CALIFORNIA**COLLABORATIVE**
on District Reform

Meeting 32 Summary
Leveraging Partnerships to Improve Community Outcomes:
Collective Impact

March 23–24, 2017
San Bernardino, California

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> *Note: This meeting summary was developed as a resource for members of the California Collaborative on District Reform. We ar*e *making this document publicly available in an effort to share the work of the Collaborative more broadly to inform dialogue and decisions of educators throughout the state. It does not, however, contain the background and contextual information that might otherwise accompany a product created for the general public. For more information about the meeting and other Collaborative activities, please visit www.cacollaborative.org.*

Previous meetings of the California Collaborative on District Reform have explored connections between K–12 education and postsecondary success[2] and with external organizations and agencies.[3] In March 2017, the Collaborative convened in San Bernardino to take these conversations a step further through an exploration of collective impact approaches (defined below) to address complex social problems that no single institution—including school districts—can solve alone. Using the lenses of San Bernardino City Unified School District (USD) and Oceanside USD, members and guests of the Collaborative considered the opportunities and challenges associated with uniting a broad range of partners to advance the interests of the entire community. In many ways, the meeting came at an opportune time: The current context of political uncertainty, discord, and potential funding cutbacks makes it all the more important for organizations to work together in service of what is best for our youth. Dialogue throughout the meeting suggested that collective impact has potential as a more powerful vehicle than traditional

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[1] Thanks to Jarah Blum, Marina Castro, Suzette Chavez, Linda Choi, and Kathleen Jones for taking careful notes during the meeting, which made this summary possible.

[2] See, for example, *College and Career Readiness for All: Linked Learning in Long Beach,* at http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting17; *Looking Forward: Preparing Our Students for a New Workforce*, at http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting-18; and *Accountability and Support in a Coherent System of Continuous Improvement*, at http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting27.

[3] See, for example, *Community-School Partnerships for Youth Success: Meeting the Needs of Adolescent English Learners*, at http://cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting6; and *Creating a Quality Community Schools District: Each Child College, Career, & Community Ready*, at http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting21.

approaches to improvement. It also introduces new obstacles. This summary captures these ideas as they emerged in the San Bernardino meeting.

Defining Collective Impact

Prereadings circulated to meeting participants summarize five conditions of collective impact identified in research as leading to powerful results.[4] (1) Partners create a **common agenda**. In order to effectively tackle a problem, the partners need to come to a shared understanding of the problem and the goals that will orient the work. (2) **Shared metrics and data systems** then help the partners evaluate their collective progress toward the shared goals. (3) Partners' engagement in **mutually reinforcing activities** coordinated across organizations can magnify the impact each is trying to make on particular intermediate or long-term goals. (4) **Frequent and continuous communication** is critical to coordinating and maintaining a collective impact effort, including regular meetings among partners to strategize, share results, and troubleshoot. (5) Finally, efforts that require extensive stakeholder participation and collaboration use a **backbone organization** or supportive structure that facilitates communication and progress. Individual sessions throughout the Collaborative's two-day meeting derived from the specific challenges that San Bernardino City USD and Oceanside USD are facing in their collective impact efforts, but they map closely onto these underlying conditions.

A presentation early in the meeting further framed the collective impact for the group. The presenter emphasized that collective impact is an effort to move from fragmented services to collective efforts: She also highlighted a shift in emphasis from traditional approaches to partnership: "Instead of convening around initiatives, we convene around outcomes."

The presentation also identified three preconditions for collective impact to take hold in a community. First, these community-wide initiatives need **champions**, "people who will pursue overcoming all obstacles to make collective impact work." The initiative also requires **adequate resources** to support it, although this is "not necessarily about looking for new resources....It's about finding ways to pull what we already have together for the most impact." Finally, collective impact success requires a sense of **urgency**. This is especially true in communities with depressed economic and social opportunities, environments in which young people may be particularly vulnerable. The presentation closed with this call to action: "We need to remember that lives are on the line."

Setting the District Contexts

Meeting 32 of the Collaborative departed from our usual format in that it viewed the topic of its discussion through the lenses of two districts (rather than one) to examine a key focal area for K–12 educators. San Bernardino City USD and Oceanside USD operate in different contexts and have taken different paths to advance a collective impact agenda. In their stories, participants had an opportunity to see the common threads that connect collective

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[4] See Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011, Winter). Collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, *9*(1), 36–41. Retrieved from https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

impact efforts and the ways in which community context and specific design decisions can shape how those efforts unfold.

San Bernardino City USD

San Bernardino is a community in which the district has anchored a collective impact initiative that began organically but that is striving to move toward a more formalized set of agreements in order to deepen and sustain the work.

Community Challenges

San Bernardino is the second-poorest city in the nation. Key industry losses—among them the closing of an air force base that provided jobs for decades—exacerbated by the state's fiscal crisis, led the city to file for bankruptcy in 2012. Job opportunities that exist in the city routinely fill with applicants who commute from surrounding communities. District leaders therefore recognize that "our crisis is not a district crisis, it's a community crisis."

Community Engagement Plan as a Pathway Forward

Early in Dr. Dale Marsden's tenure as superintendent of San Bernardino City USD, the district enlisted a range of stakeholders to develop its community engagement plan. Thirty-seven people from within the district, higher education, and the public and private sectors crafted an initial plan, then vetted and revised it with input from more than 1,000 additional voices. Describing the district's philosophy for planning in this way, one San Bernardino City USD leader explained, "If you want to accelerate change, involve more people in the process than you thought practically possible."

The focus of the community engagement plan is hope—the district's motto is "making hope happen"—with an emphasis on preparing youth for jobs. The plan also reflects a perception that all members of the community are part of the solution. According to a district leader, "Our task is to have this plan owned, known, and energized" by all partners. One of the prominent challenges facing the district is supporting an evolution from the effort's organic beginnings to a more formal set of commitments and roles that can strengthen and sustain the work moving forward.

Early Outcomes

The struggles facing the city are also evident in the K–12 school system. Nearly 90 percent of San Bernardino City USD students are low income, and 27 percent are English learners. When Superintendent Marsden came to the district in 2012, it was grappling with low levels of achievement, graduation, and college attendance. Although many of these challenges persist, promising signs of improvement have emerged. Graduation rates improved from 62 percent in 2010 to 85 percent in 2015—including strong growth among Latino, African American, and English learner students—and now exceed the statewide rate. In addition, 57 percent of middle and high school students are in career pathways designed to build rigorous, career-relevant skills. The district is currently undertaking a certification process for career pathways in elementary school as well.

Oceanside USD

Oceanside USD is working explicitly to build a collective impact approach modeled after the Strive Together theory of action.[5] Like San Bernardino City USD, Oceanside leads the effort from the district office. However, the district is challenged to find ways to support the initiative with sufficient resources and dedicated staffing to move the work forward.

Community Challenges

Oceanside USD is nested in the northern part of San Diego County, a neighbor to Camp Pendleton and adjacent to more affluent surrounding communities. Oceanside itself features high levels of poverty and significant gang activity, problems that cluster in three neighborhoods in particular. Job opportunities are limited, and most adults seeking employment within Oceanside must settle for low-skill and low-wage positions.

Oceanside Promise as a Pathway Forward

To confront these challenges, Superintendent Duane Coleman—born, raised, and deeply rooted in the Oceanside community—has spearheaded a collective impact initiative called the Oceanside Promise. Oceanside USD has partnered with government organizations, business, nonprofits, and the faith-based community to advance the academic outcomes and overall life prospects of the city's youth. To that end, the partners have organized around the goal of increasing the percentage of students graduating college-, career-, and life-ready to 90 percent by 2026.

From the start, Oceanside's work has been specifically positioned as a collective impact effort. District leaders established the Oceanside Promise as a 501c3 nonprofit foundation shortly after Coleman became superintendent in 2014 to support the initiative and are currently working to shift the foundation from its early focus on providing scholarships to a new emphasis on driving collective impact. The Oceanside Promise has also developed three collective action networks oriented around kindergarten readiness, college and career readiness, and data.

Oceanside USD leaders are moving to establish the financial and organizational structures needed to anchor the work going forward. The foundation has limited resources and no dedicated staff, and the district is able to provide only some of the time and personnel needed to support the initiative.

Target Outcomes

Clear disparities exist in student outcomes between Oceanside USD and its more affluent neighbors. More than two thirds of Oceanside's students are economically disadvantaged, and district leaders report a 45-percent difference in third-grade literacy between Oceanside students and those in nearby Carlsbad. In order to meet its goals of college, career, and life readiness, the Oceanside Promise has identified several targets for success

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[5] See https://www.strivetogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/StriveTogether-Theory-of-Action-2017.pdf

by 2026. These include an increase in kindergarten readiness from 37 percent to 90 percent, in third grade literacy from 32 percent to 90 percent, in students being on track for graduation (as measured by earning a "C" or better in A-G coursework[6]) from 50 percent to 90 percent, in high school graduates who meet A-G requirements from 34 percent to 90 percent, and in students who earn a postsecondary degree or certificate to 90 percent.

Organizing Around a Common Agenda

The first condition of collective impact is organizing around a common agenda. In both San Bernardino and Oceanside, the districts and their partners have identified a north star that motivates their work. In San Bernardino, the focus is on jobs and overall economic health. In Oceanside, college and career readiness anchors the collective impact effort. A panel of community partners from both cities and subsequent group discussion addressed some of the issues related to identifying and working together on a common agenda.

Motivation for Engaging in Collective Impact

A variety of community partners shared their motives for coming to the table as part of a collective impact effort. A county office of education leader, for example, explained that engaging with school districts is what the organization does; doing so in the context of a collective impact effort is a natural extension of the county's role. For higher education, partnerships can mean increased student enrollment—and better-prepared students can lead to higher completion rates. An area business leader added that economic expansion and growth in the area depends on the availability and quality of the workforce. A successful education system is essential to prepare potential employees for job opportunities; it is also an important component of quality of life in the community that will help to attract and retain strong employees.

A guest from a more mature initiative in Dallas, Texas—the Commit! Partnership—added to the business case for collective impact by sharing that for their partners, "equity is better for our bottom line." A presentation on the Dallas work elaborated:

> When we allow anyone's potential to go unrealized, our region suffers the consequences. When we don't have enough skilled workers to fill available jobs, businesses suffer, and without everyone having the ability to participate, our economy suffers as a whole. When we close the gaps, we all benefit.

In this and in subsequent conversations throughout the meeting, participants emphasized the need to make a business case for collective impact to bring partners to the table and to ensure the long-term viability of the work.

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[6] California has identified 15 courses that students must pass with a grade of C or better in order to gain eligibility for the University of California and California State University systems. These requirements are known as the A-G requirements; A-G coursework refers to classes that quality toward these requirements.

Conditions for Successful Partnerships

Remarks from the community partner panelists and reactions from other meeting participants pointed to several conditions that can facilitate successful partnerships.

Seeing Value in Collaboration

First, strong partners recognize the value of collaboration. Several panelists described personal and professional experiences with collaboration that have led them to believe in the potential of a collective impact approach. One participant observed, "It's amazing how much you can accomplish when it doesn't matter who gets the credit." Participants also recommended that partners avoid viewing collaboration as an add-on to the daily work of an individual or an organization. Rather, collaboration presents a different lens for understanding the work and is most effective when it becomes part of an organization's identity and its approach to doing business.

Providing Role Clarity

Participants also highlighted the importance of role clarity. First and foremost, all stakeholders need a common understanding of the problem they are trying to solve. Some individuals cautioned that a shared problem is often (incorrectly) assumed, but needs to be made explicit. Partners in a strong collective impact effort also need to understand their purpose and responsibilities and what they are accountable for doing and achieving. Some meeting participants suggested that a process of asset mapping can help partners take stock of where an initiative is, where gaps exist, and which organizations can best fill those needs. Observations also suggested that evidence of progress can be compelling. By identifying growth and areas of persistent need, data can help motivate participation and crystallize the purpose and scope of individual contributions. Further discussion of data and its role in collective impact came later in the meeting.

Building Relationships

The panel discussion also emphasized the need to build relationships. Several community partners pointed to their longstanding relationships and ongoing communications with the superintendent as key features of their work together. Participants emphasized that such relationships require trust. This trust can take time to develop and thrives when people follow through on their promises and find ways to make their partners look successful.

The conversation also served as a transition to a discussion of challenges, as several comments indicated that relationships are a necessary but insufficient condition for collective impact to thrive. One meeting participant observed, "The relationship piece is such a key…The challenge is to get folks to *stay* at the table." Another participant spoke to one of the particular challenges facing San Bernardino USD: "It's about translating relationships and collaboration to ownership."

Challenges in Establishing a Collective Endeavor Across Multiple Partners

Developing Shared Ownership

One of the key challenges that collective impact leaders face is to develop an authentic sense of shared ownership. One meeting participant reflected on the implications for district-led efforts like those in San Bernardino and Oceanside by saying, "If people perceive the purpose as helping the district do its work, people might want to help, but they're not stakeholders in the way they might be with a broader community goal." A district leader echoed this concern with an observation about the district's community partners: "They don't have the passion that I have, that this will serve the entire community, jobs, education…I have their support, but I don't know that I have their passion." A possible ingredient for success, then, is to design collective impact around the priorities that ignite the passions of multiple community partners. For example, Oceanside USD leaders reported that a recent leadership retreat for the Oceanside Promise explored an expanded focus on safety, health, and well-being; these new areas of attention are beginning to energize existing and potential partners in new ways.

Buy-in and commitment are critical factors in collective impact sustainability. With regard to vision and passion, leveraging the personal drive and charisma of a visionary leader can help motivate joint work and can even help generate participation and support among partners. In addition, however, it is important to design initiatives that can supersede and outlast a specific leader or leaders. This may be a particular consideration among district leaders and elected officials whose tenure in their positions is often limited—whether by term limits or general education trends. Designers of joint efforts also must recognize that most participants have full-time jobs. To secure ongoing commitment and engagement, collective impact needs to deepen the work, not merely add to existing responsibilities.

Formalizing Partnerships

Formalizing partnerships represents another challenge in establishing collective impact efforts: What is each partner responsible for doing, and what is each partner accountable for achieving? Doing so can help codify relationships in service of a common agenda. It can also help partnerships survive the turnover of individual leaders. However, competing adult agendas can complicate things, as can the impulse to claim ownership or credit for work that takes place. Defining clear roles and responsibilities at the outset of organizational collaborations can help mitigate issues down the road, but this may not always be appropriate for the local context—as in communities such as San Bernardino, where efforts began more organically. Meeting participants who had collective impact experience in other environments suggested that an outside or expert facilitator can ease the process of formalizing relationships.

Navigating Political Dynamics and Logistical Obstacles

Leaders also face political dynamics—both policy/regulatory structures and the politics within organizations—and logistical obstacles that impact the engagement of partner organizations. Government officials can be valuable partners in collective impact efforts, but actions and organizations are sometimes politically charged or dysfunctional. Leaders also

need to manage expectations. Meeting participants with experience in collective impact indicated that it takes time to build relationships, develop an agenda, and see movement in key outcomes. For partners anxious to see a return on their investments of time or money, setting ambitious but realistic expectations may be a key element of recruitment and early work together. There are policy and logistical barriers to mutually reinforcing activities, as well. For example, many collective impact efforts seek to strengthen the connections among K–12 education, higher education, and the workforce. One participant reported, however, that the California State University system can enroll only 50 percent of eligible students, posing challenges for pipelines that connect formal education to life success. All of these dynamics will shape the roles and strategies that partners identify in their work together.

Incorporating the Right Voice

Finally, meeting participants emphasized the need to incorporate the right voices. It is important to recognize who is *not* at the table and to leverage grassroots efforts already underway in a community. In this vein, one participant made reference to a reading from the meeting briefing binder about collective impact as a potential threat to equity in some communities.[7] Meeting participants encouraged stakeholders to enlist the contributions not only of formal organizations, but of residents, and of students in particular. Oceanside USD leaders, for example, reported that a recent retreat of Oceanside Promise partners was compelling because students came to share what *they* wanted and needed in order to thrive.

Developing Shared Measurement Systems

A second principle of collective impact is the design and use of shared measurement systems. Meeting conversation drew on the work underway in Oceanside and San Bernardino, examples from other collective impact efforts, and presentations from Dallas' Commit! Partnership and One Future Coachella Valley in California's Inland Empire.

Identifying Metrics

Meeting participants discussed the process of identifying measures for collective impact. One individual suggested that four questions should guide the process: (1) Why do you measure? (2) What do you measure? (3) How do you measure it? (4) How do you translate data into usable information? A representative from the Commit! Partnership shared the seven criteria that its members use to select metrics for their work:

1. The metric is a valid measure of the outcome.
2. The metric is available consistently over time.
3. The metric is produced by a trusted source.
4. The metric is reasonably similar across the region and its school districts.
5. The metric is affordable to gather and report.
6. The metric is easily understandable to local stakeholders.

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[7] See Le, V. (2015, November 29). *Why communities of color are getting frustrated with collective impact* (Blog post). Retrieved from http://nonprofitwithballs.com/2015/11/why-communities-of-color-are-getting-frustrated-with-collective-impact/.

7. The metric is changeable by the collective impact effort.

Related to conversations about promoting commitments and engagement, participants suggested that participation in creating the questions and identifying the measures helps compel an investment in actually doing the work.

The One Future Coachella Valley story helped to illustrate how such a process can act both to drive the identification of metrics and to promote a stronger partnership. A set of stakeholders began their work by examining the areas in which they could make the greatest impact from an economic perspective. In a review of extant data, the group first found strong associations between formal education levels and both unemployment rates and median income. They also saw gaps between the requirements for postsecondary education in future jobs and current levels of educational attainment in the region, especially among Hispanic students. The group further discovered that only 112 of 920 area high school graduates went on to earn bachelor's degrees and only 62 earned associate's degrees. Together, these data suggested that an emphasis on postsecondary enrollment and completion was a key to improving the region's economic viability.

To identify a pathway forward, the stakeholders looked for opportunities to make progress. They reviewed data that found higher rates of high school graduation and college enrollment among students in career academies and higher enrollment rates for students who completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Career academies and FAFSA plans, therefore, became key strategies in their collective impact effort. A representative from One Future Coachella Valley reported that the region has grown from five career academies serving roughly 600 local high school students prior to 2005 to 38 career academies/pathway programs serving more than 4,300 local high school students in 2015–16. Regional students who participated in career academies graduated at higher rates, moreover, and were more likely to enroll in college immediately after graduation. Regional FAFSA completion rates have also grown—from 38 percent in 2011 to 62 percent in 2016—and FAFSA completers were more than four times more likely to enroll in college than were students who did not complete the application.

Moving forward, One Future Coachella Valley has identified both intermediate outcomes to continue demonstrating effective program implementation (e.g., career academy participation and FAFSA completion among high school students) and the long-term outcomes that will determine the initiative's overall success (e.g., college attendance and graduation).

Capturing Progress From a Nonacademic Perspective

Relative to the process of selecting metrics, participants highlighted the importance of capturing nonacademic progress. Many traditional measures—and the metrics that are often easiest to collect and report—are expressed in terms of academic outcomes. Yet nonschool partners need to see themselves in the data so they can understand the roles they play and make commitments toward improved outcomes. Moreover, stories and observations from meeting participants made clear the wide range of factors outside of school that also impact students' prospects for success. As one individual observed, "I believe [the social and emotional well-being components] are the most important pieces because it's what's happening in those homes in the community, not necessarily the

districts or the schools, that we need to get a handle on." Just as important, data plays a significant role in framing partners' contributions to a collective impact effort.

Using Data to Promote Understanding and Motivate Action

During the meeting, conversation about data routinely came back to making metrics understandable and actionable. First, data can play an important role in building understanding about problems and potential solutions. In outreach to lay audiences or new partners, graphic display can help to communicate information effectively. Second, there is power in pairing quantitative and qualitative data. Although numbers play an important role in capturing trends, stories can be equally powerful; stakeholders should leverage these in tandem with quantitative information. Taken together, effectively packaged data transformed into useable information can motivate action, often by highlighting a minimally understood problem or illustrating where specific partners can contribute to a solution. Building on an idea introduced in the community partner panel, using data to make the economic case for collective impact may be especially important in engaging partners and harnessing support.

Third, participants observed that data dashboards play an important role in highlighting broad trends, but leading indicators and disaggregated data are often more powerful in driving action. One individual advised that it is important not to get stuck at the problem level. Rather, leaders should find the predictive indicators that matter and then focus attention on them.

Ultimately, metrics that inform collective impact efforts need to drive action. As one person explained, "Part of what makes data into useful information is its usability to the community." Another individual emphasized that data is not an end in and of itself. Data should serve as a basis for ongoing strategic conversations and as a tool for honing and addressing problems: "Everybody has data, but you can't put it all together in the same place without having regular dialogue."

Using data to drive action may require a culture shift for some. In education, years of punitive accountability have sometimes contributed to defensive posturing that stands in the way of honest conversation. Similar inhibitions may exist among other community partners who perceive pressure from their organizations or constituents to present a positive spin on the group's work. Using data as a flashlight rather than a hammer involves honesty and vulnerability, which requires trust—trust that can take time to develop.

Navigating Challenges

In their efforts to build and use shared measurement systems, collective impact stakeholders face several challenges. Logistically, data agreements often require partners to navigate bureaucratic and political obstacles. Questions about leadership and formal responsibilities also emerge. Who does the data work? Who has responsibility for the data, and who owns it? Participants also cautioned against paralysis by analysis. Taking time to understand the problem and potential solutions is an essential component of collective impact work, but overthinking can inhibit action and progress. At the same time, the immediacy of other pressing issues can distract from responding to data trends. Successful

collective impact initiatives will need to address these issues and prioritize the tasks of analyzing and acting on what the data tells them.

Identifying a Backbone Organization

Literature on collective impact highlights the need for a backbone organization to organize and facilitate the work, with responsibilities that range from technology and communications support to data collection and reporting to logistical and administrative details. The literature typically focuses on an independent organization as the backbone entity—examples include funders, new or existing nonprofits, and government entities—and only rarely considers a school district in this context. Meeting conversation explored a range of approaches to the backbone role, especially in Oceanside and San Bernardino, where the school districts have taken on that responsibility.

School Districts as Backbones

Both Oceanside and San Bernardino initiated their respective collective impact efforts and have subsequently served those efforts as backbone organizations. In large part, they did so because they had the capacity and the community standing needed to get the work off the ground. Some meeting comments also suggested that a district backbone makes sense during the early stages of collective impact because many of a community's early metrics *are* academic indicators.

Nevertheless, the districts' experiences raise key questions about sustainability. Among them, communities need to build their efforts to survive individual leadership transitions. The tenure of an urban school district superintendent is notoriously short, and housing an initiative within the district makes it vulnerable to senior leadership turnover. In addition, collective impact efforts need to withstand the inevitable funding cycles for K–12 education that could erode the financial base of backbone work. A school district facing severe budget cuts may struggle to maintain its full commitment to collective impact amid competing priorities for funding and staff time.

Context Shapes Options

Comments during the meeting suggested thinking more broadly about the backbone role in relation to the community context and the various stages of a collective impact effort. One participant with experience in other collective impact efforts advised, "I encourage you to think of this as a backbone *function* rather than a backbone *organization*." The official backbone designation does not need to happen immediately, and the role and its responsibilities can evolve with the effort and as other organizations or partners are prepared to take them on.

Consistent with the concept of the backbone as a function, participants also noted that partners can design roles and responsibilities that leverage individual and organizational strengths. One individual, for example, may bring a particular passion to the work and play an important role as a charismatic leader for the effort. That leader does not necessarily need to be in the backbone; he or she can play that role from the context of his or her own position or organization.

Facilitation Requires a Particular Skillset

Regardless of who takes on backbone responsibilities, or how a transition might take place, participants noted that facilitation requires a specific skill set. The backbone can play an important role as a neutral party that can help to broker conflict. (This observation highlights another drawback to a district that plays the backbone role.) The responsibility is not necessarily to be an expert in all facets of the work, but rather to align the work. As one individual with experience in a backbone organization explained, "We don't care how everyone gets there but our role is to make sure they do." Finally, playing a strong backbone requires trust. Conversation earlier in the meeting noted that partners must trust one another to follow through on commitments and to have honest conversations about progress and challenges. This is especially true of the backbone so that it can effectively organize, guide, and support the work of all partner organizations toward a common goal.

Context Matters

Throughout the backbone conversation, stories and observations highlighted the importance of context. Although collective impact traditionally situates a backbone organization independently from other partners, any community will explore options based on the relationships, capacities, and commitments of its members. As Oceanside and San Bernardino explore possible shifts in their roles over time, they will need to do so in response to opportunities and constraints shaped by their own organizations and the broader context in which they work.

Building the Capacity for Collective Impact Success

To close the meeting, Collaborative members and guests considered the capacities that districts and their communities need in order to succeed with collective impact efforts. Conversation focused on two types of capacity: leadership and financial resources.

Leadership Capacity

Leaders' contributions to collective impact may require capacities that differ from those required by those leaders' traditional organizational roles. A discussion among community partners, augmented by subsequent reactions from the full group, explored these different capacities and ways to develop them.

Skills and Roles that Leaders Need

The conversation identified several of the skills leaders need to engage effectively in collective impact. Some capacities relate to individuals' roles and skills. Given that so much of a partnership's success hinges on collaborative work across organizations, participants suggested that leaders need to be effective at developing relationships and building trust. Leaders also need to have some measure of authority. If partners are to move their organizations in coordination with others, it is important to have decision-making responsibilities in order to make and follow through on commitments. Participants also posited that leaders should be good at elevating others. For purposes ranging from personal to political, collective impact stakeholders need to experience success and growth

resulting from their participation in the work. Leaders who can highlight and recognize the contributions of their peers are more likely to secure their ongoing engagement.

Other capacities that emerged from the conversation relate to disposition and commitment. Participants suggested that enthusiasm for and engagement in the process are important features of an effective partner. They also pointed to a commitment to problem solving that involves persisting to reach a solution, thinking outside the box, and refusing to take no for an answer. Collective impact partners will often need to navigate ambiguity and novel obstacles that stand in the way of progress. Leaders bound by the strict interpretation of formal guidelines or deference to precedent may struggle to embrace the kind of innovative thinking required for success. Those leaders who embrace problems and relentlessly pursue new solutions might be best positioned to thrive.

Strategies for Building Leadership Capacity

Participants also identified several potential strategies for building leadership capacity. First, providing a model for others to see can help, especially for leaders engaging in new kinds of collaborative relationships. Seeing examples of how others approach the work can provide a roadmap or inspiration regarding how they might proceed. In recognition of the idea that collective impact success requires commitment across and throughout organizations, partners should work to build capacity and engagement at all levels. Bringing colleagues into the process can help generate ideas for how best to participate and move forward. It can also improve buy-in within the organization and help sustain an organization's involvement beyond the transition of an individual leader. Finally, participants suggested that collective impact leaders look for opportunities to engage and build the collaborative leadership skills of individuals who may not come into their roles with that orientation or skillset. For example, elected officials may need modeling and support to see how they can best contribute to existing initiatives.

Financial Capacity

Two meeting sessions addressed issues of financial capacity: a small-group problem of practice consultancy involving Oceanside leaders and a fishbowl conversation among funders about issues related to funding collective impact.

The Influence of Local Context on Funding Options

As is the case with many elements of collective impact, each community's context will shape its opportunities for financial support. Community size, community partners, and available funders are all part of this equation. For example, one meeting participant reported that in terms of foundation money, each person in San Francisco has 600 foundation dollars spent on him or her; but per-capita foundational spending in San Bernardino is only three dollars. City size and available resources may lead some communities to partner across cities and districts, which can help to create a critical mass that opens more opportunities for financial support.

Many education and other community leaders turn to foundations for overall organizational support or funding for specific initiatives. Observations during the meeting highlighted some limitations of this model. First and foremost, relying on outside funders puts organizations at the mercy of those funders for their continued operation. Organizations and initiatives rely on long-term funder commitment to their overall vision, yet foundation strategies can change in response to leadership changes, the political environment, and other factors. This unpredictability makes grantees vulnerable.

For collective impact initiatives in particular, tensions may result from the traditional foundation funding model. Collective impact requires a long-term investment in ongoing partnerships for broad and ambitious outcomes, but most foundations are unwilling to make the 5-year to 10-year commitment needed to see collective impact take hold and achieve key outcomes. In addition, funders often look for a sense of ownership over their investments and may not be positively disposed to coordinate with others. Furthermore, the backbone organization in a collective impact effort often serves as a clearinghouse for fundraising and support; but foundations—especially larger foundations—typically do not want to give to other foundations that are themselves making funding decisions.

Despite these concerns, participants identified some possibilities to harness foundation funding. One potential approach is bringing funders together to support a broader collective impact effort. A funders collaborative associated with the Local Control Funding Formula did this in California, with one funder essentially serving as a coordinating body among peers to orchestrate support for a process of policy development and implementation. Partners also might establish a 501c3 entity that functions as a backbone and fundraising arm. The backbone can operate as a nonprofit organization, not a foundation, and can organize the board to leverage fundraising commitments and capacity. Alternatively, individual organizations might pursue funding for their particular contributions using a more traditional approach, inviting funders to support the individual pieces of the work in which they have interest.

In their outreach to foundations, collective impact stakeholders should look for ways to build relationships and trust. Some foundations embrace "getting to know you" grants in which grantees can establish relationships and generate belief in the work through demonstrations of early progress. Meeting participants also suggested that demonstrating evidence of progress can compel further giving. Funding an independent research agenda alongside a collective impact effort can help with this, although some foundations are reluctant to take the risk of exploring and publicizing unknown outcomes.

Other Sources of Financial Support

Meeting participants explored several funding opportunities in addition to foundational funding. To free collective impact efforts from a reliance on unpredictable outside funding, communities can look for ways to generate their own revenue. Some participants recommended that partners develop a business plan that makes explicit the economic argument for collective impact. The beneficiaries of that work can be possible funding

sources. For example, higher education partners who experience increased enrollment or business partners who see an expanded flow of qualified job applicants may contribute resources for a system that promotes relevant improved outcomes. Similarly, partners may look for mutually beneficial arrangements. For example, machines used in San Bernardino high schools as foundational components of their career pathways come from industry partners in exchange for access to train their employees on the equipment.

Participants also identified other sources of supplemental funding. Parcel taxes are one possibility. In addition, school districts with unused property can repurpose land or buildings to generate new revenue streams. Stakeholders might also look for ways to align with other collective impact initiatives. Leveraging the relationships, systems, and structures already in place can help these organizations expand their own capacity and accelerate their own growth with minimal financial demands.

In all financial scenarios—whether working with foundations, community partners, or members of the community—participants emphasized that taking the time to build authentic relationships and trust is critical to the success of the effort.

Engaging in Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Engaging in mutually reinforcing activities is one of the five conditions of collective impact. The meeting agenda did not directly address this component, and this appears to be an element of the work in San Bernardino and Oceanside that is still in an early stage of evolution. Nevertheless, some observations during the meeting were relevant to this condition.

One question that may be difficult for early-stage partnerships to address is the degree to which collective impact is different from the work they already do. As one meeting participant observed in a general description of collective impact, "If I can do my work without you, we're not integrated. If I need you to do my work, then we're integrated." An important transition for partners, then, may be the move from bilateral agreements and aligned work to multiple partners actively engaged in collective work. Clearly defining roles, and where those roles require collaboration, can be part of the process of deepening and advancing collective impact.

Next Steps for the Collaborative

The Collaborative will reconvene in Twin Rivers USD in June 2017 to consider the broader economic, social, and political context for education in California and the implications for district work and future areas of focus for the Collaborative. In the meantime, the Collaborative staff will continue to pursue publications and activities that share key lessons from our core meetings with the broader field of California educators. As always, resources from this and previous meetings, updates regarding Collaborative members, and information concerning upcoming events are available on our website at www.cacollaborative.org.