

## Collective Impact - Role Play

**Goal of the role play** – To experience collective impact first-hand. What does it feel like when multiple stakeholders come together that have significant potential common ground to create social change but very different backgrounds, perspectives, and incentives?

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**Overview of the situation** *Printed at the top of everyone's card*

There has been broad community interest in launching an initiative in Oakland, California to better align all key stakeholders toward improving the region's education results for children and youth from cradle to career. The majority of youth in the region have been underserved for decades. The local school district serves 50,000 students, 75% of which come from families at or below the poverty line, and 25% are English Language Learners. The school district has a 50% high school graduation rate, and the achievement gap between white students and students of color is significant. Of the students that graduate from high school, less than half move on to pursue a post-secondary education – most at local community colleges. Less than 10% of low-income students and students of color achieve a post-secondary credential.

Today the East Bay Community Foundation has brought multiple stakeholders together for a planning retreat. The goal of today is to meet the other participants in the initiative, talk about why we think this initiative will be useful for our region, discuss the concerns of participants, and determine productive next steps.

We will be addressing the following questions in our discussion:

- Why do you think a collective impact approach would be useful for our region?
- What are your concerns about a collective impact approach?
- How can we best align our efforts to improve results for children and youth?

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### Your Role:

- **Local Consultant:**
  - *Your Role:* You are in charge of facilitating the discussion.
  - *During the facilitation:* Your role is to help people find common ground. If the discussion is at an impasse, you can remind people that they are here to increase education outcomes for youth, agree that the status quo is unacceptable, and acknowledge that all stakeholders involved play an important role.
  - *How to structure the discussion:*
    - Have everyone **introduce their character**. (5 minutes)
    - Discussion Question 1: **Why do you think a collective impact approach would be useful for our region?** (5 – 10 minutes)
    - Discussion Question 2: **What are your concerns about a collective impact approach?** (5 – 10 minutes)
    - Discussion Question 3: **How can we best align our efforts to improve results for children and youth?** (5-10 minutes)
  - *Questions for the facilitator to prompt if the conversation is slow:*
    - Is the current status quo for education in our region acceptable?

- Is the goal to get to results for all students, or just low-income or underserved students?
- What stakeholders are not here today that we need in order to effectively drive change? (some potential answers: teachers, unions, kids, local gov't, etc.)
- What is our overall vision for success for such an effort?
- How do we build on our collective strengths to work in greater concert toward common goals?

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### **Your Role:**

- **Program Officer at the East Bay Community Foundation:**
  - *Your Role:* You are a long standing program officer focused on education. You have seen the success of Strive in Cincinnati, and are interesting in developing a similar effort locally. You want to play a “behind the scenes” role as the initiative's funder, because you hope the implementing organizations will take ownership for the work.
  - *Your Objectives for this Initiative:* You are looking for systemic ways to improve education outcomes for youth. You know that some grantees in this region have not been communicating or coordinating their work, and this initiative could lead to gains in efficiency and effectiveness across participants. You provide significant support to the school district and recognize their centrality to this effort. You can help the effort get off the ground, but need other funders and corporations to commit as well.
  - *Your Concerns about this Initiative:* You are worried that you may invest significant resources and not see meaningful gains. You are also worried that you may be left responsible for all funding and “pushing” participation over the long term, if the initiative isn't owned by the community. You are also concerned that the school district and institutes of higher education have not traditionally partnered well with each other or with the community of nonprofit providers.

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### **Your Role:**

- **Superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District:**
  - *Your Role:* You are in your second year as superintendent, overseeing 100 schools serving 50,000 students. The district is comprised of a very diverse student body. Your high-need district never has enough money to fund all initiatives you would like to support. Given that you are new, you are currently developing your own strategy and establishing relationships with local foundations, corporations, and nonprofits.
  - *Your Objectives for this Initiative:* You want to improve outcomes for all students, but also have a particular goal to improve outcomes for African-American males. Given budget issues, you think this initiative may reduce duplication of work between the district, nonprofits, and the local community college and may even generate new philanthropic funding. You believe the district should play a strong central role.
  - *Your Concerns about this Initiative:* You are concerned that participation in this initiative may require increased transparency on the district's performance which would open you up to "being hammered" by outside advocates. You are also worried that participation may require you to relinquish some level of control over your own strategy and how you serve youth. Finally, if this initiative doesn't come with extra funding from the Foundation, you are not sure how the effort will succeed.

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### **Your Role:**

- **Local Parent of a Seventh Grade Student:**

- *Your Role:* You are the parent of a student who has consistently been in failing schools. You work as a cashier at a local store from 7 AM – 7 PM every day, but are just below the poverty line and can't afford any additional tutoring, programs, or resources for your child outside of what the district provides. You have high hopes for your child to be the first to attend college in the family, but know something will have to change for that dream to become a reality. You're very encouraged about this new initiative, and what it might mean for your child.
- *Your Objectives for this Initiative:* You are looking for new ways to get involved in your child's education. You really care about your kid, and improvements in your kid's school. You recognize that improvements take time, but are impatient to see quick results that will benefit your child specifically.
- *Your Concerns about this Initiative:* You feel powerless, and have seen parents asked for their opinions before, but their voices never seem to make a difference. You also worry that if the initiative is designed to serve all kids, your child will still fall through the cracks as in the past, and you won't have the power to do anything about it.

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### **Your Role:**

- **Community College President:**

- *Your Role:* You are the president of the local community college, and your school primarily serves low-income students of color. As a community college, you have “open enrollment” and must accept all students that apply and enroll in classes. You serve a broad range of students, many of whom work while in school, have families of their own, and/or arrive on campus unprepared for college-level work.
- *Your Objectives for this Initiative:* You are a lifelong educator and administrator, and genuinely want to improve the education for students at your college and see more of them get degrees and jobs. If this initiative is successful, you realize that students graduating from local high schools may be more prepared for courses in your college.
- *Your Concerns about this Initiative:* You have not had a lot of coordination with the K-12 system in the past, and feel like many of your challenges are the “fault” of the K-12 system that does not prepare its students for college. Historically, you have also had a hard time tracking rates of course and degree completion and you know that not enough of your students attain degrees - this makes you concerned about increased levels of transparency about attainment.

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### **Your Role:**

- **Grassroots Advocate:**

- *Your Role:* You are the Executive Director of a local advocacy nonprofit. You have a reputation for “pounding the table for low-income kids.” You advocate for the kids that get left behind in the system, and you believe the education system is designed to only serve students of privilege. Historically, you have taken the approach of fighting for change from the outside and while you are attending this meeting, you are not sure whether your best role is to join, or to remain an “outsider” pushing for change.
- *Your Objectives for this Initiative:* Your goal is to improve education attainment for low-income students and students of color. You would like to see vast improvements in the K-12 and higher education institutions in how they engage the community and parents. You would also like to see greater transparency around system results and performance.
- *Your Concerns about this Initiative:* You fear that if this initiative is focused on improving education outcomes for all students, it will primarily benefit students from wealthy families.



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### **Your Role:**

- **Local Business Leader:**

- *Your Role:* You are the CEO of a local small business, and a longtime friend of the Community College President. In the past you hired most of your staff from the local community college, but recently you have had fewer quality local recruits and have been forced to search more broadly for your talent. You also have seen an economic decline in the region in the past 10 years and realize some of this may be due to the poor education and corresponding lack of career preparation received by local students. You are willing to invest a small amount of money in this initiative up front, and are waiting to see it unfold to invest greater funding.
- *Your Objectives for this Initiative:* You need more local talent – it is costing you too much to recruit students from other regions. You also want to be a good corporate citizen, since most of your customer base is local and your reputation is important. If the initiative goes well, you'd like to support it financially, and rally the business community to become involved.
- *Your Concerns about this Initiative:* As a funder of this initiative, you are worried that you may not see meaningful gains. In addition, if you are associated with this initiative and it goes awry, you fear any reputational damage it may cause.



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### **Your Role:**

- **Leader of Local Teacher's Union:**

- *Your Role:* You are the leader of the local teacher's union and represent several thousand teachers working in the district. You have been skeptically involved in efforts to reform education in the past and are leary of the demands that are likely to be made on teachers – longer days, increased responsibility, performance based pay, etc. However, you recognize the potential for this group of leaders to improve the opportunities for these students if competing forces can come together. You are willing to potentially negotiate, if you have assurances that the group is going to make real progress and be accountable to the community.
- *Your Objectives for this Initiative:* You need to know the extent to which teachers will be part of scoping the solution. In order for them to agree to any changes, they will need a voice at the table.
- *Your Concerns about this Initiative:* If this is another unorganized effort, you do not want to lose your credibility with union members, suggesting they come to the table to negotiate.