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to create vibrant communities



Beautiful Thinking for February

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*In this issue we're pleased to share, fresh off the presses, the latest article **Channeling Change** by John Kania and his colleagues which builds upon the ideas laid out in their hugely popular 2011 article *Collective Impact*. The role of governance and leadership in collaboratives is examined and the value of learning communities as a vehicle for scaling up community innovation is explored. The skill of convening across sectors is identified as a critical capacity for community innovation and a *Community Collaboratives Toolbox* - the latest resource from the White House Council on Community Solutions - is shared. Finally we're pleased to profile a powerful new book, **Five Good Ideas: Practical Strategies for Non-Profit Success**, which synthesizes the very best of eight years worth of good practice presentations to community sector managers as something we're sure you'll want to keep close at hand.*



Join the dialogue!

~ Paul Born

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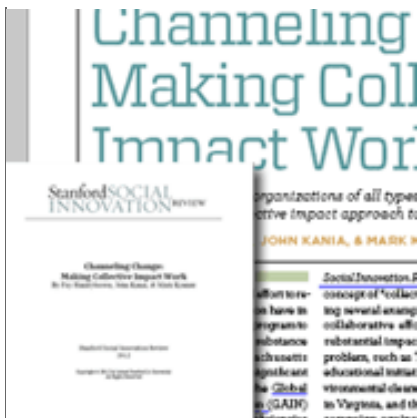
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Featured Articles

MAKING COLLECTIVE IMPACT WORK [By: Paul Born]

Channeling Change is the just-released article co-authored by John Kania, Fay Hanleybrown and Mark Cramer. It builds upon their hugely popular 2011 article *Collective Impact* which outlined how, in many diverse situations, collaborative efforts are proving successful in generating substantial, positive impact to addressing large scale social problems." Specifically, *Channeling Change* offers a deepened understanding of the term "collective impact" and specific advice for those interested in starting, leading and sustaining collective impact initiatives.

The authors identify three pre-conditions that must be in place prior to initiating a collective impact initiative. These are:



- o **An influential champion (or group of champions)** – This is the most critical precondition. It is a person or persons with the necessary respect to attract and keep the engagement of a range of CEO-level, cross-sector leaders involved in the initiative. This champion must be passionate about solving the problem at hand but not so attached to their own point of view that they are unwilling to allow those involved to figure out the answers to the issue.
- o **Adequate Financial Resources** – Funding that is adequate for at least two to three years, generally from at least one anchor funder who is engaged from the beginning and able to support and mobilize additional funds to pay for the initiative's infrastructure and planning.
- o **Urgency for Change** – This final precondition usually involves a crisis or opportunity around the initiative's issue or focus which is beginning to reach consensus that a new approach to addressing the issue is needed. A report that draws attention to and highlights the severity of a particular issue is one way in which this sense of urgency often emerges.

The article then identifies three distinct phases that collective impact initiatives typically follow in getting up and running. These are: Initiating Action; Organize for Impact; and Sustain Action and Impact. Within Phase Two, Organize for Impact, the authors specifically focus on the importance of the Collective Impact Initiative establishing a common agenda, explaining how this requires establishing agreement on the system boundaries that the initiative will work within and developing what they call a Strategic Action Framework.

Drawing, in part, from John Kania's role as a key thought-leader at Tamarack's 2011 Communities Collaborating Institute in Calgary, the article profiles the work of Tamarack and Vibrant Communities and our "frameworks for change" to illustrate a successful example of the work of establishing a Strategic Action Framework.

Finally this article identifies two essential structural elements that they see as necessary to sustain collective impact initiatives: the "backbone organization" and "cascading levels of linked collaboration." Backbone organizations are described as organizations separate from the initiative's service-delivery partners whose unique skills are used to perform six essential functions: providing overall strategic direction; facilitating dialogue between partners; managing data collection & analysis; handling communications; coordinating community outreach; and, mobilizing funding.

The second essential element required to sustain collective impact - cascading levels of linked collaboration - speaks to the way various working groups, each focused on a different leverage area of the initiative's strategic action framework, communicate and coordinate with each other to create aligned and coordinated action to impact different dimensions of a complex issue simultaneously.

Those interested in strengthening their own - or their organization's impact - in leading or being part a collaborative effort to address a pressing social issue should consider enrolling in Tamarack's 2012 Communities Collaborating Institute: Innovating Together. Now in its 6th year, the CCI /S Canada's signature learning event focused on multi-sector engagement, collaborative leadership and community innovation. Key thought-leaders joining this year's event include Margaret Wheatley, Tim Brodhead, Michael Jones and Al Etmanski. We hope you'll consider joining us too.

Related Links:

- Download [Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work](#) by John Kania et al
- Read [Collective Impact](#) the 2011 article by John Kania and Mark Kramer
- Listen to [Collaborating for Impact](#) a Tamarack audio seminar with John Kania
- Learn more and register to attend Tamarack's [2012 Communities Collaborating Institute: Innovating Together](#)
- Visit tamarackcci.ca to find [resources from the 2011 CCI](#) and more for working collaboratively for community impact

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LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVES

[By: Liz Weaver]



Increasingly, communities are joining together to address complex issues. Over the past 10 years, thirteen cities across Canada have formed collaborative planning tables to address poverty, a complex issue with multiple root causes. We have been watching and evaluating their formation, structure and impact on their host cities.

At the same time, other cross-city collaborative planning tables have formed addressing issues such as newcomer settlement, food security, and affordable housing. What do these collaborative tables have in common? These tables require a new approach to governance engaging a new mix of stakeholders who have different approaches to the issue

and a limited history of working together.

In *Cities Reducing Poverty*, a book edited by Mark Cabaj containing six case studies of Vibrant Communities across Canada, four elements of an impactful poverty reduction approach were identified as:

- Poverty is better addressed by poverty reduction not alleviation
- Poverty reduction is more effectively addressed by multi-sector collaboration and leadership
- Poverty reduction is more effective when built on local assets
- Poverty reduction efforts are more effective when part of an on-going process of learning, evaluation and change

What does this mean for collaborative governance? Being intentional about leadership recruitment is a key element. But the resources cited above also suggest, the process for effective collaborative governance is as important as the product. Too often communities dive into collaborative efforts without considering who should be at the table, what community change they are seeking and how success will be measured. These articles suggest that the time spent considering the collaborative governance process will have a direct and measurable impact on the community change effort.

Related Links:

- Register for [Leadership, Governance and Community Collaboratives](#) an interactive one-day workshop in Hamilton (March 19th) and Calgary (April 19th)
- Hear the audio seminar [Cities Reducing Poverty: Case Studies from Vibrant Communities](#)
- Read an excerpt of [Cities Reducing Poverty](#) by Mark Cabaj
- Purchase a copy of [Cities Reducing Poverty](#)

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Ideas We're Following...

FIVE GOOD IDEAS IN THE TOP RIGHT DRAWER [By: Alan Broadbent]

Much of the work in Canada is done in a broad sector variously called The Community Sector, The Third Sector, The NGO (Non Government Organization) Sector, or The Charitable Sector. These descriptions define it as non government and non business. The Sector itself is broad, ranging from small volunteer organizations, through entities with one or two staff, to large institutes with many staff and very large budgets.

What they seem to share, with few exceptions, is scarce funding and stretched management. Each senior manager is called upon to wear many hats: chief executive, manager of human resources, chief financial officer, head fundraiser, technology guru, program manager and dishwasher all in one person, all in one day, every day. Everyone who has held a senior management job in the community sector has experienced this, and few of them complain about it.

What it means, then, is that they have to be awfully good to be able to do so many things at a high level. But where does a mid-career person facing promotion go to learn so many things in a time-effective way?

This is the question Maytree sought to answer eight years ago with the Five Good Ideas lunch-and-learn program. What we sought to do was distil essential good practice across a broad range of management topics so that managers could pick out the highest leverage ideas to improve their own performance. We invited experts on key topics like finance, human resources, strategy, technology, government relations, and governance to deliver five good ideas that would enhance performance. We were delighted that so many excellent people responded to our invitation, and even more delighted that there was such a strong response and attendance from people in the community sector.

In late 2011, together with Coach House Press we published *Five Good Ideas: Practical Strategies for Non-Profit Success*. It is a collection of the lunch-and-learn presentations, and is a quick and easy reference for managers. Whether you are trying to figure out how to manage your board, structure your communications, deal with a union contract, or raise funds, *Five Good Ideas* can help you begin thinking about it more effectively. It can be as close as the top right hand drawer of your desk.

It is our hope that *Five Good Ideas* will be a real help to community sector managers, and in fact to all managers whether they be in government or business, because the elements of good management are common to all. Our observation and experience is that managers in the community sector bring a high level of talent, commitment, and endurance to their work, and we believe *Five Good Ideas* will make them even better, and will provide a helpful companion whenever needed.

Right in the top right hand desk drawer. *Five Good Ideas*.

Related links:

- Read an excerpt from [Five Good Ideas: Practical Strategies for Non-Profit Success](#)
- Learn more about and order your copy of [Five Good Ideas: Practical Strategies for Non-Profit Success](#)
- [Register here](#) to receive *Five Good Ideas* lunch-and-learn program updates and invitations by email
- Visit the [Maytree](#) website

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LEARNING COMMUNITIES: SCALING UP COMMUNITY INNOVATION

[By: Donna Jean Forster-Gill]

The power of learning communities lies in their ability to accelerate effective solutions to complex community problems. Learning Communities in academic settings have been well researched and their effectiveness is evident in enhancing student success. In a learning community, innovations can be introduced, experimented

with and ultimately, scaled up more quickly.

A learning community is always a group of people who are motivated by a shared vision of learning and a commitment to support one another on the journey. There is a co-generation of knowledge through inquiry and individual research that is quickly shared. It is this shared sense of problem-solving and evaluation in these complex times that will create change, improve engagement and empower leadership.

Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement has recently launched three learning communities – each with its own unique focus – but with a collective vision of “*engaging learning leaders into a connected force for social change.*” Tamarack’s three Learning Communities are:

- www.seekingcommunity.ca - Community is vital to our health, happiness, prosperity and safety. Seeking Community is a learning community dedicated to helping you find and strengthen community for change.
- www.tamarackcci.ca - Working collaboratively across communities to create a united force for social change! Through collaboration, people can significantly impact complex community issues. This learning community is for those who are passionate about creating positive community change through collaboration.
- www.vibrantcommunities.ca - Each vibrant community has a poverty reduction strategy that is being led by a multi-sector roundtable of engaged citizens and civic leaders. This learning community is a place where Canadians can learn, share expertise, advance common goals, and connect with one another about reducing poverty in their cities.

We welcome you to join any and all of these Learning Communities as a way of strengthening your own learning and supporting the learning of others. In this way, together, we will be collaborating across Canada and beyond to become a united force for social change.

Related links:

- Visit and join the [Seeking Community](#) Learning Community
- Visit and join the [Tamarack CCI](#) Learning Community
- Visit and join the [Vibrant Communities](#) Learning Community
- View the [Cities Reducing Poverty Slidedeck](#) - A presentation about Vibrant Communities Canada and the Cities Reducing Poverty Learning Community
- Download the [Community of Practice Design Guide](#)

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CONVENING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE - OPPORTUNITIES & DILEMMAS

[By: [Liz Weaver](#)]

Jay Connor, author of *Community Visions, Community Solutions: Grantmaking for Comprehensive Impact* has worked with leaders of diverse constituencies in communities across America, and has seen that in order to be effective, our emerging community leaders must be comfortable at the intersection not only of organizations and cultures but also at the intersection of the nonprofit, business and governmental sectors.

Convening for social change is a critical community competency in order to find solutions to our most pressing issues. Recently Al Etmanski, a renowned Canadian social entrepreneur, identified the skill of convening as one of the key success factors of community innovation. Successful convening requires that the lead organization(s) have the respect of the community and connections to bring the appropriate collaborative partners around the table and keep them there. Jay’s experience has assisted more than 75 communities across North America in applying best practices from his research to achieve measurable, transformative outcomes in areas of aspirational change: from education to economic and workforce development to health to poverty reduction.

Jay will be sharing his insights about convening for social change in an upcoming tele-learning session hosted by Tamarack on February 9, 2012 at 12:00 pm EST where he'll explore the opportunities and dilemmas facing community organizations, funders and government when they convene the community to address social change.

Related links:

- Listen to the Jay Connor Audio Seminar [Community Visions, Community Solutions](#)
- Hear Jay's audio seminar, [Grantmaking for Comprehensive Impact](#)
- Register now for the Feb 9th, 12 tele-learning [Convening for Social Change, Opportunities and Dilemmas](#) with Jay Connor

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A TOOL-BOX FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVES [By: Sylvia Cheuy]

"Every American community will have the knowledge and tools at hand to create successful local "collaboratives" that are designed to catalyze large-scale change and address their most pressing community challenges."

- White House Council on Community Solutions

The White House Council for Community Solutions has a mandate to "identify the key attributes of effective community-developed solutions to our national problems" with an engagement approach that emphasizes multiple sectors. As part of this effort they are working to build capacity within communities to "establish collaborative as a means to creating broad-based change." One vehicle for building community capacity is the Council's recently released, *Community Collaboratives Toolbox*.

As a resource, the Toolbox includes a detailed guide of key activities and resources to structure and sustain collaborative and effectively generate meaningful community participation in these efforts. It is made up of four primary tools that each includes additional resources to support collaboratives towards success. The four tools are:

- **Building or Improving a Community Collaborative: Guidance by Life Cycle Stage** - This tool describes the five stages of a collaborative's life, including case studies, a checklist of key activities, and common roadblocks for each stage
- **Community Collaborative Assessment: A Diagnostic of Success Readiness** - This tool helps communities evaluate a collaborative's readiness to implement its action plan in the community
- **Community Collaboratives Learning Examples** - This tool provides examples from successful collaboratives on the four critical success factors of Capacity, Structure, Data and Funding
- **Community Collaboratives: The Next Generation of Community Participation** - This tool describes how to generate meaningful community participation, a critical element to community collaborative success

The Community Collaboratives Toolbox mirrors and builds upon the multi-sector collaborative work being championed by Tamarack and others here in Canada and around the world. We welcome the White House Council on Community Solutions as a colleague and ally whose work is enriching the field of community engagement, collaboration and innovation and look forward to the opportunity to learn with and from them as their journey continues.

Related links:

- Access the Council's [Community Collaboratives Toolbox](#)
- Download the Council's [Community Collaboratives Whitepaper](#)
- View a [factsheet](#) and [Chair's Overview](#) for The White House Council on Community Solutions

- o Visit the [White House on Community Solutions](#) website here
- o Visit Tamarack's [Communities Collaborating Institute](#) Learning Community for more resources

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Highlights From Tamarack's Learning Communities

www.vibrantcanada.ca ♦ www.tamarackcci.ca ♦ www.seekingcommunity.ca

IDEAS

- o Are Advocacy and Collaboration Compatible? [More >>](#)
- o Moving from Charity to Investment [More >>](#)
- o What is your ONE word for 2012? [More >>](#)

RESOURCES

- o Community of Practice Design Guide [More >>](#)
- o 10 Tips for Writing an Effective Blog [More >>](#)

PODCASTS

- o Innovating Together [More >>](#)
- o Collaboration in a Chaotic World [More >>](#)

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Engage! e-magazine is published by [Tamarack - An Institute for Community Engagement](#), to bring you inspiration, ideas, and resources to envision and create vibrant communities. We would love your ideas to help us improve our new format. Please send comments to: paul@tamarackcommunity.ca. *Photo used in top banner courtesy of Carl Hiebert.*

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