

What is a Collective Impact Organization?

Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But collective impact initiatives are distinctly different. Unlike most collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants.

Kania, J., and M. Kramer, 2011: Collective Impact. *Stanford Soc. Innov. Rev.*, 36–41.

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

Hanleybrown, F., J. Kania, and M. Kramer, 2012: *Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work*. *Stanford Soc. Innov. Rev.*

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work

An important emerging concept is that of the collective impact organization approach to address broad issues with many constituencies. This new approach arises from the realization that the complex nature of most social problems makes it difficult for any single program or organization, however well managed and funded, to single-handedly create lasting largescale change. In such collective organizations, the participants share a vision of change and a commitment to solve a problem by coordinating their work and agreeing on shared goals. Participants agree to shared core values and agenda, share metrics for success, support mutually reinforcing activities, provide continuous communication, and have an agreed-on backbone support organization.

In such an organization, the shared agenda and set of core values should be initially established by the contributing organizations. The shared agenda should be broad enough that different contributors will contribute in very different ways to an overall effort yet provide boundaries that ensure the effort is overly ambitious. For ocean observations, examples of shared values might include “sustained observations,” “open access to data,” or “observations for the benefit of society.” Such core values should be decided upon by the community of contributors and should involve listening sessions within the various contributing and stakeholder communities. These core values provide guidance for a shared agenda, and a platform for defining metrics of success.

Weller RA, Baker DJ, Glackin MM, Roberts SJ, Schmitt RW, Twigg ES and Vimont DJ (2019) The Challenge of Sustaining Ocean Observations. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:105. doi:

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<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2019.00105/full>