

Collective Impact

Definition

A cross-sector approach to solving complex problems by aligning organizations around a shared vision, using common metrics, coordinated actions, and a neutral backbone to sustain the work.

What This Means

Collective Impact means different groups like schools, nonprofits, churches, and government, working together toward one shared goal. It helps everyone move in the same direction to solve big community problems.

Key Steps

- Agree on a shared vision so everyone works toward the same goal.
- Track progress together with shared measures.
- Coordinate activities so each group contributes in a connected way.
- Keep communication open to build trust.
- Have a main team to organize, measure, and guide the effort.

How Do We Achieve This

- **Common Agenda** - A shared vision for change with clearly defined problem statements, goals, scope, populations, and principles.
- **Shared Measurement System** - A small set of indicators all partners track to show collective progress.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities** - Each partner executes differentiated roles that complement others while aiming at the same outcomes.
- **Continuous communication** - Regular, structured touchpoints that build trust, share learning, and maintain alignment.
- **Backbone support organization** - A neutral team that coordinates partners, manages data, facilitates, and mobilizes resources.

Examples

- In Cincinnati, OH, the Strive Together Network brought schools, nonprofits, businesses, and government together to help children succeed from birth to career.
- In Camden, NJ, doctors, hospitals, social workers, and community groups worked together to reduce hospital readmissions and connect residents with ongoing care.
- In Minneapolis, MN, Schools, housing programs, and nonprofits united to support children and parents in a high-poverty area.
- In Newark, NJ, City agencies, schools, and youth-serving organizations built a shared data system to improve program access and equity.
- In Durham, NC, Faith groups, schools, and public health leaders joined forces to build protective community environments and prevent risky behaviors.

In Short:

Community Impact = Unity + Collaboration + Shared Goals

“Healing doesn’t happen in isolation; it happens in community.”