater chance of success if they are in the catalytic, growth or renew and sustain stages.

Stage of Community Life	<u>Key Characteristics:</u>	<u>Result:</u>	<u>Needed Next:</u>
1. Waiting Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People feel disconnected from decision making processes about public concerns. • Community discussions infrequent and divisive. • Community is fragmented into sectors and silos with little interaction. • While believing change is necessary, negative norms keep them locked into old patterns, finger pointing and blame. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community feels stuck, waiting for someone or something to save them. 	Grow internal strength - structures, relationships, leaders, networks and norms.
2. Impasse Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusted leadership thin on the ground. • Mistrust runs deep, people act for themselves not the community. • Endless battles over money and who takes credit for everything. • People feel powerless to make change. • Urgency builds for action and change to happen. 	Community hits rock bottom and decides either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “enough is enough - we can’t go on like this anymore” OR ○ “nothing can change” and things get even worse.... 	People take time to build new ways of working together to address common concerns.
3. Catalytic stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People discover they share common aspirations. • Small group of people and organisations emerge to take risks, take action, and find new ways of doing things. • Small successes show change is possible – they trigger new hope. 	Community perceived to be on verge of big turnaround.	Small locally-led action sparks take hold and grow. New ways of working spread, new leaders identified and nurtured.
4. Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action sparks continue to 	Positive and hopeful community spirit	Towards end of growth stage,

Stage of Community Life	<u>Key Characteristics:</u>	<u>Result:</u>	<u>Needed Next:</u>
Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expand, networks grow. • Common sense of purpose builds. • Signs of forward progress unmistakable. • Leadership builds at all levels. • People grow confident, take more risks, and are prepared to fail forward. 	evident, a new local story is generated, articulated and celebrated.	people run out of energy, splinter networks form, participation levels drop.
5. Sustain and Renew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New centres of action are grown; new leaders emerge to prevent stagnation and decline. • Community ready to take on more deep seated issues as well as new emerging challenges. 	Emphasis on growing networks and linkages across entire community, especially into disenfranchised parts.	Community ensures benefits of growth enjoyed by all. Attention paid to community tending to its soul – with a focus on hearts, minds and finances.

Source: adapted from *Community Rhythms: Five Stages of Community Life* The Harwood Institute.

If communities are in ‘impasse’ or ‘waiting place’ stages noted above, they can still be engaged in poverty reduction initiatives. However time and more intensive capacity building would need to be built in up front so that the community can be an effective project partner. If these initial steps are not taken, participation is likely to be ‘token’ and essential local ownership of, and leadership within collaborative change efforts, unlikely to be achieved.

4.2.2 Readiness for Collective Impact

While there’s much interest in collective impact models and tools, it is a huge undertaking to get right and do well. The Collective Impact Forum has developed a very useful [assessment tool](#) (see Appendix 10) that communities and potential collaboration partners can test themselves against to see if:

- collective impact is the ‘best fit’ approach⁵⁴ to address that local context and key local issues presenting; and
- pre-requisite conditions for collective impact are all in place.

In many cases it may be that collective impact is the right approach, but that some aspects/conditions for success may require additional time, work and/or investment before a community is actually ‘ready’ to undertake a formal collective impact process. Again, honesty is essential so that the community is not set up to fail.

4.3 Funders leading in a community-led space: roles, frameworks and funding strategies

⁵⁴ Generally speaking, collective impact processes should not be used in the following circumstances: short term simple community issues, where connective capacity between partners is limited, where resourcing to move things forward (people, financial) is limited, where the solution is to provide a programme or service or where the collaboration is designed to just share information.

4.3.1 Strategic role of funders and developing appropriate funding strategies

There are many ways that a funder can play an instrumental role in the community-led space. In Canada, the [J.W. McConnell Family Foundation](#) was an embedded funder⁵⁵ during the ten years of Vibrant Communities evolution, investing around \$10 million. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation provided grants to Vibrant Communities initial six “Trail Builder” communities⁵⁶, hosted periodic funders forums and shaped the dissemination strategy for learning and results. Financial supports were provided in the form of matching funds⁵⁷ for four key phases of local activity:

1. Exploration (\$5,000),
2. Planning (\$20,000),
3. Action-learning (up to \$100,000 per year for four years)
4. Sustainability (up to \$50,000 per year for three years).⁵⁸

This intensive level of engagement is not for every funder. In the case of Vibrant Communities, multiple national partners were involved in strategically ‘holding’ the initiative at a national level. This enabled risk to be managed because the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, with its partners the Tamarack and Caledon Institutes, were able to consider how the strategy was evolving and adjust based on lessons learned and engagement of communities. The Foundation was also able to adjust its investments during the course of the 10 years as new communities were brought on board. They were also deeply engaged in the evaluation and learning agenda and provided direction and input into the evaluation design, both formative and summative stages.⁵⁹

In a webinar on the [Funders Role in Collective Impact](#), leading American social impact consultants [FSG](#) identified that funders of collective impact initiatives needed to shift their mindset to an adaptive approach required for complex issues. In their research, they identified a number of core roles that funders should consider to move forward these collective efforts:

- funders co-creating strategy with their stakeholders;
- funders fund a long-term process of change around a specific problem in active collaboration with many organizations within a larger system;
- funders must be flexible and adaptive to get to the intended outcome with stakeholders;
- funders build the capacity of multiple organizations to work together;
- funders evaluate progress towards a social goal and degree of contribution to its solution;
- funders are held jointly accountable for achievement of goals developed as part of the effort; and
- funders actively coordinate their action and share their lessons learned.

⁵⁵ Embedded funders share four defining criteria. They work in a particular community over an extended period of time; they have direct relationships with a variety of community actors. They view community relationships as key to their work. The relationships are not incidental - they are the primary way they accomplish their work. They also provide other supports beyond conventional grant-making, such as research, training and convening. For more on embedded funding approaches see http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s61_VC_092607.html#experience.

⁵⁶ In Canada each community received \$550,000 i.e. 4 years of funding at \$100,000 per year which they had to match in order to receive Mc Connell Foundation funding, and then three additional years at \$50,000 per year. It should be noted that the average budget for a collective impact initiative in the US is much higher than this.

⁵⁷ National funding supports were designed to complement and leverage rather than replace both financial resources and technical expertise that existed in local places. The concept of matching funding is important here. A co-investment approach increases ownership and buy in, as well as maximising funding pools.

⁵⁸ Gamble, J. Evaluating Vibrant Communities 2002-2010. Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement; pg 18.

⁵⁹ Formative evaluation is typically conducted during the development or improvement of a programme or project. Summative evaluation involves making judgments about the efficacy of a programme or project at its conclusion.

FSG also identified that collective efforts provide funders with the opportunity to amplify impact, leverage funding and drive alignment. Amplifying impact strategies included the involvement of multiple partners working toward long term, systems change, channelling the energy of multiple partners towards a complex problem, and providing opportunities to influence the system from both the inside and the outside by coupling advocacy with action. The leveraging funding strategy enables a more efficient use of funding, encourages joint funding investments from other sectors and funders toward the collective effort and opens channels for additional funding. Finally, the driving alignment strategy includes reduction of duplication through mutually reinforcing activities, increased coordination across service providers and the embedding of social change capacity within the community.

There are, however key considerations that the PMP and other funders of collective efforts should reflect on before launching into collective efforts. Institutional adaptability, a cultural shift and a long term orientation should drive funder thinking, as outlined below:

Institutional Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility to work outside of institutional grant cycles and established internal processes. • Ability to be nimble in pursuing opportunities as they arise without being prescriptive about the outcome. • Willingness to learn new skill sets required – including partnering, facilitation, communication, community engagement and convening
Culture Shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort with uncertainty and adaptability required to engage with community and stakeholders. • Awareness of shift in power dynamic among funders, grantees and other stakeholders. • Openness to funding infrastructure which is often seen as less attractive than funding direct services or interventions.
Long Term Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to achieving progress on a specific issue, regardless of attribution or contribution. • Understanding the time span required for systemic change, making a long term commitment. • Comfort with measuring progress using interim milestones and process measures.

It is clear that funder can create impact and play a key role in collective community endeavours. However, they must understand that community change efforts are more complex and dynamic and require both a long term investment and funder capacity to work in a much more ‘hands on’ way, especially in early phases of development.

4.3.2 Partnering with other funders

While the amount of funding the PMP is seeking to invest is certainly very significant, so is the size and cost of the issue it’s seeking to address. Perhaps the greatest long term opportunity for New Zealand from partnering in this space is not just creating a larger overall funding pool⁶⁰ but of multiple philanthropic and public sector funders and partners fundamentally **changing ways of working and funding together** to create substantial social change. eg. sharing risks, rewards,

⁶⁰ Funder roles will be complementary also, with philanthropic funders more willing/able to support higher risk/innovative projects than governments who are much more risk averse.

establishing co-governance, aligning targets, and managing multiple accountability arrangements. Working differently is best learnt by doing together with others!

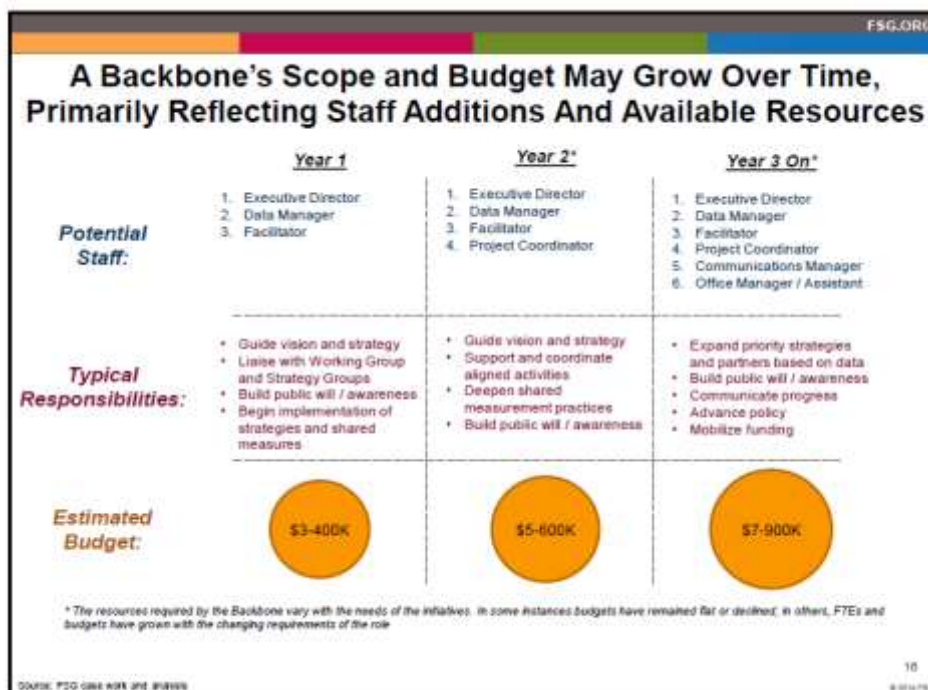
PMP’s potential investment will undoubtedly bring key stakeholders to the table and provide JRMT with an opportunity to both share your innovative vision and lead dialogue on what working differently to reduce poverty and inequalities could look like. What will be important is for JRMT to be clear about:

- overall goals and outcomes you seek;
- key principles and parameters you wish to see ‘wrap around’ this work to maximise potential for success; and
- opportunities for partnering at national, regional and local levels to co-create an effective multi-layered approach that builds on existing knowledge and success factors.

4.4 Estimating the Costs of Collective Action and Benefits from National Level Supports

As noted in section 2, collective impact efforts must have appropriate resources and collaborative infrastructure if they are to make a transformative impact. There is a considerable ‘extra’ cost to this kind of intentional collaboration which needs to be factored into budget and investment strategies from the start.

Below are examples of collective impact budgets currently used in the United States and Canada, and while not always directly transferrable to a New Zealand context,⁶¹ give an indication of the investments being made in these processes internationally.



It should also be noted that major grants from national anchor funders require ‘matched’ funding⁶² from local places which frequently comes from local/regional government, and

⁶¹ It should be noted that intervention scales and populations are much larger in North American contexts. Interestingly, collaboration costs don’t necessarily increase dramatically for larger sized communities. In Vibrant Communities experience, larger communities were able to leverage additional resources locally to get their work done.

local/regional philanthropic sources. Whether matched annual contributions of more than \$100,000 could be generated in some New Zealand communities would need to be tested. The match funding principle however is an important one for PMP to build in, as local investment would also strengthen community ownership of outcomes/success because there is 'local skin (funding) in the game.'

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Every Backbone Needs Funding; Backbone Budgets Can Range From Around \$400K to Upwards of \$800K

Illustration of a Backbone's Budget:

Expense Category	Budget (\$)		Description
	Low	High	
Salaries	80,000	155,000	1 FTE Executive Director
	55,000	100,000	1 FTE Facilitator/Coordinator
	65,000	100,000	1 FTE Data/Operations Manager
	25,000	65,000	5-1 FTE Admin. Support
Benefits	45,000	84,000	At 20% of salaries
Professional Fees	90,000	105,000	Consultants, R&E, Recruiting, Data Collection
Travel and Meetings	7,000	30,000	Workshops, events, retreat
Community Engagement	0	35,000	Space rental, youth stipends
Communications	36,500	90,000	Reports, materials design, paid media
Technology	0	4,900	In kind hardware, software, IT
Office	0	74,000	In kind/paid rent, utilities, supplies
Other	0	6,500	Staff training, miscellaneous
Total Expenses	403,500	849,400	Covered by grants and fees

Source: Adapted from Strive Network, TSYA, & CCER

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Case Example: Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction

	Year 1	Year 2*	Year 3 On*
Potential Staff:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Director Researcher Administrative Staff Tamarack Coach 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Director Manager, Community Engagement Administrative Staff Tamarack Coach Tamarack Evaluator 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Director Manager, Community Engagement Administrative Staff Project Coordinator Tamarack Coach Tamarack Evaluator Contract Staff
Typical Responsibilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide vision and strategy Liaise with Working Group and Strategy Groups Build public will / awareness Researches issue and develops poverty matrix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide vision and strategy Support and coordinate aligned activities Develops shared measurement practices Build public will / awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand priority strategies and partners based on data Build public will / awareness Communicate progress Advance policy Mobilize funding Renewal after 5 years
Estimated Budget:	\$1-250K	\$3 - 500K	\$3 - 500K

*Tamarack provided coaches for each of the communities to support their development. A common evaluation framework was also developed by Tamarack and an external evaluator coordinated the data collection, review and learning process.

Source: FSG case work and analysis

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Compared to America, the local budget in Canada is typically smaller – and in a New Zealand context, depending on size of the participating community, may be smaller again. However in the case of Vibrant Communities additional support was provided by Tamarack to participating

⁶² Matching funds are those paid in equal amount to funds available from other sources. In some cases the match can include not just funding but also value of volunteer contributions and other 'in kind' or pro bono forms of support.

‘Trail Building’ communities through community coaching, policy coordination, administration and external evaluation support. These were essential to the creation of the shared learning system which was developed across the multiple cities engaged in the Vibrant Communities Canada effort. Building a shared learning approach through a community of practice led to a number of important impacts as identified in the report [Inspired Learning: An Evaluation of Vibrant Communities National Supports 2002 – 2012](#).⁶³

“This report concludes that the national supports were a good investment in money, time and energy. Supports were important to Trail Builder’s local poverty reduction efforts, and as community dialogues around poverty gained momentum, supports helped consolidate local awareness and knowledge around poverty reduction and ultimately contributed to the emergence of constructive conversations about poverty.

Vibrant Communities (VC) supports invigorated local processes by injecting energy and inspiration. They also enabled the creation of a shared language that afforded local participants a common base for communication. When coupled with financial incentives, this common base provided the foundation for a new learning orientation. Collaborative and community based learning translated into valuable strategies in multiple communities. The supports helped communities to access the ideas and experience base of other communities, facilitating learning about specific challenges or issues, or new program or policy ideas.

The supports provided an ongoing reinforcement of VC principles and contributed to a shared identity that brought broader recognition and legitimacy to the overall approach. Trail Builders reported several ways in which the supports influenced their approach and furthered the overall progress of their community’s efforts. Without the supports, the role of the organization and the nature of its relationship to the community would have been different.

The link between the experience of the Trail Builder communities and the policy expertise of the Caledon Institute was ground breaking. It was a first in Canada for a social policy institute to maintain such a lengthy and intense period of connection with an on-the-ground poverty reduction initiative. The result was policy work that was grounded in community practice and perspective. Tangible support like helping with problem solving, sharing of program or policy initiatives and providing evaluation assistance works in combination with more intangible elements of the supports: theories of change, shared language and options for governance. There is a high level of skills required to effectively deliver comprehensive supports: facilitation, writing, supporting networks and building relationships require sophisticated expertise. When a high level of engagement in exploring and learning is desired, funding is a critical incentive and mechanism for enabling robust participation.”

Source: *Inspired Learning*; page 9.

⁶³ Gamble, J. *Inspired Learning. An Evaluation of Vibrant Communities National Supports 2002-2012*. Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement. 2012.

5. Conclusions and Advice

In New Zealand awareness is definitely growing about the impact of inequality and child poverty not just on society today, but on the potential of our children to thrive tomorrow. Child poverty is a complex issue. Positive change will require creative solutions and responses right across the system (government, business, individuals, families, communities etc) and will be required at local, regional, national and international levels.

Collective and collaborative place based approaches while high risk, show promising potential to positively impact on poverty levels and inequality in local communities and are worthy of further consideration in a New Zealand context. Evidence to date from these approaches shows the importance of three key preconditions to success – influential champions, a strong sense of urgency for change and adequate long term anchor funding.

Given the Peter McKenzie Project's poverty reduction goals, the JR McKenzie Trust now has a unique opportunity to make a strategic and catalytic investment. Being a highly respected and long standing philanthropic organisation, the Trust is in a good position to be an influential champion and trusted partner and funder of a new place-based approach to reduce child poverty and inequality. However, taking on this type of catalytic role needs to be carefully considered and the Trust confident that it is able to meet the institutional adaptability, cultural shift and a long term orientation prerequisites that have to drive funder thinking and investment in this space.

Understanding success factors and being aware of the risks is a great strategy to mitigate and minimize the risks inherent in collective place based initiatives. This allows you to consider which risks you would be willing to take on, which you would like to avoid at all costs, and proceed to build a Kiwi place-based collective impact approach with these in mind. There is risk in both taking action and not doing anything at all. Ultimately, this is the choice that JRMT must make.

If you decide to go ahead, we recommend:

- adapting and building on learning and experience from the Vibrant Communities Canada initiative;
- bringing together a national advisory group of key stakeholders, experts and potential partners to scope and explore the opportunity;
- consider inviting a small number of communities to concurrently work with you on developing an appropriate framework for a new national initiative that fits the New Zealand context; and
- investing not just in place-based initiatives, but in additional integrated national learning and support and systems change components.

Glossary

Term or phrase	What it means...
Action-reflection	A way of working that means you act or take action and then stop to think what happened as a result. Did what you thought would happen actually happen – and if not why? What worked or didn't work? Then you apply those learnings to what you do next.
Adaptive learning	Using learning to adapt action plans in an ongoing way so that each phase makes active use of 'learned' knowledge about what has or hasn't worked before.
Attribution	Where an initiative or action directly caused the observed outcomes.
Backbone organisation	A coordinating body or group who supports collaboration partners in a range of ways such as convening meetings, supporting agreed work programmes, establishing shared measurement systems, seeking/holding funds on behalf of the group, communicating with key stakeholders etc.
Burning platform	An issue or approach that's broadly and strongly supported within the community.
Capacity building	The process of developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, structures, policies, practices and resources that individuals, families, organisations and communities need to survive and thrive.
Community coaching	Action reflection and problem solving processes that build both on the community's own knowledge and experience and that of outside mentors.
Comprehensive community initiative	Involves a range of initiatives that span multiple sectors which collectively seek to address identified community priorities and goals.
Contribution	Where the initiative or action helped to achieve the outcomes observed.
Developmental approach	Rather than prescribed in advance, strategies and best courses of action emerge as people work together.
Developmental evaluation	A process of thinking, planning, implementing and evaluating that is continuously and simultaneous, so that actions and interventions can be adapted on an ongoing basis, thus ensuring a higher chance of success.
Empowerment	The process of giving confidence, skills, support and power to others so they can actively shape, influence, lead and be part of what happens in their place and how.
Hapū	Groups of extended families who lived in close proximity within part of a tribal boundary.
Iwi	Maori tribe.
Strengths based	An approach that assesses the inherent strengths of a situation, place or person and then develops actions that build on these strengths.
Systems change	The formal rules, policies, structures etc that govern how things operate.
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document signed between the British Crown and Māori in 1840.
Tight-loose approach	Some aspects have fixed or definite parameters, while other aspects have very flexible parameters that can be moulded and shaped through working together.
Whanāu	A Māori concept that encompasses a broader understanding of family, including blood relations, friends and community members who act like family and undertake family roles.

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Appendix 1 - About the Knowledge Review Authors

Inspiring Communities (www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz)

The Inspiring Communities Trust was created in 2008 by a small group of passionate New Zealanders who believe that community-led development (CLD) is critical to New Zealand's future. Established to support and strengthen the emerging CLD movement in Aotearoa, Inspiring Communities' vision is for an Aotearoa where all communities flourish - connected positive communities with healthy people, environments and economies.

Inspiring Communities' mission is to catalyse positive change through effective community-led development, with our core activities involving a mix of:

- promoting CLD and effective CLD practice that will contribute to positive outcomes and broader systems change
- connecting people, projects and places to share and showcase CLD ideas, learning and evidence to build CLD capacity and capability to tackle problems and opportunities, both locally and nationally.



While initial establishment of Inspiring Communities was enabled by a four year grant from The Tindall Foundation, the organisation operates a mixed source funding model with a broad range of other funders and supporters also now co-investing in a range of national and regional activities. Inspiring Communities also undertakes a range of consultancy and enterprise functions.

Five years on, Inspiring Communities represents both a national network of around 3000 groups, organisations and communities, committed to working and learning more about CLD and a small virtual [organisation](#) (approx 2 FTE) working both nationally and in Auckland and Bay of Plenty regions. Inspiring Communities is also supported by a [Board](#) comprising CLD passionate people from a diverse range of places, interests and sectors.

Tamarack – an Institute for Community Engagement <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/>

Founded in 2001, Tamarack is a charity that develops and supports learning communities to help people collaborate and to co-generate knowledge that solves complex community challenges. Our deep hope is to end poverty in Canada.

Our Vision & Mission

Our Vision: Building a connected force for community change

Our Mission: Collaboratively creating vibrant communities by engaging learning leaders.

Our Aspiration: Together, we will create vibrant communities by: building community; leading collaboratively; and, reducing poverty.

Our Inspirations:

1. Whatever the problem - Community is the answer - *Meg Wheatley*.
2. Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has - *Margaret Mead*.
3. Wikipedia - The free encyclopaedia that anyone can edit.

Our Motto: Better Together

Our Founders: Alan Broadbent and Paul Born.

Appendix 2: New Ways of Working Required to Address Complex Issues

This excerpt taken from [Collective Impact](#), Kania and Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011.

“The scale and complexity of the U.S. public [education](#) system has thwarted attempted reforms for decades. Major funders, such as the Annenberg Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Pew Charitable Trusts have abandoned many of their efforts in frustration after acknowledging their lack of progress. Once the global leader—after World War II the United States had the highest high school graduation rate in the world—the country now ranks 18th among the top 24 industrialized nations, with more than 1 million secondary school students dropping out every year. The heroic efforts of countless teachers, administrators, and [nonprofits](#), together with billions of dollars in charitable contributions, may have led to important improvements in individual schools and classrooms, yet system-wide progress has seemed virtually unobtainable.

Against these daunting odds, a remarkable exception seems to be emerging in Cincinnati. Strive, a nonprofit subsidiary of Knowledge Works, has brought together local leaders to tackle the student achievement crisis and improve education throughout greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. In the four years since the group was launched, Strive partners have improved student success in dozens of key areas across three large public school districts. Despite the recession and budget cuts, 34 of the 53 success indicators that Strive tracks have shown positive trends, including high school graduation rates, fourth-grade reading and math scores, and the number of preschool children prepared for kindergarten.

Why has Strive made progress when so many other efforts have failed? It is because a core group of community leaders decided to abandon their individual agendas in favor of a collective approach to improving student achievement. More than 300 leaders of local organizations agreed to participate, including the heads of influential private and corporate foundations, city government officials, school district representatives, the presidents of eight universities and community colleges, and the executive directors of hundreds of education-related nonprofit and advocacy groups.

These leaders realized that fixing one point on the educational continuum—such as better after-school programs—wouldn’t make much difference unless all parts of the continuum improved at the same time. No single organization, however innovative or powerful, could accomplish this alone. Instead, their ambitious mission became to coordinate improvements at every stage of a young person’s life, from “cradle to career.””

Appendix 3: Vibrant Communities Change Indicators

Cities Reducing Poverty – Change Indicators 2013

Indicator	Measurement
Participation – Learning Community	Level of participate in CoPs, tele-learning, online profile activity, action teams
Performance – Leadership Roundtable	<p>Value of learning community to roundtable</p> <p>Convening Organization in place</p> <p>Multi-Sector Leadership Roundtable in place</p> <p>Community Partnerships established</p> <p>Establish Key Community Priorities/Common Agenda</p> <p>Municipal Poverty Reduction Strategy in place or is Poverty a priority for your municipal council</p> <p>Financial and In-Kind resources in place – budget</p> <p>Theory of Change/Framework for Change developed</p> <p>Community Partners able to articulate role, improve their work and deepened level of trust</p> <p>Community Members increase awareness, shift attitudes about poverty and become involved in issue</p>
Progress	<p>Provide budget, describe challenges, forecast, # of funders</p> <p>Narrative – which elements are still relevant and which don't, what adjustments are you planning to make</p> <p>Narrative</p> <p>Narrative + # of change agents, # of opportunities/tools to shift attitudes, # of mechanisms used to raise awareness – provide samples, # of media stories and # of public events</p>
Population	<p># of inner resources added, # of people using emergency supports, Civic participation, expanded networks, increased social opps, Health, life skills, financial literacy, education, employment income, reduced expenses</p> <p>Median After Tax Income + Low Income Measure (after-tax) for total population, Lone Parent Families, Couples, Singles</p> <p>Working poor population as % total population + child poverty rate</p> <p>Income Inequality Measure + ratio of debt to income</p> <p># of changes in community assets (increased affordable housing)</p> <p>Narrative + # of people engaged, # of low-income people involved</p> <p>Narrative, + # of external policy maker partners</p> <p>Narrative, + # of advocacy efforts</p> <p># of substantive policy changes</p> <p># of changes to funding process (multi-yr, collaborative, etc)</p> <p># of changes to level and use of resources</p> <p># of new mechanisms established to create impact</p> <p># of changes to system (eg. Employment working with housing)</p>
Policy/System Change – Municipal and/or Provincial Level	<p>Change in Personal Assets, Physical Assets, Social Assets, Human Assets, Financial Assets</p> <p>Change in LIM (data for all communities annually provided by CCSD – using tax filer data)</p> <p>Changes in Community Level Assets</p> <p>Community engaged in policy change process</p> <p>Policy makers are increasingly aware of issue</p> <p>Policy makers increasingly advocate for changes to the system that are aligned with goals</p> <p>Policies change and are aligned with goals</p> <p>Changes in funding resources and mechanisms</p> <p>Enabling collaboration/collective impact</p> <p>Comprehensive Approaches to Poverty Reduction</p>

Appendix 4: Collective and Collaborative Place-Based Initiatives - some Related/Commonly Used Terms

There are a range of terms in use for collaborative and collective place-based approaches including:

- **Community-led development:** a common New Zealand term used to describe place-based processes of working together 'in place' to create and achieve locally owned visions and goals.
- **Comprehensive community initiatives:** largely a North American term which describes larger scale place based projects, often focused in areas of high social need. They incorporate people and place based strategies to address multi layered systems change and build social capital through encouraging participatory and collaborative approaches.
- **Funder Collaborative:** groups of funders who pool their resources to address a specific issue.
- **Integrated service planning and coordination:** groups of agencies focused on aligning service planning.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives:** voluntary activities by stakeholders from different sectors around a common theme.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** formed between government and private sector organizations to deliver specific services or benefits.
- **Social Sector Networks:** groups of individuals or organizations fluidly connected through purposeful relationships to share information and carry out short term actions.
- **Urban or community renewal projects:** focus on redeveloping run down or poorly functioning urban areas. With a focus on revitalisation of urban infrastructure, processes sometimes (but not always) include a strong people/community building focus too.

Appendix 5: About Backbone Organisations

With multiple stakeholders, multiple funders, multiple strategies and projects involved in strategic place-based collaboration, skilled convening, and connecting, communicating and catalysing resources are an essential requirement. Organisations that undertake these supporting functions and provide collaboration infrastructure have become known as back bones.

While they vary in size, scope, and approach, back bone organisations are typically focused on “improving social outcomes by organizing cross-sector groups of partners to transform an often inefficient, fragmented system.” Backbone roles can be undertaken by funders, new or existing not for profit organisations, a government agency or it can be shared between organisations.

While there roles and functions change during different phases of a collective impact’s journey, they typically involve a combination of the following functions.

Six Core Functions of a Backbone Organisation:

- ▶ Guide vision and strategy
- ▶ Support aligned activities
- ▶ Establish shared measurement practices
- ▶ Build public will
- ▶ Advance policy
- ▶ Mobilise funding

“Backbones must balance the tension between coordinating and maintaining accountability, while staying behind the scenes to establish collective ownership”

Common Characteristics of Effective Backbone Leadership

Visionary “In addition to setting the agenda items, she has a very clear vision of where we need to focus and has the ability to drive focus towards those.”

Results-Oriented “This is a really results-oriented staff, and they are constantly pushing the community and all of us to not just talk about something, but to act on it.”

Collaborative, Relationship Builder “[Her] style is a collaborator, consensus builder, she works very well with partners. We do a good job with making everyone feel like they’re important.”

Focused, but Adaptive “[There is a] combination of laser focus, a willingness to listen to almost any idea, [and an ability to] cut to the chase and not act on every idea. They are so focused on being sure that whatever is done is focused on the end goal.”

Charismatic and Influential Communicator “[She] is extraordinarily articulate and passionate about her work and...she is a true leader in the field.”

Politic “Probably a little political savvy and more of an ability to filter what they say than I have. [He] understands when to listen.”

Humble “[He] sees himself as a ‘servant-leader’.”

For more on [backbone organisations](#) see the FSG Collective Impact Website.

Appendix 6: Stories from the Vibrant Communities Field

(Material below sourced from http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/vc/VC_Evaluation.pdf)

The First Group of Trail Builders

The original intent of the Vibrant Communities initiative was to provide financial and technical support to six Trail Builder communities willing to test out the Vibrant Communities principles for three years. Some detail about the first six communities and links to some of their stories can be found below:

1. The Quality of Life CHALLENGE: Engagement, Collaboration, and Inclusion

An initiative that grew out of the sponsors' and volunteers' previous commitment with collaborative roundtables on a variety of social issues in a region with 13 urban and rural municipalities (the B.C. Capital region) and just under 500,000 residents. With a strong emphasis on inclusive leadership – particularly for people with experience living in poverty – the group focused on stimulating collaborative ventures in the areas of sustainable incomes, housing, and social networks from 2003 to 2007, and then on the larger issue of affordability from 2008 to 2010. The group's most significant initiatives to date include the Employer CHALLENGE (an effort to get employers engaged with hiring people living with low and limited income in Victoria BC), the creation of a Regional Housing Trust Fund, and shaping income support policies.

Caledon Stories:

Initial Story – <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/555ENG.pdf>;

Follow-up Story – <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/825ENG.pdf>

2. Opportunities Niagara: Connecting the Dots, Untying the Knots

A diverse group of leaders from a variety of sectors worked across a sprawling region in southern Ontario with 600,000 residents spread out over 12 municipalities. In the midst of a continual economic transformation of the region that began with free trade in the 1980s, the group's core strategy was to complement existing efforts by “connecting the dots and untying the knots” for any group with a poverty reduction strategy in the region.

Opportunities Niagara played an important role in the creation of a large affordable housing project, brokering funds for homelessness projects, an innovative transportation-employment program, early work on living wage strategy for the region, and exploration of a “smart card” to facilitate access to transit and other services. The group closed its doors in 2008 for financial reasons. However, regional government has continued to invest \$1.5m in poverty reduction efforts.

Caledon Stories: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/590ENG.pdf>

3. Vibrant Communities Saint John: Dismantling the Poverty Traps

Vibrant Communities Saint John emerged out of existing poverty reduction work by a local business network, a social planning council, the municipality, and a network of grassroots activists who had the ambitious goal of reducing the community's level of income poverty by one-half in ten years. The network's original focus on housing, early childhood development, and education to employment eventually expanded to include a focus on targeting neighbourhoods with high incidence of poverty. The group has contributed to four main streams of programmatic and policy change activity and was instrumental in encouraging the province to create a provincial poverty reduction strategy.

Caledon Stories: Initial Story – <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/577ENG.pdf>

Follow-up Story – <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/783ENG.pdf>

4. *Le Chantier in Saint-Michel: Tackling Poverty and Social Inclusion*

Vivre Saint-Michel en Santé, a community revitalization initiative in the Montreal neighbourhood of Saint-Michel, has created a new offshoot organization to work specifically on projects that will address poverty and social exclusion. Launched in March 2004, Le Chantier de revitalisation urbaine et social (Le Chantier) is helping create a sense of optimism among the residents of this densely populated, culturally diverse part of Montreal. This includes coordinating the work of “partnership clubs” responsible for developing and implementing 34 projects identified by the community through extensive consultation and ongoing community meetings, which include new local employment opportunities with Cirque du Soleil, increased connectivity between community members, increased investment and resources in their communities.

Caledon Stories: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/576ENG.pdf>

5. *Vibrant Communities Edmonton: Building Family Economic Success*

A diverse group of leaders and organizations launched its work in 2005 to help 1000 families – particularly working poor immigrants, lone parents, and Aboriginal people – achieve “family economic success.” With an emphasis on workforce development, family economic supports, and community investment, the group has played the lead role in launching projects – including Make Tax Time Pay (encouraging families to complete tax forms so they are eligible for tax transfers), financial literacy workshops, creating asset development programs (eg. savings accounts) , and the Job Bus to get people to work places. All have led to direct improvements in the lives of residents and influenced the policies and practices of local and provincial organizations.

Caledon Stories: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/571ENG.pdf>

6. *Vibrant Communities Calgary: Awareness, Engagement, and Policy Change*

An effort by non-profit and volunteer leaders – with the support of government representatives and individuals from the private sector – to reshape the systems underlying poverty in Canada’s wealthiest city. This includes using traditional and social media to raise awareness of poverty and its root causes and costs among Calgary residents, as well as engaging broad local participation –including people living with low income – in discussions about issues related to poverty (e.g., low voter turnout, minimum wages, etc.). The group has been active, and influential, in shaping provincial income disability policy, a municipal reduced transit pass, and a living wage policy for the city.

Caledon Stories: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/567ENG.pdf>

Great Story Telling Resource

Part of the success of Vibrant Communities has been their ability to tell stories that communicate issues and local action in ways that engage the hearts and minds of both local people and key decision makers. Learning from this process has also been compiled into a great resource:

[Vibrant Communities Storytelling Guide: creating memorable messages Vibrant Communities.](#)

The resource shares learning about best ways to tell stories, along with great poverty reduction stories that make you think.



specific neighbourhoods. To date, the Foundation has invested more than \$8 million dollars in community-focused poverty efforts.

By now, three powerful community agents – the Social Planning and Research Council, the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation – were honing in on poverty. The core pressures for a groundswell of community change were intensifying.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction – Getting Started

In late 2004, Joe-Anne Priel and Carolyn Milne saw the importance of bringing ‘unusual suspects’ together to tackle poverty in their city. They reached out to Mark Chamberlain, a local business entrepreneur and (then) chair of the board of the Hamilton Community Foundation and asked him to chair a community conversation about poverty with senior leaders in Hamilton.

“That first meeting was incredibly important,” says Carolyn Milne. “We had talked to Vibrant Communities for advice and Paul Born made a crucial suggestion. We were struggling with how to define poverty for the purpose of the meeting. He advised us to put the question to the group. So we did. We asked each person around the table to describe what poverty meant to him or her. As each person – most of them well-off and in positions of influence – described their definitions of poverty, we discovered that many of them had lived through periods of poverty earlier in their lives. It was an emotional sharing of perspectives that set the tone for the group. The work, though it would take place on a city-wide stage, was intensely felt and understood on the personal level.”

At the end of the conversation, Mark Chamberlain asked the leaders if they would be committed to tackling poverty and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR) was formed.

A Comprehensive Approach – An Aspiration and Framework for Change

By 2005, Roundtable members recognized the necessity of developing a community plan to tackle poverty. *The Hamilton Poverty Matrix*, commissioned by the HRPR, provided a demographic portrait of poverty’s impact on individuals and families in the community. Using the low income cut-off as a statistical measure, the Poverty Matrix reported that nearly 20 percent of Hamilton residents lived in poverty.

Specific sub-groups experienced even higher levels of poverty: children under the age of 14 and seniors (24 percent), the Aboriginal community (37 percent) and recent immigrants (50 percent).

Meanwhile, the Roundtable consulted widely in the community, gathering information about poverty reduction work already under way, the service gaps that existed and instances where collaboration could be enhanced. Though Roundtable leaders saw a lot of energy being spent on poverty reduction efforts, rates were not improving. They were convinced another poverty

Table 1: The Poverty Matrix

A general framework to examine poverty statistics among the five demographic groups experiencing the highest incidence of poverty.

		Demographic Groups*				
		Work-limiting disabilities	Recent immigrants	Unattached individuals aged 45 to 59	Lone parents	Aboriginal people
Level of Poverty	At-Risk					
	Working (Waged) Poor					
	Temporarily Unemployed					
	Dependent Poor					
	Homeless					

* Peter Hicks indicates that 54% of all persistently poor families in 1997 were found in these five categories. See "Preparing for Tomorrow's Social Policy Agenda" (SRDC Working Paper Series 02-04, November 2002).

reduction program or project would not make a significant difference - they needed to involve the whole community in developing a comprehensive plan.

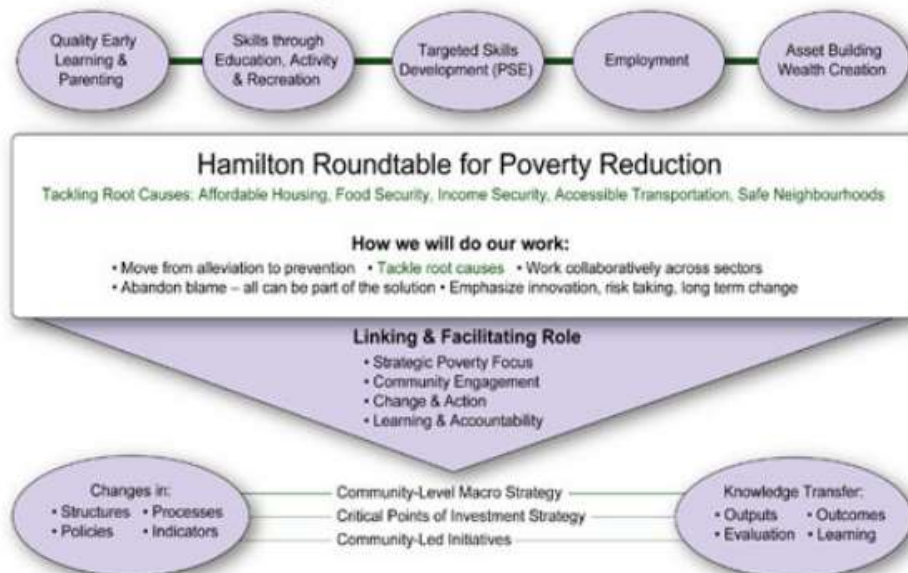
In June 2006, the HRPR launched *Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child: A Change Framework*. It invited citizens and organizations to make a commitment to get personally and professionally involved in reducing poverty for Hamilton children and their families.

The Change Framework identified five critical points in the lives of children and their families during which increased investment could have beneficial impacts:

1. The early years (0 to 6 years of age)
2. Elementary school years
3. High school and post-secondary
4. Movement to employment; and
5. The accompanying period of wealth or asset-building.

HRPR members believed that if investments could be made in each of these critical points, the community could change the trajectory for its most vulnerable citizens.

The Aspiration: Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child



The HRPR reached out to existing collaborative planning tables in the community – Hamilton Best Start Network, Boards of Education poverty initiatives, the Skills Development Flagship, Jobs Prosperity Collaborative and the Affordable Housing Flagship. These groups agreed to work with the Roundtable to leverage the results and determine shared community outcomes.

The Roundtable adopted three overarching strategies to drive community change.

1. Policies and systems that kept people living in poverty.
2. Working in partnership with other planning tables and key institutions on shared outcomes.
3. Invite as many partners as possible to share in the community effort to tackle poverty.

The HRPR's comprehensive approach to poverty reduction recognizes that everyone in the community is both "part of the problem of poverty and also part of the solution."

The Roundtable played a pivotal role, connecting the elements of the various strategies, acting as a communications hub, strengthening ties among the collaborative partners, reporting on community progress, and advancing community knowledge about poverty reduction. Central to this was a dynamic staff team and volunteer leadership that created synergies among the various elements.

In June 2009, the HRPR was invited as a witness to the Senate Sub-Committee on Cities to discuss their results. The HRPR showed both that a city could make progress on poverty reduction and the important role of the federal and provincial governments could play in advancing what could be achieved at the municipal level. Locally the HRPR could report:

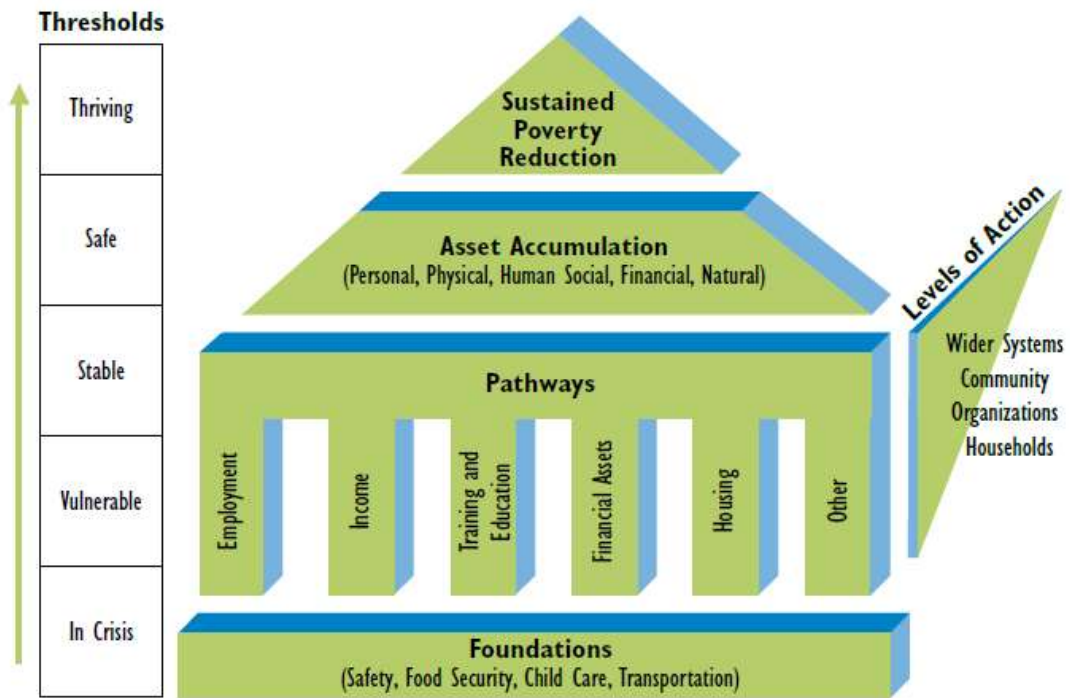
- the HRPR and its partners had affected **102,000 individuals in Hamilton living in poverty** by providing a broad range of supports.
- a reduction in the poverty rate from 20 percent to 18.1 percent resulting in **6,000 fewer citizens living below the low income cut off** at a time when other communities experienced an increase
- 175 community solutions leading to **increased household and social assets for over 47,000 children, youth and their families** including increased income, access to child care, increased access to skills training, affordable transit passes, new employment opportunities and increased access to housing
- focused investment in **neighbourhood leadership** by the Hamilton Community Foundation, United Way, City of Hamilton and Roundtable as a key strategy for citizen engagement
- increased collaborative planning across individual organizations and sectors had led to **more effective services** for low-income citizens in Hamilton
- more than \$10 million **invested in local poverty reduction priorities** through the Hamilton Community Foundation, United Way, City of Hamilton, corporate investments and new investments by the provincial and federal government
- **unprecedented media coverage** of the issue and impact of poverty on Hamilton
- a focus on **influencing policy change** including the Ontario Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy which had increased the income and assets of children, youth and their families.

Tom Cooper, Director of the Roundtable, summed up these efforts: “Hamilton has vastly increased its capacity to tackle community issues.”



Appendix 8: Vibrant Communities Change Framework

Comprehensive Framework



Source: Tamarack – [A compendium of poverty reduction strategies and frameworks, 2009.](#)

Appendix 9: Dimensions of Public Capital – Conditions for Change

The Tangible Dimensions of Public Capital

An Abundance of Social Gatherings.....that enable people to learn about what is happening in the community and begin to develop a sense of mutual trust. These gatherings form the seedbed for public capital (eg. Sporting events, organised pot lucks, community festivals etc)

Organised Spaces for Interactions....where people can come together to learn about, discuss and often act on community challenges. These spaces help a community to begin to identify and top existing resources – and at times, new resources to address concerns (churches, neighbourhood associations, recreation centres, schools).

Catalytic Organisations....that help engage people in public life, spur discussion on community challenges and marshal a community's resources to move ahead. These organisations help lay the foundation for community action but don't act as the driving force (the newspaper, chamber of commerce, community foundations, not for profits).

The Links Between Tangible Dimensions

Strong, Diverse Leadership.....that extends at all layers of a community, understands the concerns of the community as a whole and serves as a connector among individuals and organisations throughout the community. Range: elected officials, ministers, teachers, neighbourhood association members.

Informal Networks and Links....that connect various individuals, groups, organisations and institutions together to create a cross fertilisation effect of experiences, knowledge and resources. People carry and spread ideas, messages and community norms from place to place (teachers talk education at church, bring insights from church to schools, business people raise issues at civic clubs, one group gives a presentation to members of another group)

Conscious Norms for Public Life....where a community has ample opportunity to think about and sort through its public concerns before taking action. People play an active role in helping decide how the community should act.

The Underlying Conditions of Public Capital

Community Norms for Public Life.....that help guide how people act individually, interact and work together. These norms set the standards and tone for civic engagement (put children and family first, take personal responsibility, connect self-interest to larger community interest; the positive tends to win out).

A Shared Purpose for Community....that sends an explicit message about the community's aspirations and helps reinforce that everyone is headed toward a common goal. "We're all in it together", "We want to grow as a community", "We want our public institutions to thrive."

Source: The Harwood Institute [Community Rhythms Report – Five Stages of Community Life](#)

Appendix 10: Collective Impact Readiness Assessment

This assessment tool can be accessed from <http://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/readiness-assessment>.

This readiness assessment is designed for a group considering using the collective impact approach to determine if collective impact is the right approach for the social issue, and the extent to which the conditions for success are in place for the initiative to succeed. This tool is most valuable when completed by a group of stakeholders committed to addressing a specific social or environmental issue, and the results and implications are discussed together. This assessment is comprised of three sections, intended to be discussed in sequence.

1. Is Collective Impact the appropriate approach for pursuing your goals?

There are many forms of collaboration, each suited to address different types of social and environmental issues. Collective impact as an approach is appropriate for addressing complex, large scale social and environmental issues at scale. And, because collective impact requires significant investment of time and resources, it is important to determine if the approach makes sense for your work before embarking on the journey.

2. Do the pre-conditions for Collective Impact success exist?

In studying and working with organizations interested in doing collective impact work, much of initiatives' success is dependent on have the right conditions and context for the work. Three key elements have emerged as critical pre-conditions: the presence of influential champions, sufficient resources to support the planning process and collective impact infrastructure, and the urgency to address the issue in new and different ways. For practitioners that do not have these pre-conditions in place, we strongly suggest focusing on cultivating these elements before beginning a robust collective impact planning process.

3. Are the nuts and bolts for collective impact already in place?

If your group has determined that collective impact is the right collaborative approach to use, and the pre-conditions are in place, we suggest taking stock of the extent to which the following elements are in place to being your work.

1. *Collective Impact is an approach to pursuing your collaborative's goals if ...*

...A core group of partners is committed to making a measurable impact on a specific social or environmental problem.

...Making progress addressing this social issue at scale (i.e., across the state / region / city) requires the involvement of nonprofits, philanthropy, the public sector, and the private sector.

... Making significant progress against this issue requires systems change, and greater alignment and connection between many organisations.

...Successfully making progress requires both scaling effective work across organizations, as well as identifying new innovative solutions.

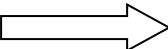
If the answer to the statements above is "yes," continue on to the next section of the assessment.

If the answer to the statements above is “no”, consider a different change approach from collective impact.

2. Are the pre-conditions for Collective Impact in place to set your initiative up for success?

a. Are there influential champions or catalysts that can bring cross-sector leaders and beneficiaries together and begin a collaborative planning process?

Yes

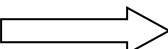
No 

The following resources provide helpful guidance for identifying and cultivating champions and catalysts for your work:

- o Channelling Change [article](#)
- o [Memo](#) on Cultivating Influential Champions

1. Are resources secured (financial, human capital) to support the planning process and potential backbone infrastructure for at least one year, in addition to a long term (5 year) commitment to the issue?

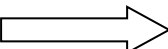
Yes

No 

Please reference the [resource development/fundraising items](#) in the Collective Impact Forum Library.

2. Is there urgency for addressing the issue in new and different ways, demonstrated by a frustration with the existing situation by multiple actors including policymakers and funders?

Yes

No 

Please reference the memo on [Creating Urgency](#)

As mentioned above, it is critical that the following three pre-conditions for collective impact success are in place before beginning a collective impact initiative.

For practitioners that do not have these pre-conditions in place, we strongly suggest focusing on cultivating these elements before beginning a robust collective impact planning process.

If you have the preconditions for collective impact in place, you can now take stock of the presence of the “nuts and bolts” for collective impact.

3. Are the Nuts and Bolts of Collective Impact Already in Place?

Is there a history and culture of collaboration amongst potential organizations in the collective impact initiative?

Yes, history / culture of collaboration

- Limited history / culture of collaboration

Is there a neutral convener who has the respect of the stakeholders who must come together to address the issue?

- Already in Place / Committed
- Under consideration, or not yet sure

Is there an existing backbone support structure, or a logical organization identified by multiple key leaders that could effectively take on this role?

- Already in Place / Committed
- Under consideration, or not yet sure

Do relationships exist that will enable engaging a broad, cross-sector group of actors to lead the collective impact initiative?

- Yes / Already engaged
- Currently pursuing, or limited potential

Are stakeholders committed to using data to set the agenda and improve our work over time?

- Yes / Data is available and stakeholders use it to make decisions
- Some or limited use of data

For more resources on Getting Started in Collective Impact see:

<http://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/getting-started>