

## What is Collective Impact?

Society is full of increasingly complex social issues that prove challenging for any single entity to solve on its own. The collective impact framework is based upon the understanding that no single policy, government entity, or organization can tackle or solve these deeply entrenched social problems alone. Moving beyond a partnership or collaboration, collective impact calls for a longstanding commitment between multiple organizations all working toward a common goal.

There are five key elements to the collective impact framework:

- 1. Agreement upon a common agenda.** The collective impact approach calls for multiple organizations or entities to abandon individual agendas in favor of a single common agenda. This requires all participants to have a common understanding of the problem, and a mutual agreement on how to solve it.
- 2. Develop a shared measurement system.** Collecting data and measuring results using a common set of performance measures ensures all efforts remain aligned, enables participants to hold each other accountable, and allows the group to learn from each other's successes and failures.
- 3. Engage in mutually reinforcing activities.** The power of collective action stems from the coordination of various member activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Collective impact initiatives encourage participants to advance activities in coordination with the activities of other participants within the initiative.
- 4. Maintain open and continuous communication.** Open and continuous communication helps group members commit and remain committed to a common agenda, builds trust between participants, and assures commitment to mutual objectives.
- 5. Formation of a backbone organization.** A defining feature of collective impact initiatives is the existence of a centralized infrastructure- known as a backbone organization, with a staff dedicated to coordinating the efforts of group members, and ensuring that the activities of participants remain in concert. The expectation that consistent collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons collective impact fails.



Photo credit: Collaboration for Impact

## **Collective Impact in Practice**

The Los Angeles region has two significant collective impact initiatives in the Los Angeles Promise Zone and the South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z) Promise Zone.

The [LA Promise Zone](#) involves nearly 50 local institutions, non-profit and community organizations, all working towards job creation, public safety, improved public education, and stimulating affordable housing opportunities for residents located within specific neighborhoods of Central Los Angeles. The City of Los Angeles is the lead agency for the initiative and the Youth Policy Institute serves as the initiative's "backbone organization". The work of the L.A. Promise Zone is overseen by a leadership council, and carried out by five working groups. Each working group, while dedicated to the overarching goal of "empowering communities by aligning efforts and resources to support family success," has created a sub-goal specific to their expertise that will help accomplish the broader goal, and is committed to an action strategy of how to get there.



Map of the Los Angeles Promise Zone

The [SLATE-Z Promise Zone](#) currently has over 55 implementation partners representing diverse community organizations, educational institutions, private sector businesses, government agencies, and elected leaders, all working to revitalize South Los Angeles by moving residents to economic opportunity. The initiative's five overarching and interrelated goals include:

move 10,000 residents into living wage jobs; increase economic activity by investing in businesses, entrepreneurs, and community-oriented infrastructure; increase student attainment of certificates, degrees, and preparation for careers by guaranteeing post-secondary career pathway enrollment and support; reduce violent crime through effective prevention, intervention, re-entry and community engagement; and increase the safety, affordability, and use of public transit. Like the LA Promise Zone, the City of Los Angeles is the lead agency for the initiative and Los Angeles Trade Technical College serves as the initiative's backbone organization.



SLATE-Z coalition

### Sources

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