BIG IDEA

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

for

Silicon Valley

POWER FOR THE SOCIAL SECTOR

Adult Schools, Community Colleges, Universities, Makers & Sellers, Community Based Organizations, Government, Investors, Companies, Media, Venture Philanthropy, Activists, Workforce Intermediaries, Faith-Based Organizations, Individuals, Organizers, Neighborhoods, Other Social Networks

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WORKFORCE INSTITUTE
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## The BIG IDEA:

Weave collective impact (CI) conditions and principles of practice into the South Bay Consortium for Adult Education (SBCAE) while training SBCAE specialists in collective impact in year one. In year two, the trained SBCAE specialists will disseminate collective impact conditions and practice to the other 70 consortia throughout California. The catalytic result of CI technical assistance and professional development will demonstrate that equity is a superior growth model to power the future economic engine of a competitive California.
ISSUE

The contributions of Silicon Valley have transformed life on Earth for billions of people. The mythic Silicon Valley that ignites the imaginations of so many people around the globe is an actual place for some of us. We live and work here and we regularly commute past some of the most iconic logos of our time. Our families are here. Our aspirations are here and so are our struggles. We have the problems that all communities have; but, symptomatically, those problems exist and persist in a marvel of technological, economic, and intellectual abundance.

While we are fortunate to have many of the ingredients to solve our problems, in many ways, Silicon Valley is a tale of two cities. Our technological advances have outpaced our social advances without sufficient transfer to mitigate inequality. Opportunity and aspirations differ greatly among our diverse communities. The abundance which has accrued to some has left others marginalized realizing little gain from a growing economy.

This status quo forecasts compromised competitiveness due to shortages of skilled labor. Importing talent is not sustainable and shipping jobs to other markets further marginalizes opportunity for our growing diversity. It is urgent that we get this right.

It may be hard for us to imagine today, but in 1930 90% of urban America had electricity but 90% of small towns and rural America remained in the dark. Part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal for America included the Rural Electrification Project, which created opportunities and incentives for building needed infrastructure. The results accelerated the ascendancy of the American economy and arguably catalyzed the trajectory for what would become known as Silicon Valley.

Inequality in Silicon Valley (and beyond) represents a 21st century version of 20th century America where many had insufficient power to fuel their participation in a larger economy. In the same way we can now look back on the rural America of the 1930s, generations to come may look back on our time and see that our lives are marked by tremendous connectivity for some (which facilitates abundance from providers, services, systems and policies).

That abundance is disconnected for others by providers, services, systems and policies that are isolated by regulation, institutionalized racism, and mindless collusion as well as by intentional design to sustain the status quo. We must invest so that the diversity of Silicon Valley in the 21st century becomes our power for our future vitality.

For some time now, the tech sector has generated billions in revenue mastering product design for end-users but it is still cutting-edge for the social sector to imagine the power of human design that connects across organizations and systems to generate resources and opportunity more equitably.

Can the greatness of Silicon Valley’s tech industry transfer to its social sector? Will the sustainability of our global competitiveness depend on this transfer to serve and cultivate the rich diversity of our communities?

Yes! Collective Impact (CI) is a structured form of collaboration designed to solve complex societal issues. CI holds promise as the 21st century “electrification” we need to shift our disparate providers, services, resources and policies from disaggregated identities and functions to an aggregated alignment powerful enough to produce the results we need. The catalytic result will demonstrate that equity is a superior growth model to power the future economic engine of a competitive California.
SBCAE represents an opportunity to demonstrate the power of collective impact regionally then scaled to California statewide. What follows is a description of SBCAE and the Big Idea which includes a scalable and replicable demonstration project that could be California Higher Education’s 21st century equivalent to rural electrification in the 20th century.

The South Bay Consortium for Adult Education is a Silicon Valley collaboration of five adult school districts and four community colleges designed by California Assembly Bill 104 (Adult Education Block Grant) to implement a regional plan to expand and improve the delivery of adult education. This one consortium serves over 30,000 people in Silicon Valley and the need is even greater. Seventy-one such consortia now exist in California. SBCAE is the largest in Northern California. While California community colleges are intended to be the open access portal to higher education opportunity, there are thousands of people for whom college is out of reach. These include a disproportionate number of immigrants, English language learners, low income families, and those with less than a High School diploma.

Any effort to build education pathways to tap the rich diversity of California for a highly skilled workforce, must include Adult Education.

Before realizing their dream to attend a community college, many Californians could benefit from Adult Education as a stepping stone but they cannot access the opportunity because of multiple barriers. Mitigating barriers to Adult School access and then creating structural alignments between the Adult Schools and the community colleges are essential components of facilitating access to opportunities in a highly skilled workforce that reflects the diversity of California. SBCAE is created and funded to do exactly that. Many of the elements for SBCAE success are in place.

While elements exist for SBCAE to function as a collective impact initiative, little to no technical assistance for collective impact is available beyond what one can read or learn about at the occasional conference. It is as though lawmakers, policy advisors, educators and others built a great car and even funded gas stations but forgot the gasoline. Like America in 1930, which lacked electricity in 90% of the country, the “power” sufficient to transform communities has not been fully realized. Collective Impact promises an organizational infrastructure which enables disparate groups to realize outcomes which are disproportionate to what could be accomplished individually.

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COLLECTIVE IMPACT  Background and Significance

A 2015 study by the Pell Institute documented a 45-year trend showing that family income not only predicts educational attainment, it does so now more than 45 years ago. Bachelor’s degree seekers from the highest income families are 99% likely to receive a Bachelor’s degree by the time they are 24 years old. Degree seekers from the lowest income families are only 19% likely to do the same. Despite our best intentions and hard work, what we are doing is not working. Tinkering on the margins of change with boutique programs for the few can demonstrate effective practice but it does not scale to systemic change.

I am as optimistic as I have ever been that we will get this right. We are learning and discovering interesting and proven approaches to how we experience and manage networks. Catalyzing networks for social change is part of effective practice in venture philanthropy. Understanding social network theory’s relationship to educational change informs education policy. Practical applications now exist to help us better navigate the networks that we have been commonly referring to as “education” and the “economy”.

One such application is Collective Impact, a termed coined by Kania and Kramer. Their article on the topic was routinely published in 2011 in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, but the reception has been anything but routine. The implications for the real change hoped for by so many are significant. Both policy-makers and practitioners have taken note.

Collective Impact has informed the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods, Strive Networks, and United Way Bay Area Regional SparkPoint Network.

The Aspen Institute hosts the Collective Impact forum, which includes among others:

Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions
FSG
the Forum for Youth Investment
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Living Cities
PolicyLink
the Tamarack Institute
United Way Worldwide.

The term Collective Impact certainly means what it implies, but its practical application requires certain ingredients. What follows is a description of the five conditions of collective impact and principles of practice to successful implementation.
COLLECTIVE IMPACT  5 Conditions Identified by FSG

According to FSG, “While our understanding of how to put Collective Impact into practice has deepened and expanded the five conditions outlined in the original article Collective Impact remain the core of the approach.”

Common Agenda

All participants have a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.

Shared Measurement

Agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported, with a short list of common indicators identified and used across all participating organizations for learning and improvement.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinating a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

Continuous Communication

Frequent and structured open communication across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

Backbone Support

Ongoing support by independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative, including guiding the initiative’s vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing funding. Backbone staff can all sit within a single organization, or they can have different roles housed in multiple organizations.

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COLLECTIVE IMPACT Principles of Practice to Successful Implementation
Presented by the Aspen Institute Collective Impact Forum

- Design and implement the initiative with a priority placed on equity.

- Include community members in the collaborative.

- Recruit and co-create with cross-sector partners.

- Use data to continuously learn, adapt, and improve.

- Cultivate leaders with unique system leadership skills.

- Focus on program and system strategies.

- Build a culture that fosters relationships, trust, and respect across participants.

- Customize for local context.

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NOTES ON FUNDING COLLECTIVE IMPACT
FROM THE STANFORD SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW

Creating a successful collective impact initiative requires a significant financial investment: the time participating organizations must dedicate to the work, the development and monitoring of shared measurement systems, and the staff of the backbone organization needed to lead and support the initiative’s ongoing work.

This is a shift that we foreshadowed in both “Leading Boldly” and our more recent article, “Catalytic Philanthropy,” in the fall 2009 issue of the Stanford Social Innovation Review.

- In the former, we suggested that the most powerful role for funders to play in addressing adaptive problems is to focus attention on the issue and help to create a process that mobilizes the organizations involved to find a solution themselves.

- In “Catalytic Philanthropy,” we wrote: "Mobilizing and coordinating stakeholders is far messier and slower work than funding a compelling grant request from a single organization.

Funding collective impact initiatives costs money, but it can be a highly leveraged investment. A backbone organization with a modest annual budget can support a collective impact initiative of several hundred organizations, magnifying the impact of millions or even billions of dollars in existing funding.

The social sector, however, has not yet changed its funding practices to enable the shift to collective impact.

Until funders are willing to embrace this new approach and invest sufficient resources in the necessary facilitation, coordination, and measurement that enable organizations to work in concert, the requisite infrastructure will not evolve.

by John Kania and Mark Kramer (From FSG fsg.org)

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Workforce Institute
uses equitable-economy research and policy to catalyze strategies that diverse communities use to thrive in a globally competitive economy.

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