Wai - Research

# Collective Impact

A Literature Review

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Collective Impact Learnings
A Literature Review

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Wai-Research

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# ABSTRACT


This literature review has been undertaken with the express aim of highlighting the development and expansion of collective impact as a popular emergent framework for addressing complex social issues, through encouraging high quality, cross sector, data informed collaboration. Despite being in existence only six years, the collective impact framework has fostered a revolution in the way that organisations throughout the world approach social change efforts.

Cross sector collaboration itself has a long and rich history, and collective impact builds upon that by incorporating the added strengths of data collection and analysis, in order to drive change forward.

It became apparent early in the search process that there is a remarkably small volume of published scholarly material concerning collective impact. Searches of online databases yielded some useful findings, but by far the bulk of the material sourced, read and summarised for this review, was gleaned from more general google searches, and also from the Collective Impact Forum. This grey literature provided a great number of highly insightful observations and criticisms of collective impact, many of which have been incorporated into improving the framework as it evolves. However the lack of scholarly research and publication on collective impact is a concern, especially given the widespread anecdotal evidence that suggests that there are some aspects of the theory and application that are still not well understood by practitioners.

This review aims to give a wide ranging international perspective on current and past trends identified within the literature, and also to explain in depth, some of the more pivotal aspects of the framework whose importance has perhaps not been emphasised clearly enough. It is hoped that this will inform and encourage collective impact practitioners and initiatives to delve deeper in terms of understanding exactly what makes this framework different and potentially more effective from previous methodologies, whilst at the same time enriching the knowledge base around what collective impact actually is and how it works.

Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust has been a significant thought leader in the implementation of collective impact here in Aotearoa, and has joined together with six regional partners to form the Te Pae Herenga o Tamaki Collective, in order to investigate innovative ways of utilising the collective impact framework to improve social outcomes for Māori. The Ngā Pou o Te Whare o Waipareira Initiative is their first pilot project employing the collective impact structure, and learnings gained to date from this venture are to be published alongside this review, as a resource for other groups contemplating or undertaking their own collective impact initiatives.

# INTRODUCTION

The term *Collective Impact* first entered the lexicon as the title of an article published in the 2011 winter edition of the Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR). The authors, John Kania & Mark Kramer are principals of consulting firm FSG, which has been a recent thought leader in the areas of social change theory and in the formulation of new and innovative methods of creating social value through focusing on the intersection between the work of non-profit, business and government sectors.

The article conceptualises collective impact as "the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration" Kania and Kramer (2011). It goes on to illustrate how the concept is applied through reference to a number of successful US initiatives.

Kania, Hanleybrown & Splansky Juster (2014) updates and further defines the five conditions stipulated by Kania and Kramer (2011) which initiatives must meet to be considered examples of collective impact:

- **Common Agenda:** All participants share a 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:** All participating organizations agree on the way success will be measured and reported, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, co-ordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
- **Continuous Communication:** All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
- **Backbone Support:** An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative's shared vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilising resources.



Hanleybrown, Kania & Kramer (2012) also prescribes three additional 'pre-conditions' that are essential to enabling the launch of a successful collective impact initiative:

- **An Influential Champion** (or small group of champions): A special type of leader who is passionately focused on solving a problem but willing to let the participants figure out the answers for themselves.
- **Adequate Financial Resources** (to last for at least two to three years): Generally in the form of at least one anchor funder who is engaged from the beginning and can support and mobilise other resources to pay for the needed infrastructure and planning processes.
- **Urgency for change** (around an issue): Has a crisis created a breaking point? Is there the potential for substantial funding? Has a fundamentally new approach been identified? There must be a catalyst to create the necessary sense of urgency to persuade people to come together in search of a new approach.

Collective impact is a framework that is based on the concept of working collaboratively across multiple sectors, organisations and actors with the aim of *creating* an approach by consensus, as opposed to adopting or adapting solutions that are pre-existing. Action is based around implementation of a common agenda for change that is agreed to by all participants, and is derived from gaining a deep understanding of the problem in question, through lengthy and thoughtful deliberation.

Subsequent insights gained form this process are then formulated into an action framework which participants work towards, using data intentionally as a driver towards innovation and results. The application of collective impact requires initiatives to work simultaneously from an organisational perspective and also at the systems-change level. This must be accomplished whilst implementing all five conditions of collective impact in a focused and measured way, in order to drive change forward.

The collective impact framework works best when the issue being tackled is both complex and dynamic, and is unable to be solved by traditional program based interventions. Weaver (2014) describes these types of issues as "having multiple root causes, there are many 'players' at the table, and [that] there may not be a direct line between intervention and result".

Collective Impact is currently it is being applied to a myriad of different fields and applications including, but not limited to; the areas of health, education, the environment, poverty reduction and community development. It is therefore important to note that each collective impact initiative will develop within its own unique context and hence will be a function of all the variables involved, such as policy, available resources, pre-existing levels of knowledge and expertise, organisational and interpersonal dynamics and other factors. In each application, it is the interplay between these factors and the varying skills and resources of each participant that will be the greatest determinant as to how the initiative unfolds.

# BACKGROUND

Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) was set up in 2000 by Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter, together with lawyer and venture capitalist Mark Kramer. By amalgamating each other's skills and backgrounds in business strategy and philanthropy respectively, they set out to help foundations develop more effective strategy.

They had collaborated the previous year on the article *Philanthropy's New Agenda: Creating Value* which was published in the Harvard Business Review Porter & Kramer (2000). This article suggested that foundations could increase their reach and impact, by focusing on the adoption of more rigorous strategies, that aimed to create value beyond the dollar amount of their grants. This describing and measuring of positive externalities would later evolve into the concept of social value, an important building block in the subsequent development of collective impact.

It is important to make it clear from the outset that the collective impact framework as outlined in the original article by Kania and Kramer and those that followed, is based on the extrapolation of ideas and principles gleaned from pre-existing collaborations that "the authors themselves were not involved in creating or implementing, but rather observed after their development" Wolff (2016). This is relevant because it places FSG at some distance from the people and organisations that actually design and deliver programmes within the social sphere, and it goes a long way towards explaining why collective impact is very light on reference to research and learnings gained from previous studies, frameworks and wider community experience. Having said that, this degree of detachment perhaps explains how FSG were able to derive their critical insight in being able to draw together the essential elements and 'reveal' collective impact to the world. As the poet Khalil Gibran put it, "is not the mountain clearer from the plain?". Indeed Paul Born from Vibrant Communities Canada has written extensively, detailing the difficulties that their organisation had encountered in their efforts to clearly and lucidly describe how the structured collaborative model they had developed was fundamentally different from prevailing orthodoxies, and writes that "The collective impact framework was a better articulation of the process we had discovered and were promoting in our work" Bourgeois and Born, (2014).

It must be acknowledged that the notion of collective impact was not an epiphany that miraculously arose in the minds of a few people, it is a point of reference on the continuum of collaborative endeavour, which has a long history and is innately humanist in its underpinnings. Moreover, the practices that are embodied in the term 'collective impact' arose organically over time, through the concerted efforts of many people and through a process of trial and error driven by expediency.

There is a rich multi-disciplinary literature generated by communities working together to create collaborative change, and despite lack of reference to this by FSG, collective impact is largely predicated on, and must necessarily be understood against the backdrop of important scholarship by the likes of the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Community Change, John McKnight & John Kretzmann, from the Institute for Policy Research, who developed the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) methodology, as well as the important contribution of theorists David Chrislip and Jay Connor; towards the understanding of leadership in the collaborative environment (Wolff, 2016).

Collective impact is premised on the idea that large scale social change is only achievable through broad cross sector co-ordination, as opposed to the singular efforts of individual organisations or sectors; which are described as examples of isolated impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011). This approach seeks to eliminate or a least minimise what Kania and Kramer regard as the greatest obstacle to social progress – fragmentation of effort. This is where multiple agencies and organisations from different sectors work independently towards their goals, often without reference to the areas where they crossover and often in competition with each other for available funding and recognition.

They argue that this fragmentation leads to a huge amount of needless and wasteful duplication and holds back the net sum gain of the whole field. By taking a collaborative and also holistic or 'whole of systems' approach to solving structural or other seemingly intractable large scale social problems, collective impact seeks to build strong coalitions of those willing to set aside the agendas of their own organisations in order to investigate new ways of working together to tackle the largest and most pressing issues facing society today. By approaching collaboration with the added strengths, rigours and discipline of the collective impact framework, it is hoped that new, more potent and sustainable solutions will emerge.

# METHODOLOGY

This review has been organised thematically in order to highlight, discuss and summarise significant issues identified in the literature. It charts the dialogue between criticism and ongoing development of the collective impact framework, and is intended to stimulate thinking and debate around emergent areas of interest to collective impact practitioners.

It focuses on highlighting salient insights from those writers with positive experience of successful initiatives, as well as theorists who are contributing to the broader understanding and application of the framework. A significant secondary emphasis is devoted to examining the work of writers who are critical of collective impact, and whose work has highlighted flaws in both its philosophy and application.

The literature is largely dominated by case studies and other forms of evidentiary testimonial. Boumgarden and Branch (2013) note that many of these mention challenges to the implementation process, however most literature, but have chosen not to dwell too heavily or replicate too many details of specific initiatives. Many writers lament the lack of scholarly research and publication on the topic of collective impact. Wolff (2016) in particular is scathing in his assessment of the failure of FSG to reference prior learnings, research, and other forms of community experience in the wider field of collaboration. It is clear from the literature that this omission has made it significantly more difficult for practitioners to understand the background, and hence the developmental context of collective impact, and has subsequently led to many examples of very shallow attempts at implementation. Another clear insight gained from the literature, is that organisations must have a strong understanding of, and commitment to the principles of collaboration, preferably with at least some experience in this area, before considering the adoption of a collective impact framework.

It is of significant note that the great majority of important literature on the topic of collective impact has been published, and is also available, online. Specialist websites such as the Collective Impact Forum serve as a valuable conduit to both the dissemination of writings and also to their discussion, especially through the comments sections of their blogs. Many writers active within the field of collective impact, maintain either personal or organisational blogs devoted to discussion of social change, and in many respects the most insightful, topical and illuminating material can be found there. This reflects the changing modality of discourse in general, and speaks in particular to the fast paced environment for expression and commentary afforded by the instantaneous nature of the internet.
It is important to note however, that there is still a vital role to be played by academic researchers and third party evaluators, in terms of understanding and structuring the evolution of collective impact moving forward.



# DISCUSSION
## THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT REVOLUTION

### EVANGELISTIC ADOPTION

Almost all writers on the subject of collective impact, express surprise at just how quickly the idea, first elucidated in a short five page article in the SSIR, has come to dominate discourse and organisational outlook throughout the non-profit and charitable sectors.

Cabay and Weaver (2015) describes the response to the original Kania and Kramer article as a "revolution in the way governments and funders thought about and approach community change", Carson (2015) depicts it is as "a tidal wave of change that asks community and fundraising leaders to act more collaboratively and start addressing some big issues", and even Hanleybrown et al. (2012) describes the response as "overwhelming".

Many writers attribute this to an environment that is fertile, if not hungry for new thinking and ideas about how to address institutional change, issues that are deeply entrenched and often intergenerational in nature, and also what they perceive as the exacerbation of these through the accelerating pace of inequality. Hanleybrown et al. (2012) suggests that the economic recession and also broad disillusionment with the ability of governments to solve society's problems are also factors "causing people to look more closely at alternative models of change". Henig, Reihl, Houston, Rebeall & Wolff (2015) points out however that the decision to collaborate is often based on more mundane factors such as resource dependence and transaction cost economics.

Esteve, Boyne, Sierra and Yga (2013) suggest that successful collaboration is less likely when problems are complex and there is little agreement on how to approach them, however as more initiatives reach a stage of full functionality there is a growing body of evidence that disputes and seemingly disproves this assertion. On the other hand there are a concomitant number of examples of misapplication of the collective impact framework towards issues that are neither complex nor adaptive in nature. In these instances the significant extra costs and rigours of employing a collective impact approach cannot be justified, even when these initiatives have yielded some success (Cabay & Weaver, 2015) . Weaver (2014) draws a clear distinction in pointing out that not every collaborative effort needs to adopt a collective impact framework as a way of organising, and that this approach is best reserved for initiatives focused on a large scale, *complex* and *adaptive* need, problem or opportunity. Not every collaborative effort can operate effectively in a complex system that requires a high degree of commitment and co-ordination, and if the issue being focused on is not large scale, complex or adaptive, then there may not be an imperative to do so. Weaver (2014) illustrated this by referencing "some very worthwhile collaborations that are necessarily more narrowly focused, with shorter term goals and/or a relatively small number of partners, and believe that these types of initiatives do not require a collective impact approach.

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The literature suggests that the way in which organisations, stakeholders and other interested parties have reacted to the introduction of collective impact thinking, has been largely dependent on the degree to which they were already disposed to collaborative working practices. Other highlighted factors include organisational capacity, strategic expertise, data and information handling capacity and existing funding & policy relationships. Some have looked at collective impact as an opportunity to work better and smarter, whereas others have seen it as an interruption and impediment to delivery of the essential services their work entails (Vu, 2015). Wolff (2016) states that "Collective impact is a great tool for those who already have power, but it is less suitable and more challenging for those with relatively little power who are working to improve the lives of people and their communities". He goes on to point out that in light of the "uncritical widespread adoption and funding of collective impact by government agencies and foundations, it is necessary to examine and assess its merits much more critically".

Several writers express the sentiment that collective impact is an attempt to make the 'third sector' more 'business like', as "business-like is presumed to be more efficient and effective than an organisation would otherwise be" (Bourgeois & Born 2014). There appears to be an inherent paradox in the fact that collective impact highlights collaboration at the expense of competition, and yet promotes a results or outcomes based framework, more typically aligned with competitive business thinking (Boumgarden & Branch, 2013). This is perhaps reflective of the way in which collective impact seeks to link centralised planning with coordinated implementation; therefore promoting accountability to performance, rather than process.

### A NEW OPERATING SYSTEM FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Hartley, Sorenson & Torfing (2013) makes the observation that over successive decades, the role of government in social service provision has shifted from being seen as the solution to the problem, to being the problem itself, and now to that of being a partner in the problem solving ecosystem. This is a valuable discernment, as it gives a political, philosophical and historical context to the way in which our expectations about normative interventions in the social landscape have evolved. Cabay and Weaver (2015) remarks that, "Collective impact is now a permanent – even dominant part of the landscape of community change". Together with other enthusiastic commentators, they express the hope that collaboration through collective impact will aid organisations and the communities they serve to help knit together the social fabric in new and sustainable ways.

Paul Born, President of the Tamarack Institute writes, "I believe that our current systems for social impact are already highly effective, that our leaders are deeply talented, and that the money we spend on creating a more equitable society is used remarkably well. But what is now needed is a shared commitment: to be willing to do things differently, to rethink how we engage a diversity of perspectives in our social change efforts, and as a result, embrace the many untapped assets that lie dormant or under-utilized in our communities, and focus all of these on the same goals"(Bourgeois & Born, 2014). Collective impact seeks to identify assets already in existence within communities that may be underutilised or even unknown to organisations working within the same space. This represents a significant deviation from more orthodox service based interventions, which typically focus on building assets within organisational structures and boundaries.



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One of the core innovations of collective impact is the shift towards finding, leveraging and incorporating these pre-existing assets within solutions, thus increasing efficiency and performance (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). Born goes on to elaborate that

> "Collective impact resonates so deeply for people because it articulates what so many of us have been looking for and have discovered, often with desperation, as a way to achieve deep impacts on complex community issues. As a sector,we were tired of running programs that we knew made the lives of the poor just a little bit better. We wanted fewer people living in poverty".

This statement speaks to the heart of the innovative and transformative potential of collective impact, as well as its emergence through a process of discovery. It is instinctively and also intuitively attractive because it capitalises on the notion that positive change is much more easily attainable by the efforts of many and multiple 'hands' working in concert.

Kania and Kramer (2011) state that the "complex nature of most social problems belies the idea that any single program or organization, however well managed and funded, can single-handedly create lasting large-scale change". This view is predicated on the notion that organisations are often absorbed in dealing with particular *consequences* of the problem (that lie within their compartmentalised organisational boundaries) and how they manifest in people's lives, instead of the actual root causes. By harnessing the synchronicity of an inter-agency, multi-sector approach, collective impact focuses on creating a co-ordinated strategy that works at a systems change level to align all program based interventions towards addressing the underlying causative factors of the central problem.

There are in fact numerous examples, especially concerning government policy, where large scale, sometimes deleterious change has been the result of a single program. There are also many instances where organisations can justifiably lay claim to discovering a 'break-through' solution that was able to be replicated and successfully applied at scale. The issue therefore would seem to hinge on the relative likelihood of achieving sustainable positive change, and the magnitude and potential scalability of that change. On both counts, case studies cited by FSG clearly show that the co-ordination and alignment derived from the collective impact approach, is leading to both quantitative and qualitative gains in outcomes and impact. Boumgarden and Branch (2013) points out that this is dependent on two factors: whether or not the focus of a collaborative centralises effectively, and whether or not they identify the *right* solution.

Hanleybrown (2012) proffers that the five conditions of collective impact offer a more powerful and realistic paradigm for social progress than the prevailing model of isolated impact in which non-profit, business and governmental organisations work to address social problems independently. They argue that it is the urgency of the call to action that is paramount, and advocate the need to persuade people and organisations to come together, versus waiting for collaborations to develop organically. They recognise that initiatives must build on existing collaborative efforts already underway to address the issue, and describe how collective impact is most effective when it honours current endeavours and engages established organisations rather than attempting to create entirely new solutions from scratch. They point out that the two key elements that enable collective impact initiatives to withstand the challenges of bringing so many different players into alignment and holding them together are the backbone organisation and the establishment of cascading levels of collaboration.

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The Collective Impact Forum is an online network and community of learning, established by FSG in partnership with the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions. It now has over 18000 members and has a range of resources to help and guide coalitions looking to implement collective impact initiatives. It runs a blog that serves as the central apparatus for discussion concerning collective impact and includes posts by all of the major thought leaders on the topic. In many respects this blog encapsulates the 'whole world' of collective impact. It ranges from the polarities of; detailing and disseminating emergent practises and ideas to further the reach and understanding of collective impact, right through to hosting and discussing some of its most strident criticism. In effect, this lifts the discourse largely out of the academic realm and places it squarely within the fast paced world of the internet. This is clearly evidenced by the very low volume of scholarly published material concerning collective impact, and the very large amount of grey literature (Wolff, 2016). Henig (2015) makes the point that

> "while many cross sector collaborations have ended up faltering before they reached their high goals, they nonetheless accomplished good things at the height of their arc, and some left imprints that continue to provide benefits today".

Whether they are ultimately successful or not, it is hoped that the development of collective impact initiatives will lay down patterns and habits of interaction that will stand the community in good stead in terms of its ability to muster collective responses in the future to challenges not yet identified.



# DISCUSSION
## THINKING AND WORKING DIFFERENTLY

### UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES & NUANCES OF THE PROBLEM

As we know, no social issue exists in isolation. They are interconnected and interdependent, and therefore proponents of collective impact believe that sustainable solutions must involve multiple partners working at multiple levels across multiple services. This entails essential progress being made towards understanding the complexities and nuances of the problem and thinking and working differently, by using data intentionally as a driver towards innovation and results.

The application of collective impact requires initiatives to work simultaneously within two spheres; from an organisational impact perspective, and also through a systems level lens, whilst at the same time, employing all five conditions of collective impact to drive change forward. Weaver (2014) considers collective impact to be a paradigm that can easily be adopted, but warns that the simplicity of a collective impact approach belies the challenges that are embedded in the execution of working collectively.

The collective impact approach reaches its maximum utility when attempting to create large scale social change through addressing complex social problems that are *adaptive* in nature. Kania & Kramer incorporate the work of leadership theorist Ron Heifetz, which identifies the distinction between technical problems and adaptive problems:

> "Technical problems are well defined: Their solutions are known and those with adequate expertise and organizational capacity can solve them. The problem is clear, the solution depends on well-established practices, and, given enough money, a single organization can implement the solution. Adaptive problems are entirely different. They are not so well defined, the answers are not known in advance, and many different stakeholders are involved, each with their own perspectives. Adaptive problems require innovation and learning among the interested parties and until the stakeholders change their outlook, a solution cannot emerge" (Heifetz et al., 2004).

In *Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity* (Kania & Kramer, 2013), the authors identify three specific strategies to exercise in dynamic contexts: "collective vigilance, collective learning and collective action". Collective impacts' rules of interaction create an alignment within complex relationships that when combined with shared intentionality, allows previously imperceptible resources and solutions to emerge. It is the ongoing shared vigilance of multiple actors that empowers participants to see and act on emerging opportunities. Continuous real time feedback allows collectives to focus on the changes in relationships between people and organisations over time. This *developmental evaluation* creates an ongoing feedback loop that drives collective learning and decision making. This in turn provides the platform on which all participants are able to benefit directly and immediately from discoveries made in any area of the initiative, as all knowledge is disseminated instantaneously through the ongoing feedback loop.

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Kania and Kramer (2013) recognise that there is a tension between remaining flexible and responsive, whilst consistently staying centred on the end goal of collective action. They believe that adherence to these three strategies will help to thrust initiatives from talking to action. Weaver (2014) agrees and further considers that effective implementation "requires people to be willing to work and do things differently, as they very consciously move towards collective impact". Karp and Lundy Wagner (2016) notes that at a personal level, collective impact requires participants to employ a certain self-reflexivity in terms of unpicking any potential barriers they may encounter within their own outlook (and established practices) that may impede their willingness to embrace new ways of thinking and acting.

Kania and Kramer (2013) asserts that the "greatest obstacle to success, is that practitioners embark on the collective impact process expecting the wrong kind of solutions". They argue that those in the social sector are conditioned to discerning discreet solutions of a technical nature, however these often do not take into account the complexity and unpredictability of real world conditions. Resources and innovations are often already in existence, but are yet to be recognised, as they are emergent rather than predetermined, and can only be ascertained through interactions that follow a path of discovery, alignment and learning. With collective impact, the emphasis is on organisations and individuals *learning together,* in order to identify ways of working collectively that combine emergent solutions with intentional outcomes. Henig et al. (2015) points out that with collective impact, causal chains between policy levers and improved outcomes are often indirect, speculative and sensitive to both context and implementation quality. Weaver (2014) concurs with this view, noting that "there may not be a direct line between an intervention and a result".

Kania and Kramer (2011) makes the important distinction that it is the coordination of *differentiated* activities by a number of partners, delivered through a mutually reinforcing plan of action that ultimately leads to improved outcomes. Likewise Easterling (2013) suggests that it is the aligning of the work of *disparate* partners that is key to the promise of collective impact. Henig et al. (2015) makes the fundamental judgement that "collaborations must try to build relationships of social capital, mutual trust and reciprocity", noting that these are like machine oil for collaboration. On the other hand they express scepticism towards the view that *everyone* can benefit from collective impact, and believe that this may be counter to the 'doing more with less' theme, that has been a central assumption of the original rationale for collaboration. They also perceive an element of danger that exists through incentivising organisations to be seen as operating at the 'cutting edge' of new methodologies. They believe that this can lead to the substitution of symbolism and the appearance of action, for the difficult, expensive and time consuming work of building organisational capacity and focus on sustained structural change.

Flood, Minkler, Lavery, Estrada & Falbe (2015) writes that "Health promotion and public health are rooted in understanding and addressing the primary causes of health problems, and collaboration has long been a crucial component of these efforts". They go on to detail how, despite encouragement from funders, the chasm between funding availability and public health need, continues to encourage single entities to compete for limited financial support. As a consequence they conclude that "testing new theoretical approaches and building the evidence base on the effectiveness of cross-sector collaborations, is therefore essential".



# DISCUSSION
## THINKING AND WORKING DIFFERENTLY

Starting with the population level result the initiative aims to achieve, collective impact then works backwards to determine who needs to be involved at the collective table. Zohdy, Samali, Laidler-Kylander & Simonin (2016) considers it essential that initiatives act broadly and inclusively in relation to contacting potential collaborators. They point out that it is the synthesis of different viewpoints and experience that is crucial to the development of new solutions. Irby and Boyle (2014) emphasises the importance of identifying the most well equipped and well positioned organisations to be engaged in the formative stages of an initiative. From there, smaller and less prominent or influential groups and organisations can be added once the initiative starts to take shape. Edmondson and Hecht (2014) prioritise the engagement of local expertise and community voice, arguing that they add a layer of context that allows practitioners to better understand data.

One of the examples used by Edmondson (2012) to differentiate collective impact from collaboration in general, is the statement that "collaboration is something that you do in *addition* to what you do, whereas collective impact *is* what you do". This presupposes that an organisations programs are all focused on a single issue or constituency, however it does not allow for the reality that most organisations operating in the social sector in Aotearoa, run a large range of programs that deal with a broad array of issues that may not necessarily target the same constituency. On the surface this would seem to disprove Edmonton's assertion, as clearly collective impact is still something that most do in addition to 'what they do'. It seems logical to assume that it is only single focus organisations or those that deal with a single constituency, that have the possibility of *exclusively* utilising collective impact as their operational framework. However, perhaps what the author is alluding to here, is collective impact in the *'future tense'* – the potential for a decentralised service environment that transcends organisational bounds, and shifts action to the peripheries? It would seem far more sensible within current settings, to view collective impact as a subset or type of collaboration, albeit a more disciplined and higher functioning one, and indeed this is the conclusion drawn by Prange et al. (2016).

Irby and Boyle (2014) considers the feature of collective impact that makes it fundamentally different and more successful, is that it adopts a collaborative, rather than competitive approach to tackling social problems. Although not specifically mentioned in the literature surveyed for this review, several case studies imply that this is not *exactly* true. Whilst the initiatives themselves are collaborative by definition, it is only single focus coalitions that have generally included many or possibly most organisations already working towards advancing the particular situation in question. This has often been the result of influence or privilege from powerful funders, particularly private foundations (primarily in North American examples), who already have a strong relationship with the organisation that the effort coalesces around. The question of what happens to groups and organisations working in the same area, field or domain who are not invited to join, or permitted to be part of an initiative, is a significant deficit in the literature, and is one that requires urgent research around the equality of participation.

Competition for funding does have positive aspects, and these have largely been excluded from the discussion around the merits of collective impact. Boumgarden and Branch (2013) view competition as a key driver of experimentation and innovation amongst service providers, and believe that performance variance; "seeing what did and did not work" as a beneficial aspect of the nature of competition.

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The competitive process also allows a degree of filtering to be applied to both proposals for funding and the actual organisations that apply. That is the the ability to choose the best out of a number of competing proposals, as opposed to reliance on a singular initiative that whilst developed by consensus, may fail to identify the best way forward. Boumgarden and Branch (2013) go on to state that "a focus on collective impact over and above competition often results in co-ordinated but misdirected efforts". They further go on to detail how collaboration can be initially helpful in generating efficiency of implementation by centralising the focus of multiple organisations, but point out that "such co-ordination is beneficial only when it centralises effectively and identifies the right solution – a complicated proposition with multi-faceted social problems". They conclude that "the gap between collective impact and co-ordinated blindness is unfortunately small". As an alternative they propose the building of systems that encourage competition within – and learning across organisations within a given field or focus area. This is clearly at odds with the Kania and Kramer (2011) view that lack of co-ordination is a fundamental limitation of isolated and competing initiatives.

In most cases funders prefer applicants that can demonstrate capacity, an original and/or rigorous proposal for dealing with the matter under consideration, and also a track record of positive outcomes from previous programs. Often these type of organisations have a long history of successful collaboration and in many cases their proposals and membership of initiatives, include and reflect this.
In contrast Hartley et al. (2013) believes that collective impact initiatives provide invaluable opportunities for testing new ideas and assessing their costs and benefits through empirical means instead of the largely theoretical approach employed in more competitive models.

Whilst collective impact is undoubtedly a powerful game changer in terms of approach, we must remain open to the possibility that significant and important change can still be achieved through other, sometimes more conventional means.



# DISCUSSION
## THINKING AND WORKING DIFFERENTLY

### ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Graham and O'Neil (2014) dictates that collective impact "requires a new type of leadership to emerge.
That leadership must be committed to earnest discovery, observation and synthesis with deep reflection before acting". They detail how successful collective impact efforts have been consistently dependent upon bold and dynamic leadership to catalyse and sustain their work, but point out that this has been reliant on the emergence of a very special type of leader. This evolving style of consensus leadership is passionately focused on finding sustainable answers, but does not expect or believe that they will have a monopoly on identifying them. Instead, these leaders are just as concerned with listening to others participants as they are with advancing their own viewpoint, and are willing to be contributors to jointly developed solutions rather than believing that they alone can uncover the route to the best outcomes.

Karp and Lundy Wagner (2016) describes these 'dynamic leaders' as not being preoccupied by promoting their own points of view at the expense of other competing ideas, and portrays them as having moved well past the oppositional and adversarial style and manner in which we are accustomed to seeing ideas represented. They denote dynamic leadership as being focused on empowering all participants to figure the answers out for themselves, with the hope that inside the intersection of the group's best thinking, lies the potential for innovation, advancement and critical steps forward.

Easterling (2013) prescribes the view that longstanding administrative and managerial scholarship typically assumes that the most important organisational dynamics are lodged primarily within single structural forms. This has proven to be a serious issue within collective impact leadership, as the notion of operating via consensus is diametrically opposed to the hierarchical structures leaders typically sit atop. Effective shared leadership is about abandoning the silo and tipping conventional ideas about leadership upside down. Collective Impact requires the adoption of a disposition that promotes a more inclusive, networked and collective vision of leadership. Holmgren (2017) deems that part of the call to change, includes that institutional leaders consider how their biases and habits may pose barriers to acting on their intentions.

Thomas (2014) notes that "one of the many paradoxes of complex civic systems is that even though they are beyond the control of any single individual or organization, achieving change within those systems is still dependent on outstanding leadership.
Without leadership, the diverse stakeholders within the system will pursue their individual interests and fail to develop the capacity to collaborate". The author considers that collective impact calls for two distinct types of leader in order to achieve sustained positive change. The first type; the "galvanising leader", is charismatic, singular and driven, and typically embodies the qualities we attribute to 'natural' leadership. These individuals are often at the helm of companies and non-profit organisations, or they may be political leaders. They are able to unite citizens as well as other leaders to work together towards a common cause, and often help to create the 'climate' necessary for successful collaboration as expressed in the three preconditions for collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2013). Thomas (2014) believes that these leaders often fail to translate their galvanising efforts into effective collaboration because they do not value the second type, the "co-ordinating" leader. They may not identify the need for a different type of leadership in the collaborative environment, and this is sometimes a reason why collaborations fail. "The leadership techniques and skills needed to foster collaboration are dramatically different than those learned by most organizational leaders".
Within a collaborative setting the emphasis is on creating value, not building up an organisation.

# DISCUSSION
## APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### THE 'PRE-CONDITIONS'

Hanleybrown (2012) augments the five conditions of collective impact set out by Kania and Kramer (2011) with the addition of three pre-conditions: *"an influential champion, adequate financial resources, and a sense of urgency for change".* They have determined that it is imperative that these pre-conditions are in place before launching a collective impact initiative, as together they create "the opportunity and motivation necessary to bring people who have never before worked together into a collective impact initiative, and hold them in place until the initiative's own momentum takes over".

The literature suggests that understanding the role of these pre-conditions within the broader scope of an initiative's formation, is essential to getting activities underway efficiently and sustainably. Weaver (2014) writes that "the three preconditions are often overlooked, but for Tamarack's Vibrant Communities Initiative they have been foundational".

Hanleybrown (2012) views the first of these, having an influential champion or champions, as being by far the most critical. These 'champions' must be capable of commanding the respect necessary to attract high level leaders as well as community members to the initiative. Champions exercise their mana and influence to catalyze participation and awaken and foster interest in the issue at hand, as well as utilising their contacts and networks to attract other resources, such as funding and connections to broader networks. The literature clearly demonstrates how finding and engaging these influential leaders, already active within the community, is a critical factor in the collective impact approach. Weaver (2014) makes the valuable additional point that "a collaborative effort that engages influential leaders can ramp up much more quickly".

'Champions' bring a number of strategic assets depending on their sphere of influence. By association they can also lend credibility to collaborative efforts through leveraging their reputations and standing within communities. Henig (2015) points out that legitimacy is a primary concern at the outset of a collaboration because "doing something new and different, without selling the innovation adequately, places the initiative at risk of not attracting sufficient support".

Secondly, it is essential that adequate and sufficient financial resources are available to sustain the nascent initiative for a minimum of three years, while it works through the initial planning and structuring phase.
In practice, this generally takes the form of at least one anchor funder who is engaged from the beginning and provides the financial and/or intellectual capital needed to kick start the project, as well as offering support to mobilise other resources to pay for the needed infrastructure and planning processes. Graham and O'Neil ( 2014) point out that in North American examples, this is where the role of private philanthropy has proved most potent. They describe how philanthropists were often the *igniters* that enabled initiatives to start, by funding the work of core collaborators.



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Consequent to this, they observe that both philanthropists and business leaders have played valuable convening roles, especially within the early stages of initiatives, by chairing meetings and in some many cases from the initiatives themselves.
This has helped to ensure that endeavours start off with and maintain a positive and productive tone, and also that a culture of focusing on results is prioritized from the outset.

A clear positive externality has also developed from this enmeshing of role and function, by immersing these granters inside the 'world' of their grantees. This is in contrast to the prevailing structural norm that saw the work of grantees as being quite separate from funders, whose role was mostly limited to handing over money and evaluating reports on its usage at the conclusion of the grant cycle. Through removing these types of barriers between funders and recipients, collective impact initiatives have enabled cascading levels of resource support to flow to initiatives from both business and philanthropic foundations. This has been an unexpected form of mutually reinforcing activity hat has proven invaluable. Prange, Allen & Reiter-Palman (2016) reinforces the significance of deepening these relationships and believes that to this end, collective impact actually calls for grantees to become facilitators of collective impact *issues,* in order to fortify initiatives' prospects of being sustainable over time.

The final pre-condition is the *'urgency for change'* around an issue: "Has a crisis created a breaking point to convince people that an entirely new approach is needed? Is there the potential for substantial funding that might entice people to work together?

Is there a fundamentally new approach, such as using the production, distribution, and demand creation capacities of the private sector to reach millions of people efficiently and sustainably?" (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). This highlights the need to create a *critical mass* of awareness that crystalizes and focuses attention on the issue under consideration.
The literature suggests that conducting research and publicising reports that capture media attention and highlight the severity of the problem, is the most sound and straight forward way to create the necessary sense of urgency required to persuade people to come together. Weaver (2014) suggests that part of this requirement to focus on urgency is actually the need for data and research to inform the issue as a key strategic tool, which highlights the important work of utilising data and research evidence to 'connect the dots'. This is aimed at building public awareness of the fact that upstream interventions can and do lead to positive downstream consequences. Whilst this is generally accepted as being self-evident, one of the goals of collective impact is to establish objective, data based 'proof points', in order to sustain momentum around new and emergent strategies for addressing complex problems.

# DISCUSSION
## APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### ESSENTIAL MIND-SET SHIFTS

Kania et al. (2014) acknowledges that the idea of collective impact is not new, and that many collaborations pre-date the original article and embody the five conditions of collective impact, but stress that the original collective impact article (Kania & Kramer, 2011) created both a framework and a *vocabulary* that has resonated deeply with practitioners who were frustrated with existing approaches to change. Hanleybrown (2012) supplemented the original five conditions of collective impact with the addition of the three pre-conditions outlined above. Kania et al. (2014) further streamlines the five conditions, and appends them with three essential mindset shifts centred on "*who* is engaged, *how* they work together, and *how* progress happens". These further definitional concepts recognise that the five conditions are not always sufficient to achieve large scale change on their own. They preface the three mindset shifts by stating that "they are fundamentally at odds with traditional approaches to social change, and although not necessarily counterintuitive, they can be highly countercultural and therefore can create serious stumbling blocks for collective impact efforts". These essential mindset shifts represent the first detailed analysis into explaining how organisations must change their outlook and not just their processes, in order to gain the best probability of achieving collective impact; and as such, are of the utmost significance to practitioners.

Irby and Boyle (2014) believe that one of the problems with collective impact becoming so popular so quickly, is that everyone will use the term, in many cases without having a deep understanding of the real challenges involved in implementation.

Prange (2015) believe that relatively few social change initiatives can truly designate their collaborations as collective impact, because its characteristics challenge organisations and community members to shift their thinking away from traditional approaches.They emphasise that these mindset shifts embody a crucial aspect of the shared learning that must take place within initiative leaders and contributors, and that they must subsequently flow through into demonstrable changes in organisational priorities and behaviours.

The first mindset shift has to do with who is involved in the initiative. Kania (2014) stipulates the importance of getting "*all* the right eyes on the problem". They refer to the preponderance of many initiatives towards omitting critical partners from government, corporate, philanthropic and the non-profit sectors, as well as community members with lived experience of the issue. This belies the fact that collective impact obliges initiatives to seek out and cultivate the often radically different perspectives of these diverse players, in order to generate deeper and more meaningful dialogue. This exposure to and synthesis of cross sector, non-homogenous viewpoints is central to growing collective understanding, and is also instrumental in creating a sense of mutual accountability and a shared vision for reform.

The early inclusion of those with lived experience of the problem at hand is also of vital import. Weaver (2014) describes the peril of neglecting authentic engagement with those who are the intended beneficiaries of the initiative, making the case that their voice and perspectives are essential to ensuring that interventions are appropriate, workable and fit for purpose.



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This reflects the social, economic and cultural gulf that often exists between the providers of services and the intended recipients. Butterfoss (2013) makes the acute observation that no amount of empathy, no matter how sincerely felt, can supplant the input of those who live day to day with the consequences of the problem under consideration. Failure to include contributions from the community invariably compromises the requisite understanding needed to build sustainable solutions that will actually *work on the ground.* Barnes and Schmitz (2016) regards this oversight as an example of leaders failing to recognise one of the ways in which the process of collective impact differs from established practice. Karp and Lundy Wagner (2016) notes also, that in some cases the omission of small but practical insights from community members, has prevented theoretically practicable policies and programs from being able to achieve deep impacts over time and in other situations has thwarted attempts to replicate at scale, the impacts that have been achieved.

The second mindset shift deals with the way in which the people involved within initiatives *actually* work together, and designates the relational aspects of this process as being just as important as the rational. Evidence based practises may be extremely convincing in the abstract, but this fact alone may not always be enough to induce a meaningful adjustment in the behaviour of those charged with implementing transformative change. This speaks to the proposition, that the diffusion of ideas is essentially a social process, through which people talking to people and connecting on a deeper level, is what fundamental allows innovation to proliferate.
This references the commonly held view within the community development sector, "that change happens at the speed of trust" (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Bartzak (2014) asserts that collaborators recognise the need for adaptation when they start to think in terms of developing relationships and channels of communication for people to interact.

Irby and Boyle (2014) highlights the need for practitioners to invest considerable time and effort into building trust and strong interpersonal relationships, and note that this often takes significantly longer than first envisioned at the outset of the process. Hanleybrown (2012) warns that strong egos and the legacy of difficult historical interactions can impede collective impact efforts, and must be overcome in order to enable collective visioning and learning. In addition, they go on to point out that structure is just as important as strategy, and that the real advantage of relationship building, is to create a collegial and fertile environment from which new and composite thinking and solutions can emerge. To encourage and promote this, deft structuring is required to regulate how participants will share data and convene to discuss and identify new strategies that emerge from it.

The third mindset shift seeks to detail and describe *how* progress happens. Bartzak (2014) expresses the need for collective impact practitioners to understand that social issues change relentlessly, therefore solutions must also be constantly adapted to take into account these changes. As the issues at the core of the initiative are adaptive in nature, and the answers are often not known in advance, participants must constantly engage in continuous learning through ulitising adaptive problem solving techniques, together with careful attention towards incorporating feedback and responses amongst partners. This is in direct contrast to the historical emphasis on identifying singular technical solutions.

Adaptive solutions are the bridge between technical know-how and improving collective outcomes. In other words they are the *how* to the technical solutions' *what*. Adaptive solutions create the processes, relationships and structures that allow technical solutions to have the maximum effect, as well as being the adhesive that combines them into a wide scale systems level strategy.

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Prange (2015) urges participants to trust the structure of collective impact to guide partners' solutions, instead of finding one path to solving the problem and sticking with it. This calls for practitioners to view their work as a component in a larger context, and to consider how their contribution is placed within the wider setting of the initiative as a whole. High quality individual programs, policies and interventions remain the basic building blocks by which impact is achieved, however collective impact places equal emphasis on the efficient and effective way in which they are *combined* in order to reinforce each other, with the aim of achieving sustainable long term improvement.



# DISCUSSION
## BUILDING A BIG TENT

### A COALITION OF THE WILLING

When seeking out partners and participants for a collective impact initiative, the need to engage a diversity of perspectives is a central and recurring theme in the literature. For many organisations this seems to be a part of the collective impact process that is most difficult to meaningfully enact.

This may be a function of the fact that human nature generally tends to favour interaction with those most alike and least threatening to the validity of our own perspectives. However because collective impact is predicated on the notion of collaboratively formulating new strategies and approaches to solve complex problems, it is of the utmost importance that dissenting and even opposing opinions and perspectives are brought together in the quest to uncover new and innovative ways of doing things. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida proposed that the only new and original knowledge is that which comes from the intersection of different types of knowledge. Therefore it is clear that collective impact calls for participants to step out of their comfort zones in order to seek out, listen to and take on board the disparate views of other potential collaborators and interested parties.

There is significant evidence in the case studies to support the conclusion, that when well-structured and well convened, successive meetings of initiative members can produce a culture of open-minded and receptive collegiality that helps to overcome misconceptions and break down perceived barriers between participants. This is vital to establishing an environment that is conducive to honest discussions and detailed examinations of not only the central problem; its nature and root cause, but also the development of potential solutions. Through this process of dialogue and deep reflection, participants must work through and reconcile opposing views until a common agenda for change is agreed upon. It is not necessary that all participants agree on every dimension of the problem, but they must reach a common understanding as to the primary goals of the initiative, and how they will work together to achieve these. Weaver (2014) makes the important point also, that participants must agree that a collective impact approach is the *most appropriate* means for tackling the problem at hand.

Cohen and Price (2015) consider that in some cases, a lack of trust or historical tensions between organisations can be a complicating factor in partnership formation, and that this is especially true when strong personalities are involved. They go on to describe how "agency leaders may underestimate the value of potential partners or discount the perspectives of others due to entrenched interests". Karp and Lundy-Wagner (2016) expresses the view that forging new relationship configurations can sometimes result in too many organisational compromises, and that participants must be conscious of potential conflicts of interest.

# DISCUSSION
## BUILDING A BIG TENT

Whilst Zohdy et al. (2016) suggests being broad and inclusive in contacting potential collaborators, Irby and Boyle (2014) highlights the need to identify the most well equipped and well positioned organisations to contribute to the initiative. Schmitz (2016) reminds us that it is crucial to ensure that all participants have a voice, as effective strategies can emerge in the most unlikely places.

It is apparent from the literature, that in order to embrace the true potential of collective impact, it is necessary for participants to advance beyond ego-driven, silo based inter-personal politics, and instead focus more acutely on working together to identify solutions to the problem at hand. Hanleybrown et al. (2012) describes how relationship and trust building among diverse stakeholders is an essential dimension of any successful change effort, and encourages that "In attempting collective impact, never underestimate the power and need to return to essential activities that can help clear away the burdens of past wounds and provide connections between people who thought they could never possibly work together". Prange et al. (2016) agrees, stating that the relational aspects of collaboration can be just as important as the rational. Hanleybrown et al. (2012) quotes Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, founder of the Elizabeth River Project saying that her secret to reconciling diverse and antagonistic stakeholders is "Clam bakes and beer", and echoing a well-known maxim amongst Māori, The Tamarack Institute website mentions "how food has been that special leaven in bringing people together." The sharing of food, drink and social interaction reminds us that whatever our station in life, we all require the same basic things in order to be sustained.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSE CROSS SECTOR REPRESENTATION

Case studies of early collective impact initiatives have clearly illustrated the importance of engaging community members and community leaders early on in the collaborative process. There are examples of efforts that failed to achieve impact through either the omission of representation at the community level, or attempting to incorporate it in a 'tokenistic' way, after the fact. In several cases this has led to initiatives implementing programs that did not adequately address the needs, concerns or context of their intended beneficiaries, and thus proved both unsuccessful and unable to be replicated at scale. Responding to criticism of collective impact from prominent blogger Vu Le, Schmitz (2015) declares that "the intended beneficiaries and those closest to them are an important voice, and they are often ignored because groups don't want to know if things really aren't working, or they just disrespect the people they serve".

Barnes and Schmitz (2016) makes the compelling assertion that "data driven solutions will be feasible and sustainable only if leaders create and implement those solutions with the active participation of people in the communities they target". This is a pivotal component in the process of formulating a common agenda, as it provides an essential extra layer of background and consideration at the front line of service uptake that acts to ground and counterbalance input from funders, organisations and other partners; who are by function, further removed from the problem. As Edmondson and Hecht (2014) points out, "local expertise and community voice adds a layer of context that helps practitioners better understand data". It is an important touchstone and reference point to have early input from the community as this can provide valuable insight towards the development of strategy.



# DISCUSSION
## BUILDING A BIG TENT

They also warn that "effective data analysis provides a powerful tool for decision making, but it represents only one vantage point".

In a podcast interview with Laura Flanders entitled *'Policy with a Conscience'*, Angela Glover Blackwell, CEO and founder of Policylink, highlights two important aspects of the potential of collective impact. The first is that "by making sure that everyone can participate, everyone benefits" and the second is that "when we solve problems for the most vulnerable, with nuance and specificity, the benefits cascade up and out – and the same is true of the economy". These are salient points that highlight, and seek to reverse some of the more pervasive dangers of marginalisation, and are especially relevant as we shift to more collaborative structures within many of our significant social institutions.

There are inherent tensions between a form of engagement that addresses participation barriers, and one that provides for achieving value alignment. Value alignment is thought to occur through dialogue between those of disparate viewpoints (Mutz, 2006) while addressing participation barriers often requires engagement to be in a familiar setting of 'like' individuals (Wood, 2016). This is a challenge that initiatives must overcome and one that will require more research as well as the development of practical solutions specific to the constituencies involved. Henig et al. (2015) notes also that "the history of collaborative multi-sector initiatives reveals that the conditions giving rise to such efforts change, and the framing that helps to build initial buy in can prove counter-productive when it comes to sustaining the effort over time".

Barnes and Schmitz (2016) points out that acting too quickly often entails significant risk. All too easily, the urge to initiate programs expeditiously translates into a preference for top-down forms of management. Engaging a community is not an activity that leaders can check off on a list. The goal is to encourage intended beneficiaries not just to participate in a social change initiative but also to champion it. Graham and O'Neil (2014) concurs and warns that in many instances, social leaders are so conditioned to *taking action* that they may fail to devote enough time to fully consider the factors required to inform collective impact efforts such as creating a broad groundswell of support for collaboration, building trusting relationships, formulating baseline measures (as well as developing outcome measures to track progress) and most importantly, working through a deep process of discovery to really understand what the problem is. They caution that collective impact initiatives are courting failure if they try to skip over or take short cuts with this part of the process.

Dedicating what can seem like an inordinate amount of time during the early stages of an initiative, towards working through these and other issues, can save much regret and recrimination down the track. They describe the current default setting as starting with a quick analysis of available data, followed by a decision, then action. "Most often, the quick analysis is poor as it is based on poor data, and the decision is to focus on (yet another) project or program instead of the whole system, and the action does not yield community wide change" (Graham & O'Neil, 2014).

This is an example of what Barnes and Schmitz (2016) term; *'patient urgency'.* This suggests that if initiative leaders are not patient, they will only achieve illusory change, and that lasting change is not possible without community buy in.

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They recognise that initiatives do need a sense of urgency to push the process forward whilst maintaining momentum, but view the tension between patience and urgency as a productive one. They are positively disposed to the idea that by navigating this tension, leaders and community members can achieve the right balance and level of engagement. They conclude that understanding and strengthening a community's civic culture is as important to collective efforts as using data, metrics and measurement outcomes.

Edmondson and Hecht (2014) give examples of how private businesses who are participants in collective impact initiatives have been able to lend expertise to help in with technical or administrative issues such as data analytics, often at little or no cost to the initiative, however there is surprisingly little in the literature that details or quantifies this on a macro level. Graham and O'Neil (2014) surmises that for collective impact to thrive, it is essential that the community and government sectors alone do not become the early majority. They believe that "with the active involvement of philanthropists and business leaders, the collective impact approach is more likely [to] fulfil its promise".

Henig et al. (2015) speculates that democratic values such as "transparency, equity, participation and accountability" are at risk of being subverted in collaborations that function as *performance regimes*, emphasising market oriented tools such as; strategic planning and performance management to drive effectiveness and efficiency. They suggest that adherence to these democratic values needs to be part of the initiatives reporting structure in order to guard against this. On a similar note, Sharonne Navas of the Equity in Education Coalition forewarns that "the illusion of inclusion is usually more dangerous than the lack of inclusion, because it can make the collective impact effort complacent and gives a false sense of security" (Vu, 2015).

Barnes and Schmitz (2016) notes that it is vital that initiative leaders view community members as producers of outcomes and not just recipients. Correspondingly they must recognise and respect the assets that community members can bring to an initiative. They postulate that community engagement has two clearly significant benefits; "it can achieve real change in people's lives, and it can propagate a can-do spirit that extends across an entire community". Weaver (2014) writes that "when the broader community is engaged in the success and achievement of a project, they begin to work in a concerted way". Solid community aspiration can create a 'big tent' under which a wide range of participants can pursue the interdependent challenges that underlay tough issues. Butterfoss (2013) agrees and observes that "diverse representation and engagement will ensure that strategies are carried out efficiently and effectively". Finally Barnes and Schmitz (2016) postulate that it is *how* policymakers and other social change leaders pursue initiatives that will ultimately determine whether these efforts succeed.

Lenfield (2016) distinguishes the existence of several kinds of equality (moral, political, social and economic) and believes that they must be "balanced in a virtuous cycle, where each feeds the others" and that "at the heart of equality is human beings' political capacity for self-government and collective decision making". Lenfield (2016) goes on to point out that "the more a society's institutions generate the possibility of the formation of bridging ties across cleavages and lines of difference" the more likely it is that society will generate egalitarian outcomes across domains such as education, health, and the labour market.



# DISCUSSION
## HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA

**Ui mai koe ki ahau he aha**
**te mea nui o te ao,**
**Maku e ki atu he tangata,**
**he tangata, he tangata!**

Māori proverb

***If you were to ask me what is the greatest thing in the world?***
***I will reply: It is people, it is people, it is people!***

### PLACING WHĀNAU (PEOPLE) AT THE CENTRE OF ALL OUR ENDEAVOURS

One of the most vociferous criticisms of the CI framework as it was initially espoused, is that it failed to place people and communities at its centre. This was most keenly expressed in the literature through comments posted on blog discussions, by those with direct experience working at the coalface of the community sector, who were sceptical of another top-down approach to change. In essence, this reflects a certain inverse polarity and tension that exists between approaches and methods that are considered 'top-down', such as collective impact, and other frameworks for change that are 'bottom-up' or community driven.

In Aotearoa there has been a marked shift within social service provision, towards a more devolved, community focused and often 'co-designed' policy environment and outlook. This is especially true within Te Ao Māori, where Whānau Ora is the leading example. The case study literature illustrates a broad range of variance between initiatives that are immersed in community participation and those that have placed a more significant emphasis on high level strategic engagement. The former are generally smaller collaborations, (or those that started off small) that have emerged from strong community forums, whereas the latter tend to be larger or more complex in their focus and range of participants.

One of the clear insights gained from early case studies is that it is imperative to involve communities and their representatives from the very beginning of the collaborative process, before initiatives are formulated and launched. At some stage, the success of every initiative will rely on convincing people individually and collectively that there is a greater benefit to be derived from approaching an issue from a collaborative perspective. This acknowledges that it is individual people and Whānau that make up communities, and highlights the need to remember and reinforce this, particularly in high level deliberations where there is often a tendency to think and talk about *he tangata* in the abstract. Schmitz (2015) makes the unfortunate observation that "The intended beneficiaries and those closest to them are an important voice, and they are often ignored because groups don't want to know if things really aren't working, or they just disrespect the people they serve". Sadly this sentiment is all too common and undoubtedly stems from a tendency to view service recipients as 'other' instead of as Whānau – who should be at the centre of all our endeavours.

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## HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA

Several writers opine that whilst collective impact is a data driven process, it must always be a *people driven* enterprise. Weaver (2014) makes the important point that it is not the data itself that is important, it is the lives of the people represented in the data that is what really matters. Likewise, Harwood (2014) offers a reminder that

> "When we talk about impact, our frame instantly becomes that of metrics and measurement – in other words data. We can get so lost in the mechanics that we fail to actually build different community relationships, norms and practises that change how a community works together. If we're not careful, we'll lose sight of our most precious mission: to help people transform their lives and build stronger communities".

### EQUITY – THE SOUL OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Schmitz (2016) writes that "equity recognises that we don't all start at the same place. It recognises that persistent disparities will not be solved without targeting certain opportunities and supports to individuals who start further behind or face additional barriers". In their article *The Equity Imperative in Collective Impact* published in the SSIR (Kania & Kramer, 2015), the authors acknowledge that equity was a crucial missing component in the collective impact framework and agree that "the five conditions of collective impact, implemented without attention to equity, are not enough to create lasting change". Schmitz (2015) subsequently goes on to state unequivocally that "The Collective Impact Forum believes that equity, and especially racial equity needs to be at the core of CI approaches". McAfee, Glover Blackwell & Bell (2015) refers to the "long, rich history of community building work in low income communities and communities of colour" and believe that this foundation of theory and practice; namely that of equity, must serve as the basis on which the framework of collective impact is built.

Bell and Lee (2011) define structural racism as a system in which "public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms" work to reinforce and perpetuate racial group inequity. Racial equity is of particular relevance to the roll out of collective impact initiatives by Kaupapa Māori organisations here in Aotearoa, whose efforts are particularly aimed at ameliorating the disproportionate representation of Māori in negative statistics across all social indices. This is the historical legacy of cultural, social and economic marginalisation compounded by government policies which continually fail to address the persistence of deeply racist institutions, systems and the culture that exists within them.



# DISCUSSION
## HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA

As a result many Māori begin life in a position of disadvantage relative to non-Māori and face a multitude of systemic barriers rooted in structural racism and long term community disinvestment.

Placing equity at the core of the collective impact framework should reinforce our efforts to ensure "that one's racial identity does not become a predictor of their educational, health, economic or other outcomes" (Schmitz, 2016). This is reiterated by Arias and Brady (2015) who write that "the structural causes of inequality along race, class, gender and cultural lines need to be tackled head on" and that equity needs to be "an explicit lens for your work, through which you do your analysis and strategy design". McAfee (2015) remarks that "Equity is not an abstract concept; it is something that leaders and communities live, breathe, and feel to their core", and goes on to point out that "without rigorous attention to persistent inequalities, our initiatives risk ineffectiveness, irrelevance, and improvements that cannot be sustained. It is important to point out also that equity issues are distinct from notions of equality because as Schmitz (2016) puts it, "equal opportunities are not equal if we start in different places with different barriers".

Influential blogger Vu Le details some of the challenges and frustrations that 'non-white' communities have experienced in their involvement with collective impact, in his article *'Why Communities of Color are Getting Frustrated with Collective Impact'.* He writes that "Collective Impact has been annoying a lot of marginalised communities because it is yet another example of the mainstream community 'discovering' something that has been around for a long time, slapping some academic labels and concepts on it, positioning it as new, and then getting all the attention and resources" (Vu, 2015).

Along with Wolff (2016)and Minkler (2012), Vu also criticises collective impact for perpetuating trickle-down community engagement and for forcing organisations to align with collective impact agendas, even when they are disinclined to do so. He goes on to observe that collective impact initiatives often "divert funding away from services, thinking of them as 'band aid solutions' even when communities are in desperate need of them". Schmitz (2015) agrees and answers this by stating that "We must invest in the process [CI], but also the direct services that accomplish our intended impact". Worryingly Vu makes the point that CI initiatives often do not work but people are afraid to say so, believing that "once it builds momentum, consolidating funders and annexing organisations, you feel like you can't criticize the machine without it running you over".

Many of these criticisms reflect or allude to the widely expressed belief (predominantly through blog comments) that in a lot of cases, collective impact is a framework that is being imposed upon community organisations from outside, or higher up the funding food chain, sometimes against their will. Some of this sentiment will undoubtedly stem from organisations fearful about future funding, and also the challenge to the status quo that this type of framework represents. However, there are examples of problems and areas that are not suitable for a collective impact approach and care must be taken to avoid viewing this framework as a one-size-fits-all panacea. Some writers believe that collective impact privileges larger and more powerful organisations whereas others express the opinion that it actually increases the relative potential power of smaller providers by enabling them to have a greater than proportional input and voice within initiatives.

# DISCUSSION
## HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA, HE TANGATA

Either way, the critical issue for organisations contemplating a collective impact approach, or any type of collaborative effort, is to think very deeply about the essential mind-set shifts necessary to work successfully in this manner (Kania et al., 2014) and formulate a pathway that enables them.

It is interesting to note that even the most strident critics of collective impact express a certain inevitability concerning its increasing popularity and adoption, and also a distinctly optimistic view that many of their criticisms can eventually be overcome and incorporated into the framework. However, Bartczak (2014) warns that funders must not force organisations to collaborate in social change partnerships like collective impact, and Wolff (2016) points out that true collaboration and indeed the very notion of sustainable partnership is incompatible with any form of compulsion.
To counteract this Prange et al. (2016) calls for funders to become facilitators of collective impact issues, in order to ensure that initiatives will be sustainable over time.

Whilst this seems logical on the surface, it is also somewhat counter-intuitive in a funding environment such as Aotearoa, where almost all funding comes either directly or indirectly from the government.
In this case the historic progression would see the role of government having evolved from being the original provider of services, to commissioning the private delivery of services, to now contracting out the policy formulation that dictates program content, only then to subsequently become the facilitator of the issues which underpin services.

There is a certain circularity evident in this progression that foreshadows the next step possibly being the privatisation of service formulation and delivery altogether, via mechanisms such social bonds. If this is indeed a motivation behind the devolution of social services, it could potentially raise compatibility issues when combined with a quest for impact that seeks to keep communities and the people that live in them as essential reference points.



# DISCUSSION
## MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

### USING DATA TO 'JOIN THE DOTS'

The rapidly accelerating pace of technological advancement in recent years has made the valuable tool of data analysis available to almost everyone everywhere.
In addition, the widespread dissemination of technology has greatly increased the interconnectedness of individuals, organisations, societies and humankind as a whole.

This has informed and enabled data driven processes and frameworks such as collective impact, to have realistic and widespread application in dealing with complex social issues across society. Barnes and Schmitz (2016) elucidates how data driven and evidence based practises present valuable new opportunities for public and social sector leaders to increase impact whilst at the same time reduce inefficiency. Moreover it is clear that social change leaders now have an unprecedented ability to draw on data driven insight to identify exactly which programs actually lead to better outcomes. Kumaraswamy and Chitale (2012) draws the valuable supplementary observation that "networks and other forms of organizational collaborations offer many prime opportunities for synthesizing multiple forms of data into new forms of knowledge that simply could not have been generated otherwise".

The development of a shared measurement system is a vital component of any collective impact initiative.  It encourages participants to improve the quality of the data they are working with, and provides a clear and dis-ambiguous means of tracking progress towards shared goals. It is also pivotal to enabling and supporting *shared understanding,* which is at the heart of coordinated collaboration. Kania and Kramer (2011) states that

> "Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level, and across all participating organisations not only ensures that all efforts remain aligned, it also enables the participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other's successes and failures".

Once agreed upon, the shared measurement indicators give voice to the common agenda and provide the basis on which to continuously adapt strategy within the dynamic context of each initiative.

Henig et al. (2015) observes our tendency to treat data as being both fixed and objective and therefore imbued with a certain power and authority. They warn that this can lead to "the illusion of clarity and authority surrounding agreed upon data indicators which may in turn mask the complexity and uncertainty inherent in what the data actually points to".

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They caution that this can lead to the generation of inflated and unrealistic expectations. Moynihan, Pandey & Wright (2011) refers to this as the "what gets measured, gets managed" paradigm, and suggests that it is incumbent upon initiatives to develop a full range of measurement targets to offset this potentiality. They also advise that care must be taken to avoid *'Campbell's Law'*; which suggests that over time, a measurement comes to be an end in itself rather that the means to shared attention and action.

Hanleybrown et al. (2012) writes that "practitioners identify shared measurement as one of the most challenging aspects of achieving collective impact". Interestingly Cabaj and Weaver (2016) report that shared measurement "has generated the greatest area of experimentation across collective impact initiatives". Bourgeois and Born (2014) make the important point that putting shared measures in place is a way to state the deeper systems change aspect of collective impact in a way that people *'can get their heads around'.* Boumgarden and Branch (2013) counter with a warning that "shared measurement may be attractive for the accountability it creates, but may also fail to measure the right things". The literature highlights this last point as a significant issue in relation to organisations and collaborative groups who do not have a long history working with data driven processes. It is essential that comprehensive training and monitoring procedures are put in place by backbone organisations to support the development of data capability for these participants.

Henig et al. (2015) observes that wholesale outsourcing of data processing functions to the backbone organisation, without deploying adequate resources to train member organisations can run the risk of participants losing control over their data whilst subsequently reducing their ability to build analytical capacity.

Cabaj and Weaver (2015) points out that a review of the case study literature across a diverse range of issues and settings, suggests that many organisations have employed an excessive focus on short term data, perhaps not fully realising that it is the movement of the indicators over time that illustrates progress and provides opportunity for learning. Several other writers also point out that it is essential for collective impact participants to understand that it is the *quality* of the data and the assumptions that underpin the formulation of indicators that is key to the process, not the quantity. Henig et al. (2015) views data as positive only when it is used to empower feedback loops and learning sequences, as highlighted in many models of continuous improvement. They also point out that data has the potential to be subverted for symbolic purposes that can be at odds with ongoing learning. Chief amongst these are the skewing of data to enhance organisational legitimacy, and when it is used as a smokescreen to mask what is really happening.

Edmondson and Hecht (2014) makes a compelling argument for the disaggregation of data, arguing that aggregated data often masks disparities. Disaggregation allows a clearer picture to emerge of exactly which programs and services work best and for whom, and therefore allows initiatives and communities to make more informed decisions. A 2013 report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation entitled *'Community Change: Lessons from Making Connections',* highlights the importance of connecting data back to real work in the community, therefore enabling the creation of a broad learning culture based around understanding the data from multiple viewpoints.



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Parkhurst & Prreskill (2014) have proposed a thought-provoking new type of measurement designed specifically for use in evaluating collective impact initiatives. This asks collaborators to take a holistic approach to measuring progress and processes for change, instead of simply measuring the outcomes of single interventions. Initiatives are broken down into four 'levels':

- **Initiative's Context:** Anything that influences an initiative's design, implementation and effectiveness (e.g., economics, demographics, culture).
- **The Initiative Itself:** The initiative's design and process.
- **Systems the Initiative Targets:** The systems (e.g., public policies), norms or patterns of behaviour the initiative is trying to impact.
- **Initiative's Ultimate Outcomes:** Overarching goals of the initiative.

By combining this holistic outlook with the *'eleven core success indicators for collaboration'* developed by Nabukenya, Van Bommel, Proper & de Vreede (2011), Prange et al. (2016) suggest a "potentially comprehensive method for assessing overt collective impact initiatives that use cross-sector inter-organizational collaboration". Despite being highly technical in nature, this comprehensive method of collective impact evaluation holds great promise, especially with regard to its potential to fine tune initiatives that have reached the point where they are achieving high levels of impact over time.

### STRATEGIC LEARNING

Hanleybrown et al. (2012) reinforces the point that meaningful shared measurement indicators are essential, and that collaborative efforts will remain superficial without them. The shared measurement indicators and the fluency gained through their continuous application, help to establish a common language amongst participants. This in turn supports the action framework, which is a working hypothesis of how the group best believes it can achieve its stated goal. It is central to the understanding of collective impact that participants realise that the action framework will always be a work in progress. It will be constantly tested, and will require constant updating to reflect new learnings, changes in local context as well as the introduction of new partners. This need for continuous adaptation reflects the adaptive nature of the central problem.

Wood (2016) observes that "the performance measurement literature indicates that shared measurement, when accompanied by dialogue, increases learning. These dialogue opportunities must be *'routinised'* in order to promote iterative learning, which is why the process of information review with learning forum must be cyclical". In addition, the exact nature of the most advantageous mutually reinforcing activities among participants may only become clear once the work of each is mapped out against the same set of indicators and outcomes. Edmonton and Hecht (2014) points out that initiatives will not know for sure whether they are achieving impact until they see sustained improvement in the shared measurement indicators over time.

Cabay and Weaver (2016) notes that one clear insight in terms of shared measurement is that participants had more success when they treated it as part of a larger system of learning and evaluation.

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This completes the feedback loop into the action framework and provides for valuable opportunities for all participants to be constantly learning from each other's successes and failures, and more importantly to be able to adapt their practice quickly in light of these. Having a robust and well defined process for learning and evaluation is a particularly important component of collectives that span multiple organisations and sectors. It has the added benefit also of translating and clarifying to participants what it actually is that other collaborative partners, especially those from alternate sectors *actually* do, as well as how this contributes to the overall progress of the initiative. The literature clearly highlights this as being foundational in terms of multiplying the effect of individual learnings into strategic learning.

In order for learning experience to be not just successful, but also useful, it is important to identify and communicate a clear understanding of what is to be accomplished. Preskill, Gutierrez & Mack (2017) defines the goals of learning as; "to individually and collectively increase our awareness and understanding, to develop new perspectives, to generate new ideas and/or solutions, and to make important decisions". Reiterating the general consensus amongst other writers, they postulate that in a group environment, it is the *collective* ability to learn that becomes the bridge between individual and organised learning. They argue that through a process of collaborative reflection and dialogue, the real benefit for participants is the development of "new constructions of what was, what is, and therefore what needs to be". This intentionality of learning affords the greatest opportunity to apply the learning effectively and productively into everyday work life, and hence derive the most benefit from it. To this end they have formulated a comprehensive table of 21 learning activities that offer clear guidance to initiatives about how to start the process.

Gutierrez (2015) provides a valuable and straight forward set of three 'reinforcing elements' that can be used to structure strategic learning within collective impact initiatives into an intentional learning mechanism. The first is to establish a set of learning priorities that are co-created by participants and aligned with the common agenda. These consist of a series of learning questions that represent what partners are curious to learn more about and what believe will help them make better decisions. The second codifies these into learning plans that delineate opportunities for dialogue, learning, and reflection. The third element incorporates and normalises the regularity of these exchanges into a learning culture which grows openness, trust and promotes the formation of deeper relationships amongst participants. This culminates in an inclusive and collegial environment in which experimentation and innovation are supported and fostered. It is believed that this focus provides a platform for uncovering new causal processes and practices,and enables the refinement of strategies, resulting in transformation and sustainable impact.

Zohdy et al. (2016) takes this idea of strategic learning to the next level by explaining how the prioritising of learning is one of the four essential behaviours of catalytic collaborators. Catalytic collaborators are intently interested in creating knowledge that can be applied for the betterment of their entire field. In this scenario, the benefits of learning are not just confined to evaluation and application within the initiative, but are also focused outwards to encompass field-relevant learning that takes in both broad trends that influence the issue at hand, as well as failed past attempts to tackle it. By studying failed past attempts to solve an issue, initiatives can save a great deal of time and resources by knowing in advance what simply doesn't work. In the context of collective impact, continuous learning is therefore as much a behaviour and disposition as it is a philosophy and practice.



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An essential component of effective group learning that is sometimes taken for granted or overlooked altogether, is the role of active facilitation. Preskill et al. (2017) sees this as being a key consideration especially in the early stages of an initiative. Although many organisations traditionally handle this in-house, there is strong anecdotal evidence that suggests that the success of this approach is often down to having skilled and talented team members available to lead the process. As this is not always the case, there is a growing acceptance and usage of professional facilitators, especially to help groups kick start the process. Skilled facilitators are able to provide non directive leadership and guidance, with the aim of making it easier for the group to reach understandings and consensus in order to support the decision making process. "Effective facilitators create a safe and participatory space by encouraging members to adhere to the ground rules and by maintaining a high energy and positive tone. They also work to support inclusive and productive participation, and help participants to articulate key points and differences of opinion. They keep the group on topic and adjust the process when necessary" (Preskill et al., 2017).

Patrizi, Heid Thompson, Coffman & Beer (2013) quotes prominent systems scientist Peter Senge, "Learning is the process that enhances knowledge; which is the capacity for effective action", and argues that initiatives must maximise opportunities to forge intentional connections between strategy, evaluation and learning that together support strategic learning and continued operationalisation of new understandings and methodologies. They believe also, that when intentional learning systems function as hoped and envisioned, they also have the potential to illuminate the kinds of tacit knowledge that is often so deeply embedded within organisational contexts that it is seldom ever articulated or shared.

### DOMAIN LEVEL INDICATORS

For over a century, organisations in the United States have been using Community Indicator Programs (CIPs) to measure a range of variables related to the human condition. In the previous two decades there has been a renewed interest in their usage at a localised level to measure quality of life. Wood (2016) writes that "when implemented with an eye towards participatory democracy and an institutional design for learning, CIPs have the capacity to satisfy these five conditions [of CI]. CIPs can germinate the process of creating a community conversation around an issue of concern. Those programs with supporting structures for analysis, learning, action and feedback can also ensure collective action." Community Indicators have the potential to fulfil the shared measurement condition of collective impact, whilst also providing a convening signal and opportunity for dialogue, in which the other conditions can also be met.

Community Indicator Programs offer a monitoring system for community *'quality of life'* that can act as an early warning system for deteriorating causal factors, which could in turn provide a sound basis from which to identify issues suitable for consideration,for a collective impact effort. These initiatives would then benefit from having a platform of baseline data readily available, thus speeding up the process. Wood (2016) regards it as a flaw in the collective impact theory, that measures are only developed subsequent to the issue being flagged for an initiative. This effectively means that there is no easily comparable method for knowing if there was another, more pressing issue that should have taken precedence. Therefore it is impossible to measure the opportunity cost of choosing to focus on one issue in preference to another. It also negates the possibility of using existing reference data to help rally the collective effort.

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Wood (2016) concludes that "Community Indicators and collective impact have a future together in ways that are not yet well defined".

As shared measurement systems become common place, and people and organisations become more skilled and comfortable working with data at volume, Community Indicators Programs have the potential to become a core shared measurement system that over-arches the various individual domains in which collective impact is used. In a similar way to the government census, collective impact initiatives could use a generic (but specifically meaningful) set of community indicators to facilitate easy comparisons across all similar types of initiative (if utilised by other initiatives operating in the same domain). In a small population sample such as Aotearoa, with a tightly networked social sector, this should not only be easy to achieve, but could become a valuable tool for understanding change at a macro level.



# DISCUSSION
## THE EVOLUTION OF THE REVOLUTION

### COLLECTIVE IMPACT 3.0

The term 'Collective Impact 3.0' emerged at the Tamarack Institute annual Collective Impact Summit in 2015. They refer to the period prior to the 2011 Kania & Kramer article as 'Collective Impact 1.0'. During this time a diverse array of collaboratives were prototyping collective impact practise without necessarily referencing patterns identified by FSG.

'Collective Impact 2.0' refers to all of the subsequent uptake and implementation of the framework in the period prior to the summit. Deliberations arising during this conference gave rise to the term 'Collective Impact 3.0', which is an attempt to identify and recognise "the push to deepen, broaden, adapt and advance collective impact based on reference to a new generation of initiatives" (Cabay & Weaver, 2016).

After six years in the public realm and a vast amount of application across a multitude of disciplines, many leading practitioners have expressed the view that collective impact is now at a strategic inflection point. Cabay and Weaver (2016) asserts two compelling reasons for advocates to find ways to *upgrade,* not simply elaborate upon the collective impact framework. In the first instance they consider that "there has now been enough experimentation with collective impact by diverse communities working on diverse issues in diverse settings, to clearly identify the limitations of the framework". They list these as:

- Insufficient attention to the role of the community in the change effort.
- An excessive focus on short term data.
- An understatement of the role of policy and systems change.
- Over investment in backbone support.

Mark Holmgren from the Tamarack Institute warns that failure to address these limitations may produce a 'pendulum swing' away from collective impact and wider collaborative change efforts (Holmgren, 2015). In response, FSG and more particularly the Collective Impact Forum have been consistently open to adapting their theory to better reflect issues and concerns that have emerged at a practise level, as well as engaging with criticism of the model, with the aim of continually improving it as a greater number of initiatives catch up to best practice.

The second reason articulated by Cabay and Weaver (2016) to upgrade the framework of collective impact, has to do with incorporating strengths and attributes of other theoretical frameworks, which are based on solid research and long term community experience. They point out that "in the rush to embrace collective impact, many have ignored the less well packaged and promoted frameworks of community change developed by others".

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Many critics of collective impact have expressed the view that it is yet another type of 'top-down' approach towards change management, and contrast this to frameworks that are more solidly grounded in community participation. Fortunately many worthwhile and positive aspects of these other frameworks can be easily and effectively woven into collective impact implementation.

Baker and King Horne (2016) distils four key elements that they believe are essential in order to keep collective impact working: Results, People, Focus & Information. They point out that the best coalitions deem their efforts to be critical in terms of achieving results, and that their participants see the benefits as outweighing the costs. This kind of loyalty is generated by people being able to clearly witness first-hand impact being achieved, and also by aligning multiple sources of funding to address a single problem. The development of shared leadership is their central tenet concerning people, whereby they argue that strategies succeed because there are proven leaders within the work groups as well as committed individuals within the backbone organisation who drive the initiatives strategy. In this scenario the effort is not lead "by one 'czar' housed in one agency, or reliant on a single 'champion' who leads, coordinates and represents the work". Rather, it is dependent on developing ambassadors and managers within the work groups, among board members and throughout the communities' public and private agencies. Long term successful initiatives rely upon the leadership of participating agencies being able find solutions both at a direct service level and by continuing to implement and report on the coordinated approach.

Whilst shared leadership is identified as a fundamental ingredient of effective and sustainable collective action, it is also acknowledged that this is often a delicate balance for backbone organisations to maintain.

Weaver (2014) & Baker and King Horne (2016) agree that the effective deployment of leaders to engage and build capacity of those in the community, not only has the power to accelerate results but is also a key to the longevity of efficacious initiatives. There are a growing number of instances where successful initiatives have emerged as the 'go to' entity for policy, planning and action within their targeted areas.

Keeping the mission manageable is of the utmost importance with regard to focus and scope. Collective impact efforts are by nature ambitious, and there is now a solid corpus of writing dealing with the importance of defining the conditions of success, together with honing in on the population prior to an initiatives launch. Once underway, staying focused allows efforts to distinctly target their resources as well as realistically appraise whether or not they are making a difference. Success does not automatically mean growth in the scope or mission of the backbone organisation. Premature expansion in scope without the required capacity, both in terms of supportive networks and community buy in, can dissipate not only energy and resources, but also goodwill.

Edmondson and Hecht (2014) emphasise the necessity of building a culture of continual improvement that is based on the identification of well-defined programmatic and service data. This must then be analysed and interpreted into lucid and succinct reports that can be used to improve efforts on the ground by training practitioners to adapt their work using this new information. This periodic recalibration of the plan offers initiatives a definite way to re-prioritise strategies and set more precise quantitative and qualitative goals. It can also assuage community pressure to expand the definition of the target population or spread funding too thinly.



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Effective collective impact initiatives understand that they must be especially vigilant when it comes to keeping strategy relevant. One way to ensure this is to keep data alive by always looking for opportunities to build the capacity to collect and analyse data through both formal (surveys and demographics) and informal (discussion sessions) means. This has proven essential to understanding, acting on and improving conditions. Baker and King Horne (2016) points out that the success of mature collective impact initiatives has been based upon

> "nurturing and reconnecting members continuously, as well as ensuring that coalitions are nimble and connected enough to the people they serve, to be able to address new challenges and opportunities as they come up".

### INCORPORATING STRENGTHS FROM OTHER MODELS

Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT) (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002) is often described as the predominant framework for building and evaluating community generated social change initiatives. It has many similarities to collective impact in terms of its organisation and structure, with the main difference being that it is built around and thrives upon community engagement. Like collective impact it seeks to bring together a diverse range of participants from multiple organisations and constituencies, who then work together collaboratively towards addressing community and social change. In a very similar way to collective impact it employs a highly structured framework that charts the development and progression of community coalitions from formation through to institutionalisation, and uses data intentionally to chart interactions of context and outcomes that impact a coalition's formation and success. CCAT builds upon the strengths and experience of a large body of scholarly work around both coalition building and community development. As it has grown in prominence, it has been constantly updated and reworked by its original authors and others, in addition to generating a large volume of academic criticism and comment. This is in direct contrast to collective impact, which is still largely invisible in terms of serious scholarly research (Google Scholar search).

CCAT has a number of strengths in areas where collective impact is light on detail or explanation, and it is believed that many of these are able to be effectively combined into collective impact initiatives, especially valuable additional precepts and strategies to increase community capacity and engagement. (Flood et al., 2015) points out that CCAT provides much more detail on ways to build, improve and sustain backbone organisations, and it also emphasises advocacy, which is a glaring weakness of the collective impact model.

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CCAT is explicitly focused on influencing public policy as a means of addressing social issues, whereas the word *'advocacy'* does not appear once in either Kania and Kramer (2011) or (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). CCAT also requires participants to equalise participation through democratising voting procedures, and notes that this has the concomitant ability to greatly enhance participation through improved group dynamics.

Winterbauer, Bekemeier, Van Raemdonck & Hoover (2016) describes Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Israel, Eng, Schultz & Parker, 2013) as providing "the gold standard for equitable, partnered research in traditional communities". CBPR provides a powerful theoretical framework for ensuring the co-production of new knowledge, while also improving and expanding the implementation and impact of research findings in real-world settings. Community-based participatory research principles are also valuable in providing a standard for partnered research that empowers non-academic participants within traditional communities. The term CBPR captures the twin ideals of action-oriented and community-partnered research and is defined by WK Kellogg Foundation (2013) as "a collaborative approach to research, that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognises the unique strengths that each brings".

CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community and has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change to improve outcomes and eliminate health disparities. Winterbauer et al. (2016) details how CBPR "builds bridges between scientists and communities by involving community participants and researchers in all aspects of the research beginning with identifying the issue to be addressed, research design, implementation, and dissemination".

It has been found to enhance the relevance and use of research data by increasing the likelihood of overcoming distrust of research by communities that have traditionally been seen only as 'subjects'. There is significant opportunity for the principles and processes of CBPR to be used to great effect with regard to research that looks to delve into issues of concern generated from within communities. It also has clear promise with regard to evaluating collective impact outcomes, as well as providing researchers with access and insight into the issues that matter most to community members. These can then help to ensure that the problems and subjects that collective impact initiatives focus on, are the most relevant and relative to the people they serve. This is especially pertinent where initiatives operate within Te Ao Māori, as it has proven value in terms of breaking down barriers between community interests and actions and interventions aimed at addressing them.

The *Power of Collaborative Solutions (*2010) is a book written by American community development veteran Dr Tom Wolff. It offers a comprehensive model and guidance around the intersection of community development and effective coalition building. It is the culmination of thirty years of community work that he has participated in, and combines and builds upon his body of published scholarship in the area. It details effective strategies to assist communities that work together to solve their own large scale social problems, and relies strongly on implementing democratic principles within community based collaborative settings, with the aim of strengthening and energising communities.



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The Power of Collaborative Solutions proffers a methodology for empowering all citizens to be capable actors in their personal and community lives, and is guided by clear principles of social justice. It is based on a broad and deep vision of community, and is notable for both its inclusion of, and reference to a strong spiritual dimension that exists for many, within the work of strengthening communities. It includes a comprehensive survey of the history of American community building initiatives, and makes a powerful case for reclaiming democratic principles and institutions that have become subverted by neoliberalism, and using them to converge collective action definitively towards community empowerment. There are many aspects, observations and practices detailed within this work that will appeal strongly to Tangata Māori, especially in terms of Wairuatanga and its role within community outreach and development. It is essentially concerned with human connectivity and may help to demystify some of the more academic concepts around community coalition building and hence, collective impact. It has also been employed widely amongst policy focused coalitions and this is also an area where it can offer complimentary assistance to collective impact initiatives.

# DISCUSSION
## FROM COLLABORATION TO CONVERGENCE

### CATALYTIC COLLABORATION

Catalytic collaboration is the next step in the collective impact journey and seeks to amplify the benefits of working together collaboratively, by focusing on the highest value opportunities to extract systems level learnings to build capacity across the entire domain that the initiative works within.

It some regards catalytic collaboration can be viewed as a high level resource intensive modality that seeks to expand the reach and depth of collaboration by implementing a refocused series of tweaks to collective impact outlook and procedures. Zohdy et al. (2016) describes 'catalytic collaborators' as exhibiting four essential behaviours; "Prioritising learning, systems thinking and acting, democratising access to assets, and building long term transformative relationships". They argue that in order for organisations to be truly transformative, their practices must embody all four traits in a way that "amplifies the impact of each one".

Catalytic collaborators are driven to create knowledge that enriches their entire field and takes a 'helicopter view' in order to concentrate on broad trends that inform and influence the issues under consideration. Their practice also highlights the value of studying failed past attempts to overcome the problem in question, and believe that these two variances of focus, form the basis for transformation, innovation and sustainable impact. Catalytic collaborators also take a systems level approach to identifying the causal links between factors that underline their issues, and seek to locate their work within the broader ecosystem of relevant players. They are committed to promoting equitable access to assets, and highlight the need to deliberately entice *'unusual suspects'* into their collaborative groupings.

A slight but careful reorientation of focus underpins this progression of collaborative thinking, embodied by the way in which Zohdy et al. (2016) describe *catalytic collaborators* as "looking to leverage the potential of current socio-economic shifts towards democratisation". These include,

- The rise of the sharing economy (which promotes access over assets).
- Increased recognition of the importance of networks (and decreased relevance of organisational boundaries and the organisation as a distinct entity).
- Growing interest in systems thinking and systems leadership.
- The decentralisation and digitisation of knowledge and information.

Catalytic collaborators are motivated to expand the world view of collective impact by taking steps to not only streamline the process, but also democratise the application of collaborative theory by lifting it outside the realm of organisational boundaries.



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They aim to minimise 'empire building' amongst 'early adopter' non-profits in particular, with the primary aim being to advantage the entire domain in which initiatives operate. Catalytic collaboration explores the concept of 'enlightened self-interest'. It requires energy and effort from its adherents, as well as acceptance of the reality that the benefits of their work may not flow either directly or immediately back to their own organisations. It proposes the further elimination of baseline competition between organisations and initiatives by advocating radically transparent processes and communication around what they're doing and learning in real-time, in order to jump start progress for the entire field. In this way it can be viewed as a significant step towards the goal of transforming collective impact from a managerial paradigm into a broad based movement for change; one that seeks to break down organisational barriers and foster deeper and more sustainable connections between practitioners and community members. It is hoped that this will result in the embedding of collaborative action as the new 'norm' within the social change sector, as well as maximise the impact of gains made through achieving collective impact.

### BUILDING A MOVEMENT

Al Etmanski and Vicky Cammack, two of Canada's most celebrated social innovators, developed this simple philosophy - "Act like an organisation but think like a movement" (Cabay & Weaver, 2016). They believe that for collective impact to truly reach its potential and fulfil its promise of achieving deep and lasting impact within communities, it must transform from a managerial to a movement building paradigm. Holmgren (2017) catalogues four steps involved in building an effective social movement:

- A community forms around a common goal or aspiration.
- The community mobilises its resources to act on the goal/aspiration.
- The community crafts solutions and acts to deliver them.
- The movement is accepted by (or actually replaces) the establishment or established regime of laws or policies.

These four steps resonate unmistakeably with the five conditions of collective impact, and should also resound viscerally for those involved within collective impact initiatives. Successful movements are consistently concerned with moving the needle and affecting systems change to do so. Many people regard collective impact as a movement, but a model or framework in of itself cannot and should not be considered a movement. A movement "implies that there is a community aspiration at work, not just the creation of a common agenda amongst those around the collective impact table" (Holmgren, 2017).

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In a movement building approach, reforming and transforming systems is emphasised, and pursued with vigour. This takes into account the fact that sometimes structural change is the bottom line of what is really needed, and acknowledges that merely improving conditions alone, cannot always lead to deep and lasting change. Cabay and Weaver (2016) asserts that movements; "open up people's hearts and minds to new possibilities, create the receptive climate needed for new ideas to take hold, embolden policy makers and systems leaders, and change the ground on which every day political life and management occur". They believe that programs have a far greater chance of achieving scale when the work is supported by associations and relationships founded upon common vision and values, that traverse the boundaries of diverse organisations, sectors and political affiliations. By approaching collective impact in the mode of a movement, there is a dramatically increased chance of shifting boundaries for what is socially acceptable and politically expedient.

The creation of non-profit organisations does not necessarily facilitate the work of movement building associations (Ito, Rosner, Carter & Pastor 2014). Professionalisation of non-profits, combined with the lack of attention devoted to the unique organisational and developmental requirements of social change groups has exacerbated the problem. Social change organisations, like other non-profit groups, contend with a wide gamut of issues and concerns, such as effective leadership, competition, constituencies and organisational proficiencies that must be tackled. However, social change groups face distinctive decisions and dilemmas about how to develop creative yet supple organisations, progress strategies and approaches betwixt and between groups, and sustain a team who are willing and able to work with others who are motivated to conceive and establish movements for change. Current capacity building programs seldom address these requirements.

Those working within social change movements can often encounter ambivalence in their relationships with the non-profit sector. Non-profit organisations that focus on social change initiatives operate within the confines of corporate structures that dictate their accountability to funders. Beamish and Luebbers (2009) points out that this can result in a bewildering amount of conflict for movements that challenge existing forms of hegemony, especially around the distribution of wealth that in turn benefits the same groups and institutions that fund organisations. This contrasts markedly with the ecosystem around movement building initiatives that places a much greater emphasis on the needs and issues of their constituents. There is a growing awareness of the need to address this through the development of analysis that specifically focuses on the impact of incorporation and funding structures in relation to non-profit bodies that work within the field of social change. Movement building is both explicitly and implicitly challenging for a multitude of factors, but is often made more so by the tendency of backbone organisations and other technical assistance bodies to seldom be aware of, or prioritise the importance of encompassing meaningful community and constituent involvement. In addition there are presently few forum where those involved in movement building work can convene to share and discuss their practices and experiences.

Holmgren (2017) observes that the collective impact framework "tends to begin with institutional players who then look to include citizens in the work; however the inclusion of citizens tends to be contextual to what a core group of institutional players [have] identified as the issues to tackle". This dramatically decreases opportunities for community members to be able to influence the development of strategies, programs, policies and solutions that the institutions and their surrogates devise.



# DISCUSSION
## FROM COLLABORATION TO CONVERGENCE

This challenges the leaders of collective impact initiatives to revisit their approaches and praxis towards community engagement, especially when the same leaders express a desire to construct a movement around their work. Movements will not occur without authentic large scale community engagement, *together* with high quality collaborative leadership. "Success comes when we engage partners who represent a broad cross section of the community not only to shape the overall vision, but also to help practitioners to change the way they serve" (Edmonton & Hecht, 2014).

Community engagement is simultaneously a process and an outcome. Holmgren (2017) advocates for the process aspects to be given more weight "than the tendency to equate return on investment with the achievement of pre-determined outcome objectives". This is predicated on a view that leaders have a duty to accede to the potential for movements and community change initiatives to produce outcomes and learnings that are dynamic, and therefore impossible to reliably predict in advance. Resource allocation also needs to factor in and support this developmental capacity, and in a social justice as well as a macroeconomic sense, governments also need to prioritise community capacity building as a primary approach to driving sustainable social progress.

Holmgren (2017) highlights the insightful yet contentious view that "the transformation that we need and talk about must also address all the ways we avoid real change". Within the context of collective impact this sadly often manifests by way of collectives choosing to focus on initiatives that are operationally convenient, not ambitious enough in their depth or scope, or considered as being *achievable,* at the expense of undertaking the difficult yet essential work of assailing their constituents' most challenging and urgent needs. Successful movements necessitate personal change. They require changes in perspective, changes in habits and behaviours, changes in our definitions of leadership and changes in the way we see and understand what community health and wellbeing actually look like.

# DISCUSSION
## AOTEAROA

### CULTURAL CONTEXT

Despite our geographical closeness and shared common history, there are a great many cultural and socio-political differences that separate Aotearoa from Australia. In terms of social service provision and the broader social contract, there are an exponentially greater number of important and defining differences between Aotearoa and The United States.

It is therefore essential that when we look to import methodologies and frameworks from these and other neighbours, that we undertake robust due diligence to ensure that these systems and interventions are not only culturally appropriate, but also feasible and fit for purpose within our own social, political and practice environment. At the very least we must be prepared to foster a broad dialogue around the central tenets of any imported thinking or framework, and treat the good ideas they embody more as a point of departure, that we then modify to reflect our own unique history and social context. This type of approach is absolutely essential to any place based systems change theory and is clearly evidenced in the foundational literature establishing and defining collective impact. In our haste for implementation and adoption of the new, it is imperative that we are constantly thinking, critiquing and prepared to change tack to ensure the best possible outcomes, instead of falling back into the default position of switching off and uncritically endorsing 'accepted wisdom'.

The obvious major difference between the North American (and to a lesser degree – Australian) social service landscape and our own here in Aotearoa, is the critical funding and leadership role played by private philanthropy in the former. It is worth reminding ourselves that collective impact emerged directly from a consultancy built around advising private philanthropic foundations about strategy. Moreover, American philanthropy is deeply ingrained in the national character and history, as one of the foundational principles of the early colonialists, before reaching its zenith in the period between the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. In these early days, American philanthropy was not primarily about the rich helping the poor, but about private initiatives for public good, which focused on increasing quality of life for all. If collective impact is to fulfill its abundant opportunity and promise, it must be implemented with constant reference to this axiom.

In its final term the Clark Labour Government enacted the Tax Act 2007, aimed at fostering a culture of charitable giving. The Act extended tax deductibility for charitable donations, legislating a 33% rebate and removed previous limits on the gross amount and proportion of one's income to which the rebate could be applied.



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The IRD attributes a modest increase in private charitable donations as a result, but notes that this has largely come from small scale middle class giving, which suggests a similar proportionality to the United States; where those earning under $100K are the most generous givers in relation to their income. It is clear that among developed nations, those with higher taxes and bigger social safety nets tend to have lower rates of private charitable giving.

The key difference in terms of the funding landscape between countries where collective impact is well established and working successfully, and Aotearoa, is our relatively small scale of private philanthropy. Gray (2013) states that "unlike many other countries, New Zealand's early history was not conducive to the growth of private philanthropy. Colonial New Zealand did not experience industrial or resources booms which created a consequent wealthy elite, who in turn created personal foundations". Prior to the deregulation of the 1984 Labour Government, our historically egalitarian society, underpinned by the generous provisions of the welfare state and redistributive policy settings, such as death duties and high marginal tax rates, afforded little direct imperative or opportunity for meaningful growth of private philanthropic foundations.

This is especially relevant in terms of systems-change innovation (and its attendant frameworks such as collective impact) and speaks directly to its appropriateness and application here in Aotearoa. It means that we are essentially lacking the core sector that has been the main driver of this type of social change initiative within other countries. This is crucially important not just in terms of funding, but also with regard to the broader think-scape in which collective impact exists.

It is not just the areas of theoretical and practical support where the influence of large scale, well-resourced and established private foundations are their most potent, it is also the fundamental relational spheres such as high quality networking, and the important work of their associated think-tanks, that disseminate critical aspects of the theory and support ongoing development of the 'brainpower' necessary to ensure practitioners have the required degree of understanding to enable them to successfully think and work differently.

There is excellent work being undertaken in Aotearoa in this area by private foundations such as the J R Mckenzie Trust, The Tindall Foundation and the Todd Foundation, and indeed their joint venture; The Working Together More Fund, is the closest parallel we have to the American model. However, the question is really one of magnitude. Since its inception in 2009, The Working Together More Fund has made grants of over $2 million to local not-for-profit organisations who work in a collaborative way to support their local communities. Whilst this is in itself is laudable, it is simply not enough concentrated resource to empower large scale social change. Even if this was increased a hundred fold over the same timeframe, it is doubtful whether it would be enough to 'move the needle' on the issues in question, or shift the social service sector away from the predominance of the more limited and risk-averse project-based distributive funding that we currently see. Irrespective of the amount of money and resource available for social change initiatives here in Aotearoa, the lack of large scale private philanthropy and its relationship to the potential success of frameworks such as collective impact is an issue that mandates our serious consideration.

# DISCUSSION
## AOTEAROA

### 1984 – ROGERNOMICS (NOT ORWELL)

After nine years in power, the National Party government and Prime Minister Robert Muldoon had become deeply unpopular with the electorate, who had become disillusioned by their economic policies, and viewed the government as rigid, autocratic, inflexible, and increasingly unresponsive to public concerns. The Labour Party were swept into power in a landslide victory, after Muldoon called a snap election. As a result of the short lead time between announcement and Election Day, the Labour Party did not release either a political manifesto, or signify to any great degree what policies they would pursue in government if they won.

Upon winning the election, Labour Finance Minister Roger Douglas subsequently enacted sweeping structural changes to the economy aimed at implementing neoliberal free market principles. Nagel (1998) states that "between 1984 and 1993, New Zealand underwent radical economic reform, moving from what had probably been the most protected, regulated and state-dominated system of any capitalist democracy to an extreme position at the open, competitive, free-market end of the spectrum". This entailed the removal of farming subsidies, the introduction of GST, the reduction of income and company tax, abolition of import tariffs, and the deregulation of the economy, together with the corporatisation and later privatization of state owned enterprises. This began a traumatic period for our country's economy, which eventually flowed through to substantial social change. The New Zealand Labour party had grown out of the union movement, and was historically socialist in orientation, being largely viewed as the 'workers party'.

Many long-time supporters felt betrayed by the clandestine and underhanded way in which *Rogernomics* was effected, and have subsequently lamented the slow, painful dismantling of the welfare state that had once underpinned our traditionally egalitarian society. Suddenly collectivism was out, and individualism was in.

Central to the doctrine of neoliberalism are the ideas of competition, individualism and free choice. Neoliberalism views the economy as a market place and encourages the unrestricted use of competition as a means of increasing value and reducing waste. It stipulates that we are all free agents to make our own choices as to the goods and services we will purchase, and that the 'market', through use of the price mechanism will always revert to and maintain equilibrium between production and consumption. This was supposed to ensure that production of 'good' products and services increased and 'bad' ones were eliminated.

Coinciding with a worldwide shift towards globalisation, the abrupt removal of subsidies and tariffs largely destroyed our manufacturing base, as domestic production of many goods was no longer competitive in relation to cheap imports manufactured in third world sweatshops. This proved economically catastrophic, especially for rural and provincial New Zealand, where industries like forestry and sheep meat farming were now suddenly at the mercy of fluctuating global commodity prices. History clearly illustrates how the burden of these economic shifts fell disproportionately upon Māori.



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Margaret Thatcher famously declared that "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families". This exemplifies how the neoliberal worldview attaches no significance to the notion that we are all a part of something larger than ourselves, something shared; such as neighbourhood, community, church, electorate, hapu, or iwi. In its quest to prove the superiority of individualism, neoliberal capitalism has greatly damaged our social fabric by attacking our inclination and ability to form connections that are the building blocks of society. This is most clearly evidenced by our perpetually growing rates of inequality. Three decades later, persistently low wages, casualisation of the workforce and lack of job security, unaffordable housing, sky-rocketing inequality, a growing underclass of those stuck within entrenched and often intergenerational poverty, the corporatisation of democracy, and the underfunding of essential services such as health and education, are the legacies of neoliberalism. Foreign ownerships of our major banks, together with an economy that is dominated by the interests of powerful multinational corporations, sees hundreds of millions of dollars of profit withdrawn from New Zealand every week. This is a net economic outflow and is money that is no longer available to be utilised to benefit the citizens of this country.

There were some spectacular winners from this process. A tiny handful of business people with insider knowledge or connections, made fortunes out of buying our previously state owned enterprises on the cheap. What we as a society had owned collectively, was rapidly transferred into the hands of the elite, for a pittance. Those already wealthy, those with significant assets, and the owners of large businesses also benefited disproportionately. History bears witness to the fact that once the dust settled, and the economic 'pie' was re-sliced, a far greater share was apportioned to the few, while a far smaller share was left to be divided by everyone else.

In one sense it is a paraphrase of the economic and cultural dispossession heaped on Māori, at the hands of Pākeha colonialists.

In his book 'Ruth, Roger and Me' Rhodes Scholar Andrew Dean details the social consequences of neoliberalism; as the breakdown in the security of families, a pervasive sense of disconnection from each other, and a ruthless and uncaring society, where people no longer know their neighbours or look out for each other's best interests. Dean ties these economics changes directly to sharp and sustained increases in crime, suicide, family violence, mental health problems and other negative indices. Once again Māori were effected disproportionately. Interestingly, in a recent interview of former Prime Minister Jim Bolger (conducted as part of Radio NZ's series '9th Floor') the former PM stated unequivocally that "The neoliberal experiment has failed New Zealand" (Espiner, 2017).

Appreciation of this recent history is valuable for anyone working within the social services sector; as most people that approach social service providers for assistance, will have been impacted either directly or indirectly by a multitude of the issues detailed above. Through our efforts to foster positive change and achieve collective impact on the most pressing issues facing our society today, we must necessarily understand our work against a backdrop of policies, by successive governments that have dismantled the bonding agents within our culture and society.
In a philosophical sense, one of the things we are looking to achieve by way of interventions such as collective impact, is to rebuild and reconnect our civic culture to the people who make up our society.

# OVERVIEW

In many respects, collaboration is an innately humanist and intuitive response to problem solving that seeks to extract the maximum value and benefit from collective inputs, in order to achieve outcomes that are greater than the sum of their parts.

A vast number of studies clearly prove that collaboration as a model of organisational behaviour and development, can be a formidable tool for advancing net sum gains within a domain or field of knowledge, as well as maximising the productivity of those working together in a structured way. More importantly, there is now a general consensus that in working to address large scale, intractable and entrenched social issues in particular, *together* is indeed better. The social aspects of collaboration are also well documented and extremely positive; with participants reporting increased motivation driven by shared aspiration, improved morale through a sense of shared responsibility, and intensified focus achieved by multiple perspectives being simultaneously reconciled, and synthesized into new understandings.

Central to the notion of effective collaboration, is the quality of the relationships which underpin it. The literature is unequivocal on this point. Initiatives must undertake to build relationships of social capital, mutual trust and reciprocity. Trust, and the development of relationships built upon trust, is the cornerstone of collaboration. In her influential work around egalitarian participating democracy, Harvard theorist Danielle Allen writes that "Citizens in a democracy should think of themselves as friends, not out of love, but out of utility. They are in a project together, and that project works best when they can assume each other's best intentions. And rhetoric at its best can forge that trust, making it possible to talk to strangers as equals, respecting what they have to give, and signalling a willingness to give in return". This is a great analogy for the kind of trusting relationships and outlook required to build great collaborations.

A distinct focus on the relational aspects of collaboration is a compelling and ever present theme in the literature around collective impact. In all forms of collaboration, boundary crossing must be accomplished in order to create linkages across hierarchical, functional and internal/external divides. Social interaction is a powerful leveller that has the potential to span all social cleavages, especially where there may be a history of avoidance, conflict or dysfunction. As Māori, we are innately aware of the significance of Whakawhānaungatanga in terms of building relationships. This confers a considerable advantage upon Kaupapa Māori driven initiatives, with respect to the climatic factors necessary to begin the process of collective impact. However, all care must be taken to act generously and inclusively towards other participants, partners and organisations, and their contributions towards the formation and work of initiatives.



This reflects the essential reality, that ethnicity is one of the pivotal boundaries that must be traversed in order to build the broad, cross-sector 'buy in' required to establish and maintain collective impact initiatives.

One of the most critical potential difficulties highlighted in the literature, is the process surrounding the formulation of the common agenda. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is often not given the time or depth of consideration needed to truly achieve the breakthroughs in thinking, required to power the initiative forward. This part of the process must be viewed by participants and leaders, as absolutely fundamental to the likely success or otherwise, of the initiative. Partners are often enthusiastic to get started on the 'doing' part, and therefore may gloss over the 'thinking' part, or otherwise fail to realise how significant and foundational it is. Several commentators have pointed out the folly of this approach, and how it can lead to later tensions around differing understandings of crucial aspects of the action framework, as well as a perceived lack of mission congruence.

Many rounds of in-depth discussion, followed by deep reflection must be allowed for. A vigorous, open and attentive atmosphere should be fostered, in order to encourage all participants to speak honestly and abundantly. Issues and conflicts must be brought to the surface and addressed. Without authentic and transparent communication and feedback, conformity and groupthink may develop. This can preclude the development of innovative strategies and ideas and render the whole undertaking pointless. There should be no time pressure on this procedure. It will take longer than you think, and in some cases significantly longer. However, there is no substitute for the lengthy deliberative nature of this aspect of the process, as this is essentially the learning phase upon which collective understandings are built. The degree to which participants pursue this essential component, will subsequently dictate how well the multiple viewpoints around the table are able to be synthesized and reconciled, in order to achieve the level of consensus needed to derive a robust and durable common agenda.

The case for authentic, early and broad scale community involvement within the determinative stages of collective impact initiatives, is overwhelming. Writers are unanimous in expressing the imperative for initiatives to consult widely with their constituent communities early in the formative process, well before common agendas are formulated. Collective impact efforts must transcend the model of institutions and organizations doing things *to and for* communities, instead of *with* them. This is a critical distinction. Collective impact efforts must formulate new constructions as to the ways in which members of the community are engaged, not just as focus group participants or token representatives, but as active leaders and producers of the ideas, services and outcomes that will create and sustain long-term change.

Best practice would suggest that the implementation of CBPR projects (Community Based Participatory Research) would provide a logical start point for the development of issues suitable and appropriate for consideration by initiatives. Through this robust process of co-design and investigation, the most pressing issues relevant to communities themselves should become easily identifiable. It is these issues that collective impact initiatives should then coalesce around. Valuable additional precepts and processes gleaned from other frameworks such as CCAT (Community Coalition Action Theory) & PCS (Power of Collaborative Solutions) could then provide additional and beneficial support to embryonic projects before they are fashioned into initiatives.

This intensity of focus at the instigative stage of the process, should position collective impact initiatives strongly, to eschew the obvious pitfalls that can derail efforts or progress further down the line.

Economic changes over the past three decades, particularly the expansion and universality of the communication internet and the 'internet of things (IoT)', have instigated a radical transformation of the economy. We have moved through the digital revolution and witnessed the primacy of large scale industry give way to a global economy that is now information-centred, and therefore dependent on emergent technologies, as well as the expansion of the service sector. Resulting societal changes allow new ways of conceptualising collaboration, and of understanding the evolution and expansion of these types of working relationships. The rise of the internet has facilitated the almost instantaneous sharing of ideas, skills and knowledge, and this in turn has greatly enhanced both the feasibility and applicability of collaborative working practices. Rather than being domiciled within single structural forms or organisations, those seeking to advance social solutions are now being empowered and energised to act as 'free radicals' within the larger social context. This speaks to the necessity and inevitability of transforming collective impact from a managerial to a movement building paradigm.

The shift from a managerial to a movement building paradigm is one that seeks to liberate and multiply individual efforts, by allowing them to find new and more powerful contexts within which to grow and achieve critical mass for change. Central to this notion is the concept of devolution. Following on from the governmental trend of devolving services to community organisations and the private sector, collective impact aspires to further devolve these services and their associated forums back to communities, by way of initiatives that will eventually embody the collective will of the communities they serve. This underlines the formidable shift towards democratisation that is currently underway largely unheralded, within many of our social institutions. It is being powered by the rise of the sharing economy together with the cooperative commons, and it is already making immense structural changes to the economy. The sharing economy is enabled by the digitisation of information and knowledge and prioritises access over assets, together with a natural inclination towards systems level thinking and change. It is therefore amorphous and unencumbered by many 'real world' considerations

Collective impact is strongly countercultural to the prevailing archetype of building large, complex and multifaceted organisations, especially within the social sector. In his seminal work *'The Culture of Collaboration',* author Evan Rosen clearly outlines how traditional "command and control" organisational structures inhibit collaboration. He views the frameworks upon which our most established community based, and non-profit organisations are constructed, as largely obsolete, and argues that collective impact dictates a shift away from these types of aggregating structures. Indeed he defines collaborations as "working together to create value, while sharing virtual or physical space", which unmistakeably presciences a shift to the 'virtual' over the physical.

For collaboration to flourish, it is becoming increasingly apparent that there is a necessity to change the very nature of our organisations, and the practices and priorities of those who work within them. The breaking down of organisational barriers between people, whose work is focused on achieving the same end goals, is really at the heart of what collective impact seeks to address.



Instead of individual efforts being fragmented into discrete components in the change process, collective impact is motivated by the desire to amalgamate efforts and promulgate innovation as the means to attaining significantly better outcomes. It calls us to rethink the ways in which our organisational structures segment, diffuse and dilute our efforts. The call to 'abandon the silo' and the very deep seated sense of competition that reinforces them, is also crucial. Technology has allowed us to realise that competition and market structures do not always result in equitable solutions or sustainable outcomes. In fact they hardly ever do.

Much has been written about how collective impact *differs* from collaboration. For functional purposes it may be preferable and indeed more helpful, to view collective impact as a juncture on the continuum of collaborative endeavour. Perhaps it is not really necessary to differentiate collective impact from collaboration per se, by denigrating the latter.

Instead, we could view collective impact as a subset of collaboration, albeit a higher functioning and more disciplined version. This is significant in terms of both timeframe and context. The case studies that FSG have cited as successful examples of collective impact, have grown out of longstanding collaborations that in some cases have been underway in some form or another for over a decade. It is unrealistic to expect that initiatives and their members will be able to make the leap from limited experience of high functioning collaboration, all the way to collective impact in the space of a few short years. It is clear from the literature that much more time and effort needs to be devoted to understanding, learning and putting into practice collaborative methodologies. Collective impact is valuable in that it sets a 'high water' mark for what is possible under a collaborative approach, but it should not be viewed as an end in itself.

# CONCLUSION

A number of significant findings have been clearly identified in the course of this review. In the first instance, the shift towards more collaborative working practices and environments across all spheres of administration, is now firmly established. Within this trend, collective impact is emerging as the dominant framework for advancing collaborative endeavours across a wide range of applications.

The intentional use of data as a driver towards progress on a wide variety of issues has now become standard practice within governmental, non-profit and private enterprises. Collective impact is at the forefront of data-informed innovation and interventions, and is experiencing substantial growth in uptake throughout the world.

The facet of collective impact that has received the most criticism and commentary, is the relationship that exists between initiatives and the communities they serve. Reflecting the business backgrounds of its founders, collective impact began as a high level strategy based intervention that was clearly top down in nature. This was initially, and to a lesser degree continues to be the subject of a loud chorus of disapproval from many quarters. FSG, together with leaders from some of the groundbreaking initiatives that collective impact was founded upon, have been diligent in addressing this and other concerns that have emerged at a practice level. It is now fully accepted that community members and leaders, as well as the intended beneficiaries of collective impact initiatives, must be included in the process of creating the initiatives themselves. This reflects the important reality that lasting change is simply not possible without wide scale community buy in.

At present there is a real deficit in terms of substantive research into the actual processes and experience of collective impact initiatives, across the full course of their evolution, from formulation, establishment and development, through to evaluation. The literature suggests that this continues to be a limiting factor for new initiatives in regard to providing comprehensive testimonials and learnings about potential difficulties they may face and short-cuts they may benefit from. Whilst collective impact has generated a large volume of meaningful and worthwhile discussion, across the internet in particular, there is still a clear and present need for solid, academic, peer reviewed investigation in order to extrapolate and objectively define the exact nature of its benefits.

The Collective Impact Forum provides an excellent resource for anyone considering the adoption of a collective impact approach. It contains the vast majority of published material concerning collective impact, as well as a range of tools, tutorials and other valuable resources. Contained within the references section at the back of this review, is a full list of articles that have been relied upon to formulate this publication.

They represent a broad cross section of the available material concerning collective impact, and therefore offer the reader with an excellent place to start their own journey towards understanding what collective impact is all about.

In order to progress sustainable resolutions to the most critical social issues within our society, the solution must be to build stronger and more resilient communities, not just stronger programs and services. We sometimes forget that people live in communities and that families, friends, neighbours, and other issues based assemblages and organisations, have always been at the forefront of how communities solve problems.

Collective impact must identify and build upon assets that already exist within communities, and be responsive to the needs and issues identified from within communities themselves. As Edmondson & Hecht point out in their article 'Defining Quality Collective Impact'

> "collective impact can represent a significant leap in the journey to address pervasive social challenges, but to ensure that this concept leads to real improvements in the lives of those we serve, we must bring rigor to the practice by drawing on lessons from a diverse array of communities, and define in concrete terms, what makes this work different".

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