SMART PRACTICES FOR SYSTEMIC COLLABORATION

PREPARED FOR
KENT COUNTY ESSENTIAL NEEDS TASK FORCE
ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

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INCLUSIVE
PERFORMANCE
STRATEGIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT *SMART PRACTICES FOR SYSTEMIC COLLABORATION*

Inclusive Performance Strategies (IPS) and Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF) leadership codesigned this report in the spirit of the growing sustainability and independence of the Economic & Workforce Development Subcommittee (ENTF WFD). For the ENTF WFD to be both effective and sustainable in its efforts moving forward, the group must consider how best to collaborate. This includes not only formal structures, but also practices, behaviors, and norms. IPS has compiled this report to provide the ENTF WFD with a set of recommendations for effective collaboration for systems change. These recommendations, or "smart practices," are based on the experiences of other collaboratives as discussed by evaluators, practitioners, and academics in the literature IPS reviewed.

This report is meant to be a highly practical reference tool that is used continuously when considering how to deepen and expand current work. Effective structures, behaviors, practices, and norms for collaboration will enable the ENTF WFD to fully capitalize on the expertise, networks, and influence of each participating person/organization. In turn, increased clarity, efficiency, and support will allow partner organizations to focus more intently on the strategies needed to support equitable outcomes in the workforce development system for all residents.

DEFINING SMART PRACTICES

While "best practice" has become common nomenclature, constantly changing local contexts means that the best in one situation is rarely the best elsewhere. Bardach & Patashnik (2016) instead propose identifying "smart practices" which have meaningful results in their original contexts and provide clever solutions capable of adapting to new circumstances. The IPS team has used the following definition in determining useful smart practices to provide to the ENTF WFD:

- Clear and concrete behavior that accomplishes a goal or solves a problem;
- Ideally low cost and/or low risk;
- Highly adaptable and relevant to the ENTF WFD.

OUR APPROACH

This report was designed to answer a central research question essential for the ENTF WFD's strategic growth moving forward: *"What existing collaborative structures, processes, and practices could enhance the outcome and impact goals of the ENTF Economic & Workforce Development subcommittee?"* This central question led to four sub-questions, discussed below, that provided the basis for IPS' research through a traditional literature review. By using a myriad of search terms related to the project's research questions, IPS gathered 264 research articles, professional publications, books, and websites, with the majority of sources coming from peer reviewed academic journals. Findings were organized per emerging themes related to the research questions. After additional analysis and synthesis, the final report consists of the 69 resources most relevant to the focus areas of *Common Understanding, Leadership Structures, Strategic Decision-Making,* and *Member Participation.*

COMMON UNDERSTANDING
What practices are needed to ensure all members clearly understand the purpose, value, and the "how" of the work?

Participants' clear understanding of their collaborative's vision, purpose, and goals is essential to building trust, commitment, and unity. In turn, this trust and commitment builds a collective voice that can be used in the broader community to gather support for strategic action (Mayan et al., 2019). Addressing this need

must start with ensuring members agree to a common vision and can draw clear connections between the problems within the workforce development system, the ENTF WFD vision, and the group's strategies. The practices in this section can all help to contribute to a consistent and clear understanding of the ENTF WFD's work.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES
What practices ensure there is sufficient leadership capacity to support the ENTF WFD's efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability of the work?

As achieving common understanding is foundational to the success of collaborative systems work, so is identifying and cultivating the leaders that can make the work happen. The networked nature of systems collaboration means leaders must engage a broad set of behaviors and structures "that facilitate productive interaction and move the participants in the network toward effective resolution of a problem" (McGuire & Silva, 2014, p. 35). The practices in this section focus on the general mindsets, structures, and approaches to leadership that will most benefit the ENTF WFD as it continues to increase its self-sufficiency as a collective.

STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING
What practices enable the WFD subcommittee to make intermediary goals that are timely, attainable, and build towards the success measures?

A challenge for the ENTF WFD is to be intentional in its ongoing strategy development—who are the decision makers, how is work prioritized, and how do these strategies link to long term impact? The opportunity that lays ahead of the ENTF WFD is to implement practices and structures for decision making that promote a culture of experimentation that considers ideas that stem from the collective expertise of community. The ENTF WFD must also leverage its strategic decision-making practices as a means for maintaining accountability to utilizing an equity lens in its work. The practices in this section can help the ENTF WFD use effective and inclusive practices for decision making.

MEMBER PARTICIPATION
What member participation practices within the WFD subcommittee are necessary for effectively achieving goals?

Although the ENTF WFD is composed of member organizations, individual representatives are the people actually collaborating. The collaborative skill level of individuals impacts the performance of the collective. Likewise, highly skilled collaborators can still be limited by the design of their organizations, so the structures, processes, supports, and culture of their home organizations are also critical to coalition success (Ainsworth & Chesley, 2018). This section discusses practices that can ensure individuals are equipped to collaborate and clear on the role they are called to play in systemic impact.

READING THIS REPORT
The report is designed to be a working tool to inform the ongoing decision making and structure building of the ENTF WFD and potentially the ENTF as a whole. As such, the sections have been organized to provide opportunity for readers to find practices most relevant to their needs at the time of their review. For example, the glossary beginning on page 4 gives high-level definitions and page references for every practice. In addition, the *Key Considerations & Context* section beginning on page 10 provides a brief analysis of how certain smart practices are related to findings and recommendations from other recent reports provided to the ENTF WFD. As a working tool, it should also be noted that the smart practices listed in this report are not explained exhaustively. Rather, each practice is introduced and applied to the ENTF WFD's current context so that readers can have generative discussions about how to adapt the practice and whether further learning about the practice is warranted.

GLOSSARY

COMMON UNDERSTANDING

Consensus on Desired Collaboration (page 15)
Determining the desired value-add of the collaboration, how much impact the collaboration will have on participating organizations' structures, and how partners will work together.

Systems Thinking (page 17)
How to equip members to think of the system as a whole and to design systemic strategies, considering that each member comes to the collaborative with a unique personal background and organizational context.

Theory of Change (page 19)
Creating a model that explicitly states how the group expects change to play out in the system over time, what assumptions are made to rationalize that expectation, the role of the collaborative in supporting that change, and how interim work will build towards long term goals.

Common Agenda (page 20)
Agreeing on goals and the processes and strategies needed to meet them; can be designed as a tactical extension of the theory of change.

Clear Communication (page 21)
A necessity for a large and evolving group like the ENTF and WFD, this section discusses both practices and structures for ensuring all group members stay informed and have accurate information about the work.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES

Integrative Leadership (page 23)
A form of leadership that brings diverse stakeholders together in *semi-permanent* ways, and typically across sector boundaries, to address complex public problems and achieve shared goals.

Strategy-Based Leadership Tenure (page 25)
Due to the long-term nature of systems change, collectives need to intentionally determine appropriate tenures for leadership roles to guide the work at various levels that are intentional and strategic, not arbitrarily time bound.

Backbone Staff Allocation (page 27)
It is vital to have backbone staff members focusing on core functions to a collective (i.e. strategic visioning, network partnerships, process facilitation, resource coordination, etc.). When staff are misallocated, it challenges momentum and group efficiency.

Developing Core Competencies (page 28)
Because of the multi-layered and complex nature of systems collaboration, leaders often fulfill multiple roles and therefore must develop multiple skill sets. Identifying the specific leadership competencies that best support the WFD's goals & capacity needs can increase network efficacy.

Cultivating a Pipeline for Residents-as-Leaders (page 31)
An ongoing challenge for collectives is integrating residents as participants, let alone leaders. As such, this section addresses how expectations, positions, etc. for leaders can encourage residents to engage in a pipeline that elevates them as leaders.

STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) (page 34)

A model that positions residents as experts; "professionals" shift into support roles, which helps collaboratives foster a more nuanced understanding of a community's experience.

Iterative Goal-Setting (page 36)

Once goals are identified within collectives, they are often treated as immutable, fixed points; collectives should instead shape their planning to revisit goals frequently as "guideposts" that can be refined and adapted to evolving local contexts.

Flexibility in Action Planning (page 37)

Establishing intentional strategies to prioritize action and utilizing shared structures that spur innovation and flexibility within action planning is essential. Furthermore, action planning can foster buy-in and alignment as work evolves across subgroups within the network.

Framing & Balancing Power Dynamics (page 38)

Though collectives strive to maintain shared decision-making or consensus-building processes, an important but often overlooked step is understanding how power dynamics influence perspective sharing and decision implementation.

MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Defining Roles in Writing (page 43)

Members are more likely to stay committed when each participant has a clear understanding of their role and the roles of others, as well as when their organization provides concrete support for their role in the collaborative.

Managing Expectations (page 44)

Providing members with an understanding of how work will progress, the expected value to community, and the expected value back to individuals and participating organizations will help to increase buy-in and reduce fatigue.

Encouraging Full Engagement & Innovation (page 45)

This practice discusses specific strategies and structures that facilitators and ENTF leaders can utilize to ensure members are fully contributing and innovation is not stifled.

Diversifying the Collaborative Network (page 45)

There is a common understanding that diversified participation makes collaboratives more effective and is essential for committing to inclusive work with equitable outcomes. This section discusses how to determine who should be included in the collaborative and what role various stakeholders should play.

Capacity Building (page 47)

This practice discusses how the ENTF WFD can work to equip individuals participating in the collaborative to both build their collaborative skills and reduce member burnout.

Building a Collective Knowledge Base (page 48)

Practices to support members' understanding of both the collective itself and of the various other member organizations to increase clarity of purpose and members' capacity to engage with the network and with one another.

Trust Building (page 49)

Without trust, collaborative action is unsustainable. Trust in relationships reduces transaction costs, increases cooperation, and builds acceptance of network leadership.

Meaningful Interactions (page 50)

This includes experiences that help individual participants span boundaries associated with their role or sector in order to create more meaningful relationships that support effective collaboration

Managing Conflict (page 51)

Systemic change requires commitment to bold and courageous actions which can lead to conflicts of interest and personal or professional agendas. Managing conflict constructively, as opposed to avoiding or burying it, will be key to progressive success.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Performance Strategies (IPS) has worked with the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force Workforce Development Subcommittee (ENTF WFD) since 2015. In that time, the ENTF WFD has transformed from a networking group to a collaborative body seeking to determine the systems-level changes needed to increase positive outcomes and address racial disparities in unemployment. As such, the ENTF WFD has undergone numerous conversations, data collection projects, and decision-making activities to determine strategic paths forward. IPS' relationship with the ENTF WFD has also evolved from serving as primary facilitators, to empowering subcommittee members to take on leadership roles, to providing back-end support on projects driven directly by the ENTF WFD. Other consulting groups have experienced a similar trajectory as the ENTF WFD has grown to rely more directly on staff and member expertise and less on paid external support.

IPS and ENTF leadership codesigned this report in the spirit of the ENTF WFD's growing sustainability and independence. For the ENTF WFD to be both effective and sustainable in its efforts moving forward, the group must consider how best to collaborate. This includes not only formal structures, but also practices, behaviors, and norms.

IPS has compiled this report to provide the ENTF WFD with a set of recommendations for effective collaboration for systems change. This report is meant to be a highly practical reference tool that is used continuously when considering how to deepen and expand current work. Effective structures, behaviors, practices, and norms for collaboration will enable the ENTF WFD to fully capitalize on the expertise, networks, and influence of each person/organization choosing to participate. In turn, increased efficiency, clarity, and support in collaboration will allow partner organizations to focus more intently on the strategies needed to support equitable outcomes in the workforce development system for all residents.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This report was designed to answer a key question for the ENTF WFD's strategic growth moving forward (referred to as the Central Research Question): *"What existing collaborative structures, processes, and practices could enhance the outcome and impact goals of the ENTF Workforce Development subcommittee?"* In considering this question, IPS determined three initial areas of focus for research: network sustainability, encouraging members' use of systems thinking, and determining needed structures for effective collaboration. These areas of focus were rooted in IPS' experience with the ENTF WFD, conversations about emerging results from Petersen Research Consultant's process evaluation, and direct feedback from leadership. For each area, IPS generated a sub-list of search topics, provided below:

Network Sustainability	Systems Thinking	Collaborative Structures
Funding	Communications	Backbone Staff
Maintaining Momentum	Community Engagement	Governance
Sufficient Capacity	Learning	Member Participation
Common Understanding	Effective Relationships	Member Expectations
Avoiding Scope-Creep	Using, Understanding, and Communicating Data	Goal Setting
	Policy and Advocacy	Strategy Setting
		Feedback Loops
		Maintaining Stability
		Accountability Structures

The 20 subtopics above were the basis for the initial search through popular and academic literature. As the search progressed, IPS had conversations with ENTF staff and the ENTF WFD Steering Committee, read the final process evaluation from Petersen Research Consultants, and received feedback from the general ENTF WFD subcommittee through IPS' Capacity Trends survey. As a result of these additional inputs, the focus of the report was consolidated into four new areas, each with their own guiding research question. While each area absorbs many of the topics mentioned in the chart above, some topics were set aside.

IPS chose to focus on those topics most relevant to the ENTF WFD's current context. As the ENTF WFD builds more sustainable structures and processes, the remaining research could be reviewed and acted upon. *The final four areas of focus and their corresponding research questions are listed below; all focus area questions feed into answering the central research question.*

- **COMMON UNDERSTANDING:** What practices are needed to ensure all members clearly understand the purpose, value, and the "how" of the work?
- **LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES:** What practices ensure there is sufficient leadership capacity to support the ENTF WFD's efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability of the work?
- **STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING:** What practices enable the ENTF WFD subcommittee to make intermediary goals that are timely, attainable, and build towards the success measures?
- **MEMBER PARTICIPATION:** What member participation practices within the ENTF WFD subcommittee are necessary for effectively achieving goals?

SEARCH PROCESS

The team conducted a traditional literature review appropriate for exploring theory and developing new topical perspectives (Cronin et al., 2008; Torraco, 2005). The team utilized an iterative approach to support extensive resource collection, accounting for insights discovered during the collection process (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014; Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013; Torraco, 2005). In total, 264 research articles, professional publications, books, and websites were gathered using a myriad of search terms related to the project's research questions, with the majority of sources coming from peer reviewed academic journals.

IPS read the abstracts or summaries of each resource and tagged resources with labels in Zotero, a reference management software. Findings were organized per emerging themes related to the research questions. Of the total gathered, 166 were deemed appropriate to keep in the project—discarded resources lacked enough relevancy to the ENTF WFD to provide transferable insights. IPS continued to synthesize and hone the resources so that the final report consists of the 69 resources most relevant to *Common Understanding*, *Leadership Structures*, *Strategic Decision-Making*, and *Member Participation*.

STRENGTHS & CONSIDERATIONS OF APPROACH

A review of the literature is a stable analysis which provides broad coverage and information on trends across a given period of time and in many settings (Westat Frechtling, 2010; Yin, 1998). A traditional literature review is also unobtrusive, requiring few resources from the client outside of sharing perspectives on the approach as subject matter experts (Haddaway et al., 2015; Westat Frechtling, 2010).

Because the ENTF WFD operates in fairly specific circumstances, the research did expand to analogous contexts, such as effective collaboration across many different nonprofit and service sectors as well as local government and business. However, considering solutions across subject areas is also considered a smart practice of literature reviews, so this consideration is not necessarily negative (Weimer et al., 2011). Due

to limited time and resources, the search was necessarily incomplete (e.g. not systemic). The team also determined articles for inclusion in the final set using inductive reasoning to build on emerging themes from initial research. This could contribute to inaccuracies in analysis and biased selection of articles (Westat Frechtling, 2010; Yin, 1998). Finally, the literature itself will likely include reporting bias and reflect the unknown biases of the authors, which will impact the final analysis (Yin, 1998).

WHAT IS A SMART PRACTICE?

This report provides summarized descriptions of general principles and theories that are derived from a collection of examples provided across multiple resources (Overman & Boyd, 1994). These transferable examples and principles are organized into a set of "smart practices" (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016, p. 47) organized around the focus areas of the report. While "best practice" has become common nomenclature, a careful review of purported best practices often yields bias, exaggerated results, or unproven methodologies (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016, p. 120). These concerning realities are often based on the fact that most programs do not have the capacity or resources to conduct sufficiently rigorous internal and comparative evaluations to truthfully claim something is "best".

Additionally, constantly changing local contexts means that the best in one situation is rarely the best elsewhere. Bardach & Patashnik (2016) instead propose identifying "smart practices" which have meaningful results in their original contexts and provide clever solutions worth considering for adaptation. The IPS team has used this definition in determining useful smart practices to provide to the ENTF WFD. In deciding which examples from the literature to retain as smart practices, the team considered how frequently the smart practice occurred in the literature, how comparable the research subjects were to the ENTF WFD, whether major inputs and outputs were identifiable, and whether there was a cause and effect relationship that led to outcomes desirable for the ENTF WFD (Bretschneider et al., 2005).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS & CONTEXT

ENTF WFD PROCESS EVALUATION

In 2019, Petersen Research Consultants conducted a process evaluation of the ENTF WFD with the goal of understanding how the subcommittee works together, what practices appear to be contributing to success, and where there are opportunities for development or growth. *Smart Practices for Systemic Collaboration* was designed in part to address some of the challenges and growth opportunities recognized by the process evaluation. As the ENTF WFD considers how to prioritize implementing the practices in the report, it may want to first consider those in line with the process evaluation. Although many practices can be tied to the various findings of the evaluation, the following chart provides examples of how IPS has provided suggested smart practices to address some of the specific opportunities called out in the process evaluation:

Process Evaluation Finding	Smart Practice	Page
Strategic intentions are sometimes lost or unknown	Theory of Change	19
	Common Agenda	20
	Integrative Leadership	23
Participants come with varying goals for their interaction with the subcommittee	Systems Thinking	17
	Iterative Goal-Setting	36
	Framing & Balancing Power Dynamics	38
	Defining Roles in Writing	43
Diversity of perspectives about the role of the subcommittee	Consensus on Desired Collaboration	15
	Iterative Goal-Setting	36
	Flexibility in Action Planning	37
	Managing Expectations	44
Need for more intentional onboarding & communication	Clear Communication	21
	Building a Collective Knowledge Base	48
Members are concerned about their capacity to fully contribute	Developing Core Competencies	28
	Asset-Based Community Development	34
	Flexibility in Action Planning	37
	Encouraging Full Engagement & Innovation	45
	Diversifying the Collaborative Network	45
	Capacity Building	47
Members note a lack of capacity within ENTF staffing	Backbone Staff Allocation	27
	Developing Core Competencies	28
	Managing Expectations	44

ENTF WFD CAPACITY TRENDS REPORT

In February 2020, IPS presented the 2019 Capacity Trends Report to the ENTF WFD. This report had two primary sections. One section explained the progression of independence and sustainability of the subcommittee, in that member reliance on external support or ENTF staff declined over a period of 5 years. This was particularly true for categories like strategic planning, meeting planning, and meeting facilitation. The second half of the report is more directly relevant to this Smart Practices report, as it provided an aggregate view of subcommittee members' perspectives on their capacity as individuals to contribute to subcommittee goals.

Based on member feedback regarding how people have contributed, how they would like to contribute moving forward, how much time they have to dedicate to ENTF WFD work, and what they think ENTF WFD needs for success, the IPS Capacity Trends Report suggested the following recommendations:

1. Create clear annual intermediate goals for each action team, linked to the broader ENTF WFD strategy.
2. Create onboarding processes to ensure new individuals and organizations have good relationships with the network, an understanding of the work, and are plugged into areas most aligned with their skills, needs, and interests.
3. Diversify participation to ensure cross sector representation, resident voice, and increased overall member capacity.
4. Enhance communication so that members are consistently up to date on ENTF WFD progress.
5. Create structures for shared responsibility, such as rotating leadership, formalizing roles and expectations, and creating both ad-hoc and ongoing groups to accommodate varying individual capacity to commit to projects.

As is evidenced in the glossary on page 4, many of our recommendations in this report are designed to support the five recommendations above by providing specific implementation examples. In particular, the Capacity Trends Report, in conjunction with this report, are mutually reinforcing on the need for a Theory of Change (page 19), diversifying the collaborative network (page 45), having a reiterative approach to setting goals (page 36) and flexibility in action planning (page 37).

RELEVANCY TO THE BROADER ENTF NETWORK

The recommendations of this report take into account the current state and capacity of the ENTF WFD Subcommittee specifically. However, as indicated in *Strengths & Considerations of the Approach*, research for this report expanded to include analogous context across different sectors, types of collaborative platforms, and across organizational structures (nonprofit, for-profit, etc.). Consequently, these smart practices could be broadly applicable to the ENTF as an entire organization as well as to its four other subcommittees (the Coalition to End Homelessness, Energy, Food & Nutrition, and Transportation). Though each subcommittee focuses on a different basic community need and operates within different ecosystems, as part of the ENTF's full network, there is some universality in the collaborative challenges and shifts in capacity across the subcommittees as a whole (for example, fostering common understanding or implementing effective decision-making processes).

Additionally, several smart practices are focused on effective structure and capacity-building for ENTF staff to consider to effectively support the ENTF WFD. Inherently, any changes or adoption of practices resulting from recommendations would influence the level and delivery of support staff are able to provide to other subcommittees. ENTF staff would have to examine the overall organizational structures of the ENTF to ensure they are able to successfully implement any strategies informed by this report. As a result, changes intended to benefit the ENTF WFD would also benefit the other subcommittees.

Finally, as of the publication of this report in July 2020, ENTF is currently designing an overall Strategy and Implementation plan through the facilitation of Liz G Consulting. The plan is intended to refine ENTF's vision, mission, and values, to identify opportunities to effectively engage subcommittee members in ENTF's broader work, and to understand organizational strengths and opportunities for growth. Given that this process will provide direction on key strategy and action planning, improvement for member engagement and communication, and general capacity-building, this report can be utilized to inform the final deliverable.

While this report is structured as a reference tool for the ENTF WFD and can be a resource network-wide, certain practices are geared toward specific roles currently present within the WFD subcommittee. Throughout the evolution of the ENTF WFD, members have stepped into leadership roles that are both formal and informal, which is reflective of the open nature of membership. As a result, the term "ENTF WFD leaders'' or "leaders" generally encompasses these groups and is utilized to indicate the broad applicability of the smart practices geared towards 'leaders' as defined below:

- *Staff or Backbone Staff:* The ENTF Executive Director, Data Manager, and/or Administrative Assistant.
- *Steering Committee:* Subcommittee members selected through a nomination process that serve two-year terms and work in collaboration with ENTF Staff to monitor strategic progress, projects, and facilitate subcommittee activities or meetings.
- *Action Team Leads:* members that have volunteered to serve as a "point person" for the subcommittee's action teams and/or ad hoc projects.

A NOTE ON COLLECTIVE IMPACT

At its inception in 1982, ENTF was formed as a coalition to align systems that would improve Kent County residents' access to basic needs primarily through collaboration and partnership. Membership (both organizations and their representatives) were better able to effectively network, share institutional progress, and identify opportunities for collaboration. Over recent years, the ENTF WFD in particular has focused its efforts to not just foster system alignment (asking the question "how can we more effectively work together?"), but to define and work towards system change (asking the question "how can we effectively improve outcomes that are equitable together?").

At its core, the deepening of this work is congruent to the focus of collective impact (CI), a "form of cross-sector collaboration to address complex social and environmental challenges" (Collective Impact Forum, 2020). ENTF is not a traditional collective impact entity, but given its structure, formal and informal practices, and system-wide lens, it can consider the practices of collective impact as potential strategies to improve its efficacy and efficiency.

Throughout this report, there are several smart practices and articles that reference collective impact entities that were included due to their relevancy and potential for applicability within the ENTF WFD. As an overall consideration, it is important to note the ways in which the ENTF and the ENTF WFD both mirror and diverge from the five core principles to collective impact work as outlined by Kania & Kramer (2011):

- **Common Agenda**: while ENTF has an organizational vision, mission, and primary purpose, the five subcommittees largely operate independently of each other. Having a shared vision for change is seminal to CI work; while each subcommittee functions to help fulfill the mission, the work lacks a unifying and mutually agreed upon vision (the 2020 Strategy & Implementation planning process is partially addressing this).

- **Shared Measurement Systems**: ENTF identified broad success measures and indicators for each subcommittee to formulate a Basic Needs Index that would help the community and system understand progress on meeting basic needs. As a result, the ENTF WFD identified the shared data points that any member organization needs to collect in order to measure systemic results. While those data points have been identified, the ENTF WFD's membership has widely

varying capacity to collect and provide such data and is working on capacity-building efforts to more successfully capture systemic progress.

- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities**: CI initiatives encourage stakeholders to "undertake the specific set activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the action of others" (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Due to their independent nature of functioning, collaborative activities across subcommittees happen circumstantially or responsively as opportunities emerge, rather than in support of a common agenda. At the subcommittee level, IPS provided the ENTF WFD with a Service Analysis and Data Decision Making Process to help the group determine effective mutually reinforcing services within workforce development, but the ENTF WFD has yet to be able to make significant decisions based on these tools.

- **Continuous Communication**: All ENTF subcommittees meet on a monthly basis, and the ENTF WFD Steering Committee also meets monthly to discuss strategy and plan for the subcommittee meeting. Additionally, action teams or ad hoc project teams have met regularly depending on the scope of objectives. The impact of effective communication and engagement strategies, or lack thereof, are factors addressed in both the Process Evaluation and Capacity Trends reports.

- **Backbone Support Organization**: having an established staff that oversees all of the network work is the CI principle ENTF most closely mirrors. ENTF staff serve as the primary conveners and connectors across subcommittees, and in conjunction with the Steering Committee, oversee the planning for the ENTF WFD. Several smart practices address appropriate capacity-building of staff, particularly in *Leadership Structures*.

Because it is not modeled as a 'true' CI entity, ENTF it is not beholden to maintain fidelity to the model. This is a beneficial consideration as CI, over time, has proven to have several drawbacks. In that sense, the ENTF WFD is in a position to 'pick and choose' the CI practices and principles that are most relevant or encapsulate the most potential for meaningful use. Hoey et al. (2017) and Christens & Inzeo (2015) point on the lack of specificity behind implementation practices that support the five primary principles of CI. Kania & Kramer (2011) say the broadness of the CI is intentional so that it can be applied across contexts to challenge isolated community interventions.

However, the "murkiness" of the model can make it difficult to dissipate the "shadow side" of CI collaboration, especially when individual or institutional self-interest of membership "is masked by the overarching drive towards the collective" (Salignac et al., 2018, p. 104). Collective Impact is also known to struggle with top-down decision making that does not equitably value the input of those with lived experience. As such, the recommendations put forth in this report are presented to either reinforce the strengths of the CI model or provide opportunities for the ENTF WFD to constructively deviate from traditional CI practices. While collective impact is mentioned, on whole, as a positive model for consideration, IPS is not recommending that the ENTF WFD (or broader ENTF) restructure itself according to the formal CI model.

READING & UTILIZING THIS REPORT

A CONTINUAL REFERENCE

The smart practices featured within this report are presented as recommendations for the ENTF WFD to adopt or adapt for effective collaboration. As such, it is structured as a reference tool that can be utilized to inform ongoing and future discussions and decision-making processes. The material is meant to highlight practices that can refine existing or establish new structures and practices or help to shape future planning. ENTF leadership and membership can continuously refer to this report to be more efficient in their collaborative efforts to achieve equitable community outcomes.

Additionally, this report is meant to serve as a jumping-off point for the ENTF WFD to further explore the listed smart practices and relevant materials to support future capacity-building. It is not meant to be an all-encompassing compendium that discusses each smart practice at length; *each section is designed to provide readers a basic understanding of the smart practice and its relevance to inform future decision-making and spur generative discussion.*

READING THE FOCUS AREAS

The smart practices are divided into sections reflecting the four main focus areas: *Common Understanding, Leadership Structures, Strategic Decision-Making,* and *Member Participation*. Each section begins with a high-level overview of the focus area and the types of practices it encompasses. Each smart practice is then featured in subsections as follows:

- **Smart Practice:** provides definitions and contextual information of the smart practice based on the literature, including applicable examples, case studies, further clarifying research, etc.
- **Why This Matters:** an overview of how and why the practice is relevant to the ENTF WFD's current and future state, and recommendations and considerations for adopting and implementing the smart practice.

It is important to note that some smart practices are theories, concepts, or mindsets proven to be effective in collaborative systems work, whereas others are tangible structures, tactics, or processes that support collaboration or directly address identified barriers to success.

COMMON UNDERSTANDING

What practices are needed to ensure all members clearly understand the purpose, value, & the 'how' of the work?

Collaboration is a popular response to the well-recognized problem of fragmentation in human services. However, members of collaborations often disagree about what needs to be accomplished beyond a general sense of 'more', 'better', 'faster', or 'less' (Jeffares & Dickinson, 2016), and even common understanding of a general shared vision is a struggle in many collective impact groups (Faxon-Mills et al., 2018; Gajda, 2004). However, without such understanding, groups will find they have limited capacity for determining joint solutions (Duncan, n.d; Mayan et al., 2019). Participants' clear understanding of their collaborative's vision, purpose, and goals is essential to building trust, commitment, and unity. In turn, this trust and commitment builds a collective voice that can be used in the broader community to gather support for strategic action (Mayan et al., 2019).

While the ENTF WFD has determined common success measures, group members have often indicated they are unclear about how current action teams' work is related to impacting those success measures. Further, a lack of clarity regarding the value or purpose of monthly meetings has resulted in member fatigue and turnover. At the same time, members recognize that the ENTF WFD will need even more capacity from its members if the group is going to be able to make a significant impact on the workforce development system. Addressing this need must start with ensuring members agree to a common vision and can draw clear connections between the problems within the workforce development system, the ENTF WFD vision, and the group's strategies. The following practices can all help to contribute to a consistent and clear understanding of the ENTF WFD's work.

CONSENSUS ON DESIRED COLLABORATION

To promote appropriate levels of commitment, action, and behavior among all participating members, strategic alliances like the ENTF WFD should ensure all agree on:

- The desired value proposition of the collaboration
- How much impact the collaboration will have on participating organizations' structures
- How partners will work together

Such common understanding can help to increase trust and reduce participant's sense of organizational ownership or 'turf issues' (Gajda, 2004; Johnson et al., 2003; Weaver, 2015).

Le Pennec & Raufflet (2018) have created a helpful continuum of the types of value that collaborations can create for participating members. The continuum is not linear; members may experience multiple types of value throughout their participation. However, the types of value are progressive and build on one another:

- **Associational Value**: Working together may positively impact the credibility, visibility, and reputations of participating organizations. In addition, organizations involved in collaboratives often receive greater support.

- **Transferred Resource Value**: Shared resources can be durable, such as mastering a new skill, troubleshooting, or expanding networks. Resources may also be temporary, as with collaborative financial support.

- **Interaction Value:** Partnership processes result in intangible value such as trust, learning opportunities, knowledge creation, and deeper understanding of community landscape and context.

- **Synergistic Value:** The premise that partners can do more together than apart, particularly in regard to innovation that could result in significant changes for partners or the community, such as process improvement or behavior change.

Just as the potential types of value of collaboration vary, the level of connectivity between partners also varies. Collaboration is not a fixed concept; it constitutes a range of ways that partnering organizations may choose to work together (Gajda, 2004).

Figure 1 below provides a visual summary of the work of Bailey & Koney (2000) as described by Gajda (2004). Their theory posits that strategic alliances can range from low to high formal integration.

- **Cooperation:** information sharing in support of each organization's individual outcomes.
- **Coordination:** aligning activities or co-sponsoring events or services.
- **Collaboration:** giving up some organizational independence in favor of a shared goal.
- **Coadunation:** at least one partnering organization may give up independence in order to strengthen the collective entity.
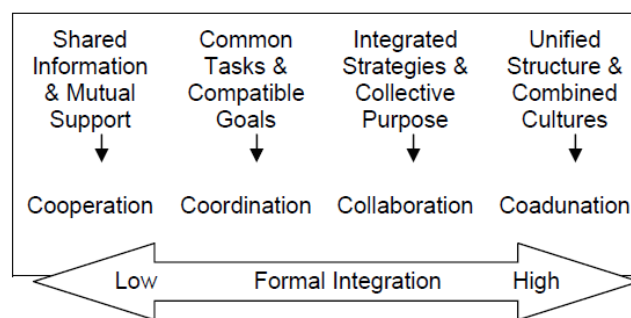

Figure 1: "Defining strategic alliances across a continuum of integration" (Gajda, 2004, p. 69)

Once the desired value-add and level of commitment are determined, collaborations will be in a much better position to agree on many of the tactical decisions that must be made for effective strategy implementation, as purported by Johnson et al. (2003) and Weaver (2015):

- Agreeing on the key issues to be addressed
- Identifying which partners to involve
- Determining the roles of each partner
- Agreeing on decision-making processes
- Discussing potential problems that could arise
- Discussing the similarities and differences in participating partner's organizational cultures and how that could influence the work

Why This Matters
Defining the potential value of participating in the ENTF WFD will help to build momentum and commitment to the type of collaboration the subcommittee deems necessary to meet desired outcomes. In turn, consensus about needed collaborative commitment can help to provide rationale for partner roles

or decision-making processes and can illuminate potential challenges before strategy implementation begins. Furthermore, if the ENTF WFD has a good understanding of what types of value are motivating members to participate, part of vetting future group strategies or time investment can include considering whether desired value types are being met.

To avoid over-simplifying the potential value of the ENTF WFD or limiting participants' thinking, IPS recommends conducting an informal poll or conversation with members at large about what they may hope to gain (personally and for their organization) from participating. Leadership could then map these responses to the value types listed by Le Pennec & Raufflet (2018) in order to discuss whether trends in participants' expectations align with the ENTF WFD's current structures and goals.

In addition, IPS has provided Gajda's (2004) Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) in Appendix B. This tool was designed for the federally funded Safe School/Healthy Student initiatives to measure the depth of collaboration. The ENTF WFD as a whole or Steering Committee could use this rubric as a group to quickly evaluate the level of connectivity the ENTF WFD provides members. The author then suggests the following discussion questions:

- What would it look like if the group reached their ideal level of integration?
- What actions does the group need and want to take to bring about their ideal level of integration?
- What is the evidence that would help the group recognize when they have reached their ideal level of integration?

SYSTEMS THINKING

Systems thinking can be understood as "the ability to see how social systems, subsystems, and their parts interact with and influence each other, and how these systems create and contribute to specific problems" (Uribe et al., 2017, p. 14). When highly motivated and ambitious people jump into system interventions without taking enough time to understand system dynamics and characteristics, small unintended consequences can build into significant problems that are difficult to solve or identify because of the large space between cause and effect in systems work. Fortunately, Nobel economist Herbert Simon provides some perspective; complex systems are hierarchical, and consist of smaller, less complex subsystems that are connected to one another. If this were not the case, a system would be so complex it would simply freeze, and any change would be impossible. Instead, it is entirely feasible and in fact advisable to look at transforming the larger system by understanding and making changes to subsystems (Seelos & Mair, 2018).

However, instead of focusing on deep learning with a given subsystem, groups that don't experience the success they had hoped for may seek to regain a false sense of control by jumping from one intervention to the next. As a result, parts of subsystems may shift or change, but nothing is intentionally transformed in the direction a group had hoped. By instead focusing on continuous learning and shifting mindsets, groups can work to avoid making the system worse through unintended consequences and protect the stamina and mental and emotional health of those involved in the work (Seelos & Mair, 2018). The following practices can assist with promoting systems thinking and learning:

- **Consistently reground in the big picture***:* This could be as simple as restating the group's ultimate goal at the beginning of every meeting (Uribe et al., 2017). This helps to ensure participants do not get too focused on strategies with instant appeal but potential long-term consequences.

- **Ensure shared definition of the problem***:* In order to motivate systems thinking and action, participants must have a common understanding of the problem and see it as both urgent and important. This can be facilitated by many of the practices discussed earlier in the report. Problem definitions must be evidence based as well as grounded in the experiences and context of those affected by the system (Weaver, 2016). Part of defining the system and problem should include understanding players and influencers, gaps and opportunities, and key trends and momentum (Uribe et al., 2017).

- **Challenge perspectives***:* Each individual must be willing to accept their own role in systems problems and be willing to do and see things differently (Uribe et al., 2017).

- **Include multiple perspectives***:* Diversity of thought and experience is key to ensuring groups are learning about the system they seek to influence from multiple angles and are addressing group think or biases.

- **Focus on value-add of collaboration***:* To maintain a focus on system transformation, ensure that conversations are concentrated on how working together can achieve more towards group goals as opposed to focusing on individual organization's current programs, challenges, or limitations (Uribe et al., 2017). One facilitative method of doing this is to implement the SOAR process (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) during ideation (Walzer et al., 2016). Traditional SWOT methods can devolve conversations into a focus on challenges and weaknesses. In contrast, SOAR uses Aspirations and Results to build strategies based on collaborative strengths and incorporates an Appreciative Inquiry approach to strategy development (Stavros & Cole, 2013; Walzer et al., 2016). IPS has included the full Stavros & Cole article with a deeper explanation of implementing SOAR in Appendix A.

- **Engage people with a willingness to learn***:* System transformation is long and unclear work that has more to do with minimizing harm, persistence, and learning than silver bullet solutions (Seelos & Mair, 2018). Individuals and organizations need to be ready to commit to continuous learning and adaptation, to see the value of the process itself (Kania et al., 2014; Uribe et al., 2017). Such an attitude will allow participants to maintain a systems perspective and not get lost in the weeds of immediate programmatic design (Gajda, 2004, p. 69).

Why This Matters

While this report will discuss why it is important to incorporate people at all levels within the workforce development system (organizational leaders, frontline staff, cross-sector partners, residents, etc.), each of those individuals is likely to come to the table with their own narrow agenda in mind. Helping each participant to see the forest through the trees will be critical to building consensus and creating strategy to actually transform the system as opposed to merely influencing it (perhaps in unintended negative ways). As evidenced in the suggested practices above, encouraging systems thinking can be both tactical and behavioral. Leadership has the primary responsibility of both implicitly demonstrating systems thinking and explicitly supporting its importance through facilitative practice.

While all partners need to be facilitated, equipped, and encouraged to pursue systems thinking, ENTF leadership must take one step further into integrated thinking, which "involves the cognitive ability to maintain a systems perspective on a collaboration while distinguishing between and understanding the interrelations of the different dynamisms at play within the collaboration" (Daymond, 2015, p.11). In other

words, leadership must be able to focus on systems thinking and on the dynamics between all individual organizations at the same time, maintaining simultaneous macro and mezzo mindsets.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The exact contents of theories of change vary, but all seek to illustrate how change is expected to play out over time, the role of a given collaboration or organization in promoting that change, and how interim work will build towards long term goals (Coffman & Beer, 2015). Articulating the group's theory of change can help to ensure that any strategies that are developed are appropriately situated within the larger community context. In addition, theory of change models help groups clearly define desired impact, how to influence the system towards those impact goals, and where leverage can come from to exhort that influence (Organizational Research Associates, 2004).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation commissioned a very clear toolkit on how to create Theory of Change models to fit a variety of different contexts. The toolkit provides useful background information, step by step processes, and worksheets. We have provided a link to the toolkit in Appendix A. Although there are many different models to illustrate final theories of change, a model from the National Funding Collaboration for Violence Prevention model provides a particularly clear visual of how many players in a system (funding collaboratives, programmatic collaboratives, and individual organizations) can leverage activities to support short term change and long-term outcomes (Rog et al., 2004). A visual of this model is featured in Appendix B.

In addition to the facilitative exercises from the toolkit that are useful for creating a theory of change, IPS recommends ensuring the process is centered in:

- **Equity:** As is often discussed in ENTF WFD meetings, a key driver for transforming the workforce development system is to address the racial disparities in outcomes. These disparities are perpetuated by inequities. Maintaining an equity lens when determining elements of the theory of change will lay the right foundation to ensure that future activities coming out of the theory of change are also rooted in equity. We have provided a twelve-page primer, *Equity: The Soul of Collective Impact*, in Appendix A (McAfee et al., 2015). While the primer does not provide explicit tactics regarding *how* to integrate equity into collective work, it does provide a strong rationale for why equity is essential and what equity focused collaboration looks like. This document is a quick and accessible read. It can be particularly useful for onboarding new members or for periodically re-grounding the ENTF WFD throughout the work.

- **Participatory planning**: In order to ensure buy-in and understanding, the ENTF WFD would need to ensure that diverse stakeholders that are representative of ENTF WFD membership and other relevant groups were included in the development process. Participatory planning can also help to ensure multiple needs are addressed, and diverse perspectives can illuminate assumptions, barriers, and opportunities that could impact the model (Gil de Gibaja, 2001). Gil de Gibaja (2001) studied multiple collectives and their planning processes; the value of participatory planning processes is often on par with the value of the end product itself, and she found several instances in which the lack of participatory planning resulted in such poor ownership that the group had to re-do planning processes later on (see also *Integrative Leadership* on page 23).

Why This Matters

While the ENTF WFD has agreed to a common success measure, it is less clear that the group can currently agree on the state of the system, define the assumptions they are making about system transformation,

and clearly state the levers they hope to utilize to create that change. Common understanding of the problem(s) at hand and a joint approach to solving it is critical to the success of collaborative work (Duncan, n.d). Building a theory of change would help the ENTF WFD clearly articulate its purpose as a group and its place in community.

Further, once a theory of change is in place, the model can be used to inform strategy development across action teams so that activities are linked directly to the group's identified strategies and desired interim outcomes (Coffman & Beer, 2015). For more support on connecting ongoing strategy development back to a defined theory of change, IPS has provided Coffman & Beer's 2015 article, *The Advocacy Strategy Framework,* in Appendix A. The framework as originally provided may be particularly useful to the advocacy action team. However, Coffman & Beer propose six reflection questions to help connect strategies back to a theory of change; IPS sees these questions as a broadly adaptable tool for any action team.

COMMON AGENDA

Although creating a common agenda is one of the primary tenants of formal collective impact initiatives (Kania & Kramer, 2011), the premise of identifying a goal and determining strategies that can plausibly achieve that goal is essential to any collaborative effort (Gold, 2013; Mayan et al., 2019). Specific collective impact frameworks aside, a common agenda can be simply defined as agreeing on goals and the processes and strategies needed to meet them (Faxon-Mills et al., 2018). Like a theory of change, a common agenda can serve to provide ongoing clarity to partners about what the collaborative is trying to achieve, and can help to create standards through which to evaluate new strategies and partnerships (Mayan et al., 2019).

As an example, Partners for a Competitive Workforce (PCW), based in Cincinnati, Ohio, has set a goal of ensuring 90 percent of the labor force is gainfully employed by 2020. PCW's common agenda focuses on **1)** connecting businesses with qualified workers; **2)** creating industry partnerships with employers, school districts, higher education, and community organizations to support career pathways in priority industries; and **3)** improve work readiness services (Gold, 2013, p. 6).

Although the agenda has elements focused on service and program provision, the group focuses the collaborative's effort on collecting and analyzing data to understand current needs and future workforce trends, creating a comprehensive communications plan around workforce efforts, and aligning funding and policy to support improvements in the talent supply chain (Gold, 2013). The group has bridged the program level interventions of partner organizations with the systems level interventions supported by the collaborative as a whole and maintains a dashboard that tracks the group's progress on a number of identified indicators.

Why This Matters

The ENTD WFD has already identified a success measure (percentage of households with income above the ALICE Threshold) and indicators (percentage recipients served by best-practice service providers and percentage of residents with adequate transportation access to workforce development sites). What is not clear, as reported by ENTF WFD participants, is how the activities and strategies of the ENTF WFD are related to accomplishing the indicators or ultimately the success measure. The theory of change work described earlier in this report can help the ENTF WFD to ensure they have identified the right goals and levers for change. Building on a theory of change by creating a common agenda for the group can help to illuminate the connectivity between the annual work of the collaboration and the larger systemic change the ENTF WFD is hoping to activate.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Assuming all other practices in this section on Common Understanding are in place, the realities of working together as a large and evolving group present tactical challenges to ongoing common understanding of the work. As such, ensuring clear communication practices is critical so that all of the diligent thought work around consensus in problem definitions, commitment to systems thinking, defining theories of change, etc., is not lost in the day to day work. Further, clear communication is in and of itself a behavior that builds goodwill and momentum for change in collaboratives. Without broad and ongoing communication, collaboratives will struggle to move from vision to action (Hawkins, 2018; Hoelscher et al., 2017). Suggested practices for clear communication include:

Clear language. Create common messaging any current member can use to discuss the work with external stakeholders, including their clients. Make sure to eliminate acronyms and jargon and ensure there is an obvious link in messaging between current activities and long-term goals. This can help current organizational partners be better bridges into the broader community and can help ensure more successful participation of residents and new partners in the work (Cooper, 2017).

Communication practices of leaders. State the urgent need for the collaborative at every meeting, illustrating how current state in the system does not match desired outcomes and impact. Build confidence and energy by frequently communicating current successes. Demonstrate buy-in by actively participating in all aspects of the work and promptly doing any assigned follow-up work (Kramer et al., 2019).

Opportunities to discuss current events. In order to promote innovation, cross-mentoring, and networking, the Michigan Local Food Council Network hosts monthly calls that focus on topics members propose in advance. The calls provide opportunity for members to learn about upcoming policy changes, community events, or other work influencing the network's mission. Members can share ideas, ask questions, and determine if a network-wide response is needed (Hoey et al., 2017).

Create an information repository. Members of the Big Lift collaborative provided suggestions to an external evaluator about creating a manual or e-space for people to consistently reference foundational documents. Faxon-Mills et al. (2018) suggest the following tactics:

- Focus areas and activities
- Role descriptions
- Organizational chart
- Logic model
- Marketing and recruitment materials to bring others in

Maintain updated contact lists. Lists should not only include currently participating members, but can act as organizers to document contacts from networking, identified contacts of people that need to be invited into the work, etc. The contact lists should document what types of communication or relationship management steps for each person. Developing standards for when to remove someone from a list will help to keep the size manageable. Nevertheless, lists will be most effective when maintaining them is a specific person's responsibility (Helmstetter et al., 2017).

Create an outreach calendar. An outreach calendar can ensure that members in different roles, as well as other key stakeholders, receive the right level of communication at appropriate intervals. Newsletters, social media, and webinars are examples of the types of communication that may be used. Documenting the purpose of each along with the preferences of various stakeholder groups can help staff maintain

regular communications that are actually utilized (Helmstetter et al., 2017). A sample calendar from the collaborative Minnesota Compass is included as Figure 2.

Table 4.3 Outreach calendar

Audience (number of people)	In-person meeting	Email update	Social media
Governance Committee (N = 15)	Annual Governance meeting Annual Meeting Presentation offered to each organization	Quarterly Monthly e-newsletter	Ongoing
Steering Committee (N = 15)	Bi-annual Steering Committee meeting Annual Meeting	Bi-monthly Monthly e-newsletter	Ongoing
Time-limited topic advisory committees (N = 20 to 50)	During time they serve on committee: Two advisory meetings Annual Compass Meeting	Monthly e-newsletter (subscriptions invited during committee process for those not already subscribed)	Ongoing
Community partners (N = 150)	Depending on topic, select individuals are invited to Annual Compass Meeting Presentations are commonly offered to organizations and collaboratives	Monthly e-newsletter	Ongoing
Media		Monthly e-newsletter Media alerts as needed	Ongoing
All stakeholders		Monthly e-newsletter	Ongoing

Figure 2 (Helmstetter et al., 2017, p. 65)

Why This Matters

The ENTF WFD can take comfort in knowing that its current struggles with clear communication are not unique. Throughout the literature, other collaboratives of similar scale   reported the same issues with consistency, understanding effective methods, and creating clear and engaging content (Faxon-Mills et al., 2018; Helmstetter et al., 2017; Jeffares & Dickinson, 2016; Kramer et al., 2019). It is difficult to know what partners want to know and how they need to hear about it in order to promote their continued engagement. However, figuring out communication challenges is critical to maintaining accountability to progress. IPS' recent capacity survey indicated that ENTF WFD members want to be informed of what is going on, but they will likely disregard group emails. Discussing some of the tactical suggestions from this section as a group may illuminate communication strategies that ENTF WFD members can commit to participating in.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES

What practices ensure there is sufficient leadership capacity to support the ENTF WFD's efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability of the work?

As achieving common understanding is foundational to the success of collaborative systems, so is identifying and cultivating the leaders that can make the work happen. The networked nature of system collaboration means leaders must engage a broad set of behaviors and structures "that facilitate productive interaction and move the participants in the network toward effective resolution of a problem" (McGuire & Silva, 2014, p. 35). In systems work (which is complex and adaptive), leaders tend to emerge through activities and interactions that lead to participants fulfilling roles of leadership, both formally and informally (Hawkins, 2018).

Thus, what a collaborative needs from its leadership emerges both gradually and suddenly; short-term responses to challenges and opportunities inform long-term strategies for effectiveness. For the ENTF WFD, this has meant that leadership has had to broaden its scope of staff responsibilities, rely upon external consultants, and create new structures, such as the Steering Committee and Action Teams, to better meet collaborative needs. Additionally, many leaders fulfill these roles on top of their organizational roles and so the collaborative constantly navigates the challenge of leadership with limited capacity, whether that is based on time, skills, expertise, or commitment.

As it stands, the ENTF WFD continues to evolve away from depending on support from professional consultants. Therefore, equipping members to step into effective and manageable leadership roles within the collective is critical for driving progress (Ansell & Gash, 2012). The practices in this section focus on the general mindsets, structures and approaches to leadership across staff and membership that will most benefit the ENTF WFD as it continues to increase its self-sufficiency as a collective.

INTEGRATIVE LEADERSHIP

Determining a governance model that is appropriate for the subcommittee's current goals is critical to its success in achieving them. Hawkins (2018) purports there is no "silver bullet" when it comes to governance models, due to varying factors like a collective's purpose, size, resources, and so on (p. 11). However, understanding the right balance of informal and formal governance practices and overall approach to leadership can enable the ENTF WFD to be more responsive to its evolving needs and opportunities.

For leaders within a collaborative, it is necessary to have a systems mindset to be successful and impactful in their role, in addition to having a solid understanding of the collective expertise represented across membership as a whole (see also *Systems Thinking* on page 17). This systems mindset supports leaders to act as "integrative leaders" that can more effectively engage members and aid in alignment across strategic work (Hawkins, 2018, p. 6). According to Crosby & Bryson (2014), *integrative leadership is an approach that integrates "people, resources and organisations [sic] across various boundaries to tackle complex public problems and achieve the common good"* (p. 57). Integrative leaders cultivate knowledge, behaviors, and skills that enable them to understand the individuals and entities within a collaborative network and position participants for success based on their expertise, capacity, and strengths.

Daymond (2015)'s synthesis of integrative public leadership literature highlights four dimensions that integrative leaders utilize to facilitate cross-sector collaborations:

- **Integrative Thinking:** the ability to sustain a systems lens (or "systems" thinking) while also understanding the dynamics and interconnectedness within a collaboration, especially the various roles network members serve

- **Integrative Behavior:** actions that support and nurture relationships and connections that are semi-permanent to help achieve the overall goals, particularly to help build trust across the collaborative

- **Integrative Leadership Resources:** identifying and procuring the needed expertise, opportunities, and even social capital that support the collaborative and helps the collaborative demonstrate its value to community;

- **Integrative Structures & Processes:** embedding structures and processes to be effectively leveraged by the collaborative, especially recognizing that those structures and processes can enhance or inhibit growth, development, and ongoing communication.

Collectively, these dimensions can help leaders better anticipate needs within a collaborative, while also aiding the collaborative's capacity to shift and adapt as the work evolves. Leaders "need to guide planning processes, work together as a team, serve as externally-focused leaders, and implement while planning rather than focus on only one of these levels" (Kramer et al., 2018, p. 413). It is important to note that participants within cross-sector collaborations are more likely to emphasize process and structure because they can directly influence those elements (versus the selection of who participates, which they cannot control) (Daymond, 2015). Because of this tendency, leaders need to cultivate skills that enable them to identify and understand the expertise and potential of participants as it relates to the collaborative's goal to ensure they are plugged into the vision and work effectively.

This represents one of the greatest challenges to large-scale collaborations: helping individuals stay connected to the purpose of the platform as they try to advance the mission of their respective organizations and/or communities. Salignac et al. (2014) suggest this is especially true for collective impact entities "particularly when the self-interest of the various members is masked by the overarching drive towards the collective" (p. 104). Therefore, it is primarily the responsibility of integrative leaders to be mindful of how these dynamics shift and influence the collective's progress and help individuals and their organizations understand how their self-interests align with the interests of the group.

According to Pearlman et al. (2014), this "informed mindfulness" is foundational to leaders aiming to make educated decisions as they balance their own self-awareness as leaders with the greater context of the work (p. 9). Several scholars emphasize the importance of being self-aware and understanding how to set aside ego as a leader within a collaborative space as a key component to integrative leadership; leaders are often tasked with making conscious decisions about what does or does not serve the collaborative or broader community (Pearlman et al., 2014; Gil de Gibaja, 2001; Kania, Hanleybrown, & Splansky Juster, 2014; Ryu, 2014;). Additionally, there are several internal factors that integrative leaders should develop to cultivate this sense of self-awareness:

- Integrity
- Authenticity
- Courage
- Compassion
- Empathy
- Humility
- Passion (Pearlman et al., 2014)

By starting with the self and demonstrating the necessary behaviors for success, leaders can ultimately support a culture of sustainable transformation and change; Figure 3 illustrates the domains leaders can influence through integrative leadership.

Figure 3, The Five Domains of Integrative Leadership (Pearlman et al., 2014, p. 4)

Why This Matters

As it currently stands, ENTF staff have limited capacity to have more robust roles within the ENTF WFD as their responsibilities are spread across the five subcommittees (in Spring 2020, however, ENTF introduced a data manager role that helps mitigate this issue related to the network's substantial data needs and initiatives). The ENTF WFD Steering Committee was also created to help ensure the subcommittee's further ownership of the work and to increase leadership capacity. However, overall trends in capacity within the ENTF WFD indicate that most members are not able to sustain or increase their level of participation or engagement, which can stymie sustainability and forward progress (see Capacity Trends Report). Utilizing integrative leadership to inform leadership roles, responsibilities and competencies can support the navigation of individual and institutional dynamics within a collaborative space and bring together the multitude of perspectives and expertise for forward progress.

Systems work is not linear; it is multi-layered and interconnected. As such, ENTF WFD leaders must adopt a mindset to see the work as both cyclical and overlapping so that key phases of work do not stall. This means that leadership as a whole needs to have a multi-layered approach so that leaders can 'plug in' to the network at a given moment, especially since relationships, membership, and the broader community landscape are constantly shifting. Integrative leadership is a model that can both support and inform how ENTF WFD leaders can be most effective in the collaborative space.

STRATEGY-BASED LEADERSHIP TENURE

A continuous challenge for collectives is the frequent change in general participation and in leadership roles; this typically stems from and is exacerbated by turnover and capacity constraints at individual partner agencies. This emphasizes the needs for consistency and appropriate capacity in key roles, particularly within governance positions. Backbone staff are much more likely to fulfill those needs, not only because they are compensated for their work, but their primary responsibilities empower them to participate,

engage, and lead throughout all levels in community collaboratives (as addressed in *Backbone Staff Allocation* on page 27, this has historically been challenge for ENTF staff).

Additionally, consultants can and have fulfilled more temporary leadership roles, but can be constrained by the parameters of their contract or their leadership style (see Table 1 in *Developing Core Competencies*, page 28). The majority of leadership roles are fulfilled by members in a voluntary capacity. When there is greater instability due to frequent changes, it can affect a collective's capacity to be strategic and intentional in its continued work.

For collectives to be successful, there needs to be "a commitment to the longer-term time frames that allow the relational and measurement challenges inherent in this type of interorganizational collaboration to be addressed" (Salignac et al, 2018, p. 106). For leadership roles, there should be a clear understanding of how each role helps maintain that commitment over time through a formal commitment. Simultaneously, collectives need to develop more flexible parameters for members to serve as leaders; turnover is expected for collaboratives that last over years, so partners are incentivized to prepare for leadership succession to be more responsive and "build in ways that will sustain the collaboration during changes in leadership (Bryson et al., 2006, p. 47).

The utilization of leadership styles that are more facilitative or integrative can be more effective when leadership rotates based on skill or expertise, according to Gil de Gibaja, 2001. Structuring rotating leadership roles based on a partner's experience, skills, and ultimately the collaborative's needs, better enables forward progress toward the collaborative's goals (Gil de Gibaja, 2001). Hawkins (2018) also indicates that the way in which governance is designed within a collaborative varies because the network changes over time and activities evolve, hence there is not an ideal singular model to collaborative governance.

At present, the ENTF WFD employs a very traditional time-based approach to tenure of its Steering Committee, whereas leadership tenure for action teams has been very ambiguous (members agreed to serve as leads, but no deliberate discussions on how long they would serve took place). IPS recommends codifying the practice of basing leadership tenure on the present goals and needs and aligning it with individual skill and capacity. This reinforces the idea of a goal-bound versus time-bound collaboration (Gold, 2013, p. 12). This can also affirm the value leaders bring into a project or structure, help the ENTF WFD be more agile as it navigates member turnover, and potentially prevent burnout.

Why This Matters
The ENTF WFD Steering Committee already intentionally staggers terms of members to ensure continuity and to maintain a necessary quorum; this shifted approach to setting term limits would accomplish the same goal while being more intentional about integrating Steering Committee members into the work. The same approach could also be utilized for less formal leadership roles, such as action team leads or leading ad hoc projects; determining definitive or anticipated lengths of time that are mutually decided upon by ENTF Staff and/or the Steering Committee and the member(s) who would fulfill the role.

Inherently, the work of the ENTF WFD Subcommittee is to address systemic inequity and foster system-wide change to address the historical and current barriers residents face to achieving economic prosperity. More intentional planning of leadership roles means that specific strategies are provided with adequate leadership and oversight rather than being based on arbitrary commitments of time. Tenure of roles can be based upon needs for longer-term strategy alignment or on shorter-term action planning or strategy implementation. Leaders will be empowered to focus more deeply on advancing intentional strategies, balancing priorities, and nurturing relationships.

BACKBONE STAFF ALLOCATION

It is understandable that a key challenge the ENTF WFD faces is related to overall capacity as most participants serve in a voluntary capacity. For collaboratives to continue their work, backbone staff serve an important role in sustainability and support by providing much needed "infrastructure" (Gemmel, 2014, p. 4). Backbone organizations like ENTF operate within a system that is, by nature, collaborative, but often these organizations lack the "command and control" leadership like they would if they were employing all members of the collective (Turner et al. 2013, para. 3). Because collaboratives often eschew traditional hierarchy and influence, the multilayered nature of a platform like ENTF means leadership, in particular backbone staff, are able to assume roles across all of those layers to maintain progress (Michaud-Letourneau et al., 2019).

As previously established, maintaining a systems lens is a key component to leadership of a collaborative space; Michaud-Letourneau et al. (2019) posit it is necessary to cultivate that mindset so that each participant and organization in the collaborative understands how to best contribute to the work, especially if those contributions fall outside typical expectations or roles. For backbone staff, however, fulfilling this role can be compromised when they are "not fully capable of playing the various backbone role[s]" (Michaud-Letourneau et al. 2019, p. 8).

Turner et al. (2013) find there are several ways through which backbone staff can exert influence despite challenges and constraints, such as:

- Demonstrating *competence* and *commitment*
- Providing and facilitating *objectivity* along with *data and information*
- Cultivating the *network* and its *visibility* within community

These sources of influence help enable backbone staff's capacity to shape attitudes and behaviors within a collective (Turner et al 2013). Staff can also support the collective by providing practical assessment and follow-up to the progress of the working groups within the structure (Michaud-Letourneau et al., 2019).

Structures to support strategic implementation, such as action teams, help propel the work but require appropriately allocated staffing to maintain momentum through the provision of resources. Establishing designated staff roles to fulfill necessary operational, facilitative, and administrative functions are vital to collaborative success, especially within the context of working groups Kramer et al (2018).

Backbone staff within collaboratives fulfill vital components to successful collaboration, primarily through strategies, tools, resources, and other facilitative support (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Having designated staffing whose primary responsibilities focus on key structures for success, such as process/project coordination and data, would be an appropriate division of workload for ENTF Staff. This would include identifying and managing necessary resources, supporting internal relationship-building, and providing key facilitation for collaborative convenings (Garber & Adams, 2017).

A persistent challenge ENTF has faced in recent years is lack of staff capacity to 'keep up' with the continued growth and progress of strategic efforts. For example, the ENTF WFD's data projects required considerable time and contributions from external consultants and membership. While it is necessary for the staff, particularly primary leaders (i.e. Executive Director) to focus on vision, strategy, and fostering key partnerships, it can be difficult to maintain momentum in these function areas while balancing operational responsibilities and coordinating subcommittee projects.

The backbone team must be able to adapt to the changing needs of the collective as work evolves. This includes not only providing the resources to support goals and strategies but having the willingness to

"step out front and lead when necessary, especially to keep equity as the driving force of the initiative" (McAfee at el., 2015, p. 8). To further explore this, we have provided a link in Appendix A to the full *Equity: The Soul of Collective Impact* brief.

Why This Matters

ENTF's collective network is vast - the ENTF WFD's membership encompasses 57 individual entities alone. Given the significant shift in strategic direction over the past five years, ENTF staff (particularly the Executive Director position) have continued to serve in several key roles in other collaborative platforms and continue to engage in relationship building efforts to develop strategic partnerships. Initiatives within the ENTF WFD have grown in scale and have consistently required the support of external consultants to support facilitation, project management, and engagement. Members have also stepped in to fulfill these roles to a limited capacity.

Despite growing capacity trends at the staffing and voluntary leadership level, IPS concludes that ENTF staff is under-capacity in terms of the various roles that are needed for the ENTF WFD to be fully effective. When staff are misallocated across a collaborative, it challenges the momentum of the collective and compromises overall staff efficacy. In Spring 2020, ENTF hired a data manager whose key responsibilities will be to oversee the data processes and projects across the full network, with particular focus on the ENTF WFD shared data projects. This role partially addresses the need for an increase in staff overall capacity and demonstrates the necessity of allocating staff across key collaborative function areas. IPS recommends continued reflection and evaluation of the subcommittee's operational and administrative to ensure staffing is appropriately resourced and structured (especially upon the completion of the 2020 strategic planning process).

DEVELOPING CORE COMPETENCIES

Although the concept of core competencies stems from corporate business practices, the intention is applicable to the needs of collectives. A collaborative leader functioning across various arenas or sectors can achieve success by clarifying their needed knowledge and skills. More broadly, defining competencies relates to a deep commitment to work across traditional boundaries, be they across function areas, people or organizations (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

The literature indicates there are several types of behaviors, skills, and knowledge that represent core competencies collaborative leaders should possess to facilitate collective or system-wide change:

- Engage participants
- Encourage relationship building
- Facilitate communication and processes
- Foster an equitable collaborative environment (McGuire & Silvia, 2009; Kramer et al., 2018; McAfee et al., 2015; Ansell & Gash (2012); Gil de Gibaja, 2001; Bryson et al., 2006).

Further, there are two types of leadership behavior that have a greater positive impact on network effectiveness according to McGuire & Silvia (2009):

- *Mobilizing behaviors* that influence both internal and external involvement
- *Synthesizing behaviors* that focus on increasing/strengthening network relationships

The Capacity Trends report that examined the evolution of capacity of ENTF WFD stakeholders from 2015-2019 indicated that several individual members felt they were at capacity but noted additional membership was needed to ensure the work moves forward appropriately. A critical component of this

will involve ENTF staff and the Steering Committee being equipped to "mobilize" members appropriately and efficiently. Mobilizing and synthesizing behaviors were found to be significantly and positively related to overall network effectiveness perceptions in county-based networks (McGuire & Silvia, 2009).

Additionally, there are several leadership definitions and theories that illuminate the various competencies needed to be effective; a common theme across these definitions and theories relates to the role of leadership and communication. Kramer et. al. (2018) refer to the ideas of Hackman and Johnson (2013), who posit "that leadership is generally defined as the conscious use of symbols to communicate about the past, present and future [that] influences the attitudes and behaviors of others to help achieve goals" (p. 399).

Inherently, leaders need to have the capacity to influence and mobilize fellow members through effective engagement and communication strategies in addition to understanding the appropriate variety and balance of those strategies. This would help address a number of key challenges that the ENTF WFD currently faces, including the lack of common understanding of the collective's goals, and the need to perpetually align specific strategies (mostly pushed forward by action teams) to connect to the broader goals of the subcommittee (there are several tactics that are proven to be effective in supporting this competency featured in *Clear Communication* on page 21).

A collective's capacity to achieve its equity goals is also compromised when leadership does not have the full set of skills necessary to support that work. In fact, "backbone organizations must bring a point of view, infusing collective impact partnerships with a focus on fairness and inclusion and a commitment to create the change that will ensure everyone has access to the opportunities and resources it takes to succeed" (McAfee et al., 2015, p. 7). By extension, volunteer leadership roles must also support backbone staff in executing their vision for equitable collaborative environments.

There are particular key elements to leadership that ensure a collective is successful in fostering equity through the lens of the collective's focus and goals:

- *Demonstration of behavior patterns* that embody equity, bringing a point of view and commitment to equity.
- *Comfortability discussing issues of race*, disparity, and equity and the capacity to do so in a credible and courageous way.
- *Maintaining accountability to the success measures* they set out to meet; this may mean having the capacity to advocate, educate and organize members around systems change and policy work. (McAfee et al., 2015, p.8)

Overall, core competencies represent how a collective acts upon its strategic intent (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). They serve as a synthesis of the various roles that leaders fulfill within the collaborative environment. Ansell & Gash (2012) observed three primary roles of collaborative leadership:

- **Stewards** that establish and protect the integrity to the collaborative process overall;
- **Mediators** that arbitrate and nurture relationship building across the collaborative;
- **Catalysts** that identify value-creating opportunities and mobilize stakeholders pursue them (p. 8).

How these roles are fulfilled are dependent on the style of leadership: **neutral facilitation**, which relies upon trained facilitation that emphasize mediation (typically external leaders with no vested interest), or

organic leadership which comes from within the collaborative (emphasizes subject matter expertise and intimate knowledge of community and stakeholders) (Ansell & Gash, 2012).

The table below is an adapted version of Ansell & Gash's (2012) summary chart that highlights how these specific skill sets and considerations for the three roles of collaborative leadership intersect with neutral facilitation or organic leadership:

Collaborative Leadership Roles	Skills & Strategies	Distinctive Role of Neutral Facilitator	Distinctive Role of Organic Leader
Steward *Establishes and protects integrity to the collaborative process*	- Lends reputation and social capital to convene process - Establishes the inclusiveness, transparency, neutrality, and civic character of process - Manages image and identity of collaborative	Professional facilitator may be more important in establishing process ground rules than in initially convening the process	Organic leader may be critical in convening a collaborative process, because organization leader has reputation and social capital to invest
Mediator Arbitrates and nurtures relationships between stakeholders	- Serves as 'honest broker' in mediating disputes - Facilitates construction of shared meaning - Restores process to positive interaction - Builds trust among stakeholders (specific strategies depend on goals and baseline trust)	Professional facilitator role may have an easier time establishing credentials as 'honest broker'; professional often have sophisticated communication and negotiation skills	Organic leaders may be more effective in intervening to move difficult processes forward; may have context-specific knowledge valuable for adjudication
Catalyst Identifies Value-creating opportunities and mobilizes stakeholders to pursue them	- Engages in 'systems thinking' - Frames or reframes problems - Creates mutually reinforcing link between collaboration and innovation	Professional facilitators are probably less likely to engage in catalytic leadership	Organic leaders are likely to draw on contextual knowledge and unique relationships to act catalytically

Table 1. Adapted summary chart of collaborative leadership roles (Ansell & Gash, 2012, p. 8)

To support a continuously collaborative and equitable environment, leaders need to understand what leadership roles are needed in addition to where and when those roles should be exercised. Due to the nature of collective work, it is not only necessary but efficient for leaders to build their capacity through a multi-faceted approach like this. Leadership roles within the ENTF WFD have been primarily borne out of the necessity of process or project facilitation; the introduction of the Steering Committee helped increase the leadership capacity of the ENTF WFD to direct overall strategic implementation and ownership of the work.

IPS recommends that the ENTF WFD engage in a process to identify the core competencies that are relevant to the subcommittee (particularly accounting for key challenges observed in the Process Evaluation and Capacity Trends report). Utilizing a framework to understand leadership roles and then articulating the specific behaviors that leaders should exhibit to fulfill those roles will help guide continued leadership-capacity building efforts and support managing expectations regarding those roles (see also *Defining Roles in Writing* on page 43).

This presents a key opportunity for the ENTF WFD: to reflect upon the desired skills, knowledge and behaviors that have been most effective in achieving key goals and reaching milestones in order to codify them as core competencies that any leader can work towards fulfilling. Current leaders will have guidance for ongoing development and capacity building and can utilize the core competencies to identify and cultivate potential leaders. Core competencies can also help potential leaders understand the expectations around leadership roles. Additionally, core competencies can help support members filling informal leadership roles identify specific skills or behaviors that would be most effective for the nature of the work they lead, even if temporary.

Since participation in the ENTF WFD is voluntary, membership burnout and turnover will continue to be a challenge until the subcommittee increases the efficacy of its engagement strategies (see Member Participation). It is imperative that leadership positions are designed to be responsive to the capacity of individuals fulfilling those roles while balancing the needs of the subcommittee. The creation of the Steering Committee and action teams helped allocate the work throughout the subcommittee (and provided opportunities for individuals to plug into work they were more equipped and/or interested in doing). However, leadership roles need to be further enhanced and articulated to encompass not just what leaders do for the collaborative (responsibilities) but how they can effectively achieve that (core competencies). Specificity and transparency for what each leadership role entails can help mitigate the overload of voluntary responsibilities by enabling leaders to proactively and appropriately 'step in' or 'step out' of decision-making processes, projects, and new relationships.

CULTIVATING A PIPELINE FOR RESIDENTS-AS-LEADERS

Historically, grassroots organizing efforts prioritize residents as the primary constituents that fill key leadership positions and are positioned as the subject matter experts. In contrast, the tendency for large collaboratives is to "primarily convene established organizational leaders and decision-makers, although they sometimes work from this core group to include nonprofessional community members in various ways" (Christens & Inzeo, 2015, p. 428). In larger collectives, assumptions around how roles are structured (i.e. tasks, responsibilities, and expected level of commitment) and how those roles are executed (i.e. meeting structures, timing, and location) are primarily based on working professionals who are organizational representatives, salaried, and work traditional daytime and weekday hours.

This has many implications, most notably when it comes to a collaborative's capacity to effectively engage community. Working within the confines of dominant culture creates a barrier to participation for individuals or groups whose schedules or lived experience do not align with the professionals within the collaborative. As a result, pathways for residents to fulfill leadership roles within the subcommittee are severely blocked or non-existent. Intentional groundwork must be laid in order to more fully integrate residents within the collaborative to cultivate them as collaborative leaders. However, assumptions are often made about the capacity of community members and how they contribute.

As Duncan (n.d.) posits, residents are often brought into collectives (regardless of the collective's intent) as "community representatives" that represent their own entire communities and are often perceived as "less powerful or knowledgeable" (p. 4) than other participants. Community engagement efforts in collaboratives might go beyond positioning residents as clients to the point of advisors, but oftentimes the engagement efforts stop there (Duncan, n.d., p. 5).

Bommert (2010) finds that engaging residents into cycles of collaborative innovation can help mitigate cultural barriers to risk-taking that often influence collaborative efforts, which "might result in more understanding, trust and support for public sector innovation" (Fung, 2009, p. 23). In fact, once residents

are incorporated into the collaborative process it can be detrimental if they are excluded or there is a "return to closed forms of innovation since a return might reduce transparency, trust and legitimacy" within community (Bommert, 2010, p. 27).

As such, professionals within system-wide collaboration or collective impact efforts are extremely influential in reducing the barriers residents face in informing and leading decision-making and solution design. Agencies engaged in collaboratives can likely achieve more success when they are "equipped with the right tools to engage community members who most benefit from" those solutions (Francis et al., 2018, p. 81) and when residents who are passionate about developing solutions for their communities are involved.

This requires intentional efforts in the collaborative to set aside prescribed notions of how leadership roles are articulated. Partners in a collaborative network, particularly nonprofits, not only regularly engage residents but sometimes rely on residents to inform their decision-making. Increasing resident involvement in the collective to the point of leading or deciding can enable collectives to "push for system reform" and be more intentional in demonstrating the collective's commitment to that reform (Thompson et al., 2002, p. 63). Outlining specific opportunities for residents to fulfill leadership roles can support creating a more direct relationship with communities and help residents see the value they bring to the network.

While engaging community participants in a successful change process can be a major challenge, it is crucial to overall effectiveness. Incorporating residents within the fabric of the collaborative also helps address a disadvantage to collective collaboration, especially when funding entities are involved; traditional philanthropy practices tend to centralize the needs and designs of donors or funders, whereas collective impact can help correct over-reliance on such resources (Gemmel, 2014). By understanding that collective impact is too often too top-down, collaborations can commit to changing their structures to be more inclusive of the voices of those impacted by the work (Walzer et al., 2016). The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has put forward a spectrum for engaging the public that ranges from simply informing to co-leading in order to encourage collectives to increase their level of public engagement. This tool is available already in the ENTF WFD Equity Toolkit.

Living Cities, a national resource collective focusing on ending racialized income and wealth gaps, argues that community participants should always be engaged at the level of "involve" or higher on the IAP2 spectrum. Any lower level of involvement "invites a feeling that they [community members] are being marginalized or that their views are not taken seriously, either of which can slow the success of the change process" (Walzer et al., 2016, p. 162).

The Living Cities resource page is regularly updated and includes a number of tools on community engagement, racial equity, and capacity building for collaboratives, among others, and is linked in Appendix A. We encourage ENTF WFD leadership to regularly utilize the site for ongoing support. To further explore engaging community participants within the collaborative, see *Diversifying the Collaborative Network* on page 45.

Why This Matters
A primary goal of collaboratives is (or should be) to increase the impact residents have on decisions to the point of empowerment, a stage the International Association of Public Participation (2018) defines as handing the power of final decision-making to the public. The ENTF WFD operates on an open participation model – any community member can join the subcommittee at any time. Yet the presence of residents (i.e. individuals not representing a service provider, employers, or government entity) has been consistently low if not non-existent within the collaborative.

This has been an ongoing trend despite previous strategic efforts to combat this. In 2018, two of the ENTF WFD's action teams (Engaging External Systems and Communication System Resources) merged into a larger Community Engagement team to primarily focus on enhancing resident involvement and decision-making. The ENTF WFD Equity Toolkit was developed to support not only equitable decision-making but to support membership in incorporating and centering resident voice in decision-making processes.

An unfortunate consequence of these efforts is that they have likely been too vague or not explicitly codified to spur broad application, which can lead to complacency. Articulating a more specific goal to position residents as leaders within the ENTF WFD can increase accountability across membership and deeper utilization of the existing structures and tools to support it.

STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

What practices enable the WFD subcommittee to make intermediary goals that are timely, attainable, and build towards the success measures?

A persistent challenge of the ENTF WFD is that the strategic direction and intentions of the collaborative gets lost or becomes unclear to members, regardless of their tenure. This is partially due to lack of common understanding and clear communication practices to reinforce it (see *Common Understanding* on page 15). This is also impacted by fluctuations in leadership capacity, as addressed in the previous section. Yet, this challenge is indicative of the fact that collaborative systems work, especially in collective impact, often falls into the pitfall of developing universal solutions that may lack nuance or relevancy (Hoey et al., 2017).

To make decisions that factor in a diverse array of perspectives, are relevant and timely, and proven to be effective is a daunting endeavor. Unfortunately, many collaboratives utilize strategies and practices that may achieve one factor (such as being timely and responsive) at the expense of excluding important voices from the decision-making process. Collaboratives also often aim to cultivate a culture of learning, but struggle to identify practices that support successful implementation of this (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). Conversely, when trying to utilize structures that aid in creating and refining goals, or identifying appropriate action steps, processes at times can be too restrictive or prescriptive, and collectives can end up stifling the creativity, innovation, and equitable culture they attempt to leverage. Research repeatedly suggests that approaches that allow for more flexibility and allow for the voice of community to dictate the strategic direction ultimately achieve greater success (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Hawkins, 2018; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Pretorius & Hanna, 2012).

The opportunity that lays ahead of the ENTF WFD is to implement practices and structures for decision making that promote a culture of experimentation that considers ideas that stem from the collective expertise of community. The ENTF WFD must also leverage its strategic decision-making practices as a mechanism that maintains accountability to utilizing an equity lens to its work. The recommended practices in this section can help the ENTF WFD more effectively accomplish this.

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community development that was designed to disrupt the deficiency orientation that is often utilized by those in positions of power in creating community-based policy and strategy (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). However, two realities necessitate a shift from a deficiency orientation to a capacity orientation:

- history has proven that when members of the community are committed to investing in themselves and community change, significant community change occurs; and
- the allocation of external resources and assets is often lacking, as opportunities for entities providing a large number of jobs within specific communities are infrequent or inconsistent (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

When operating from a deficiency orientation to address community development, residents and community members suffer negative consequences despite being the intended beneficiaries of the development strategy. Primarily, they are viewed as incompetent in their capacity to lead community change, and thus treated as consumers versus producers of that change. Additionally, they are more likely to contend with external entities coming to address development, which erodes organic or existing internal community relationships (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

By identifying assets that already exist within a community, collaboratives are not only able to center residents more effectively but can also identify "where and how our systems are unfair", which is "an essential step to dismantling unjust power" (Dwyer-Voss & Bishop, 2019). There are three key principles to the ABCD model:

- First, **community development starts with what already exists or is present within community**; the capacities of its residents and workers, the associations (groups of unpaid citizens such as clubs or networks), and the institutions (profit, non-profit, non-governmental organization, or governmental) within the area. In other words, community development should not start with what is missing or problematic, which assumes community needs.

- Second, **the work is inherently "internally focused"**: strategy for development concentrates on local residents' capacity to problem-solve, in conjunction with local/community organizations or associations. As such, this focus elevates the vital importance of residents as the driving force behind defining, investing, shaping, and monitoring.

- Third, **community development is driven by relationships** (especially if it is asset-based and internally focused); as such, all individuals and entities involved in the work must consistently invest in and manage building relationships with each other.

ABCD is also a community development model that helps collectives push past the practice of just inviting community representatives to collaborative spaces (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). ABCD illuminates how members (as professionals) can and should step back so that residents are the true leaders informing and deciding on strategies designed to benefit them; members move to roles that make that shift happen.

ABCD presents a way to approach resident engagement that is not exploitative and does not implicitly or explicitly reinforce biases or biased thinking on the part of professionals in the space, but rather relies upon Appreciative Inquiry to highlight the inherent strength of each participant (see also *Systems Thinking* on page 17 to learn more about the value of an Appreciative Inquiry-based approach). Traditional approaches to community development, organizing, and resident engagement, again, are often deficit-based and have been largely influenced by problem-solving models that focus on supposedly dysfunctional attributes or limits of given groups or populations (Pretorius & Hanna 2012).

Why This Matters
The term "asset-based community development" was coined over 25 years ago (and the concept of such community-based organizing long preceded that). Despite its longevity and proven effectiveness, it is not an approach that has been broadly or sustainably adapted to its full extent within Kent County. The ENTF WFD and the ENTF as a whole address basic needs within a white-dominant culture and has to contend with systems and institutions largely led by individuals and groups with racial, economic, and/or social privilege. ABCD inherently centers marginalized and disenfranchised communities and their members as the key decision-makers. In consequence, those in privilege will have to grapple with the shifts in power and must be equipped to do so.

Additionally, the broader spheres of influence of the county's workforce development system, such as employers, do not have a strong presence within systems change work but still have a significant influence on both strategic direction and the sustainability of larger-scale systemic strategies. This is not to discount the development of targeted strategies and programs that exemplify effective collaboration between service providers, employers and residents. It does underscore that the cultural and historical perspectives

regarding system collaboration around workforce development can often be white-centered, employer (vs employee)-centered, and/or deficit-oriented.

Until these barriers are explicitly named and directly addressed across sectors, it will be difficult for the ENTF WFD to consistently maintain momentum toward economic equity while expanding its network for broader and deeper collaboration. As such, the ENTF WFD decision-making structures need to be centered on questions that assume residents as experts (for instance, the question "what do residents need?" should be based on the assumption that only residents can truly answer that). The Asset-Based Community Development Institute at DePaul University has developed a primer, linked in Appendix A, to help collaboratives distinguish ABCD from other approaches. IPS recommends the ENTF WFD Steering Committee use this as a resource when considering how to embed and implement ABCD into its current work.

Designing a model in which all members understand how residents have informed and are present throughout each point in the process will be necessary for the Subcommittee to continue progress towards its goals. Because ENTF is structured as a county-wide collaborative, it must navigate the tensions presented in aligning a system that serves populations with different demographics, disparities, resources, and landscapes. ABCD presents the opportunity for the ENTF WFD to consider how to more authentically partner with residents to address system change toward their economic prosperity.

ITERATIVE GOAL-SETTING

Bryson et al. (2006) posits that collaborations are more likely to be successful when planning efforts are both deliberate and emergent. When collaboration is mandated, deliberate planning is emphasized more, whereas emergent planning is more emphasized in nonmandated collaboration. For example, the ENTF WFD utilizes its success measures to help determine broad strategies for progress (mandated collaboration with deliberate planning) but allows room for opportunities and projects as they are introduced during implementation or throughout a given year (non-mandated collaboration with emergent planning).

Traditionally, the ENTF WFD has positioned goals on an annual basis and treated them as fixed states, or destinations, that need to be reached no matter how the work or environment of the collaborative shifts over time. While this can often be viewed as staying goal-oriented or establishing collective focus, it can also be an indicator that the ENTF WFD may have become too rigid in its overall strategy and action planning. Conversely, projects or initiatives that seemingly deviated from original goals may need to be revisited to ensure goal alignment and validity.

Behavioral tendencies of collaboratives within Kent County (and West Michigan, broadly speaking) have prioritized deliberate planning and mandated collaborations that rely upon linear processes that allow for quick tactical implementation. While those characteristics can be considered strengths through a certain cultural lens, they often can create barriers to collective collaboration.

Systems change and the collaborative work required to achieve it is reiterative and is primarily propelled by groups coming together, learning from each other, making decisions, and then dispersing to their respective communities to apply that knowledge (and then come together again, and so on). According to Moore (2013), this presents a "tension between intentionality and emergence. Goals certainly must be intentional [to] maintain a clear focus [...but] there is room between intentionality and emergence [for] new insights, new opportunities, even complementary goals" (para. 2).

Essentially, collectives must be able utilize the knowledge they gain from 'doing the work' to not only monitor the progress they are making, but also to review and revise, when applicable, the very goals they are trying to meet.

This mindset is congruent with social innovation practices rooted within design thinking, which lends itself to creating systemic solutions grounded in clients' needs (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). This mindset also encourages practitioners to consider their approach or process as "overlapping spaces rather than a sequence of orderly steps" as complex systems work in not always sequential (Brown & Wyatt, 2010, para. 20). These processes can encourage approaches to achieving success that diverge from traditional goal-oriented strategies and generate multiple opportunities to push the work forward (Hanisian, 2015).

Utilizing a reiterative approach to goals and strategies to achieve success measures can make collaboratives appear directionless, indecisive, or low performing (if goals are changing constantly, what is being accomplished?). However, adopting such an approach can mean embracing experimentation and promoting a culture of learning versus a culture seeking to validate forgone conclusions for the sake of project completion (Brown & Wyatt, 2010).

This is particularly true for regional collaboratives focused on addressing change within a specific geographic context, as highlighted by Hawkins (2018) through the findings of Foster (2001), Winer & Ray (1994), and the University of Montana's Public Policy Institute (2008): "concrete, attainable goals and objectives are established, but the collaborative demonstrates flexibility in organizing and acting. The group learns as it goes and adapts as new problems and opportunities emerge and others fade away" (p. 7).

Ultimately, systems change aims to reorient behaviors, interactions and strategies to achieve better results within a system or across systems (Gold, 2013, p. 12). Relying on goals as guideposts rather than fixed destinations to reach can provide more opportunities for participants to learn from each other and develop new strategies or identify needed changes to practice (Gold, 2013).

Why This Matters
The ENTF WFD has made a significant shift as a collective body primarily focused on networking as a system, to convening and leading strategy designed for systems change. However, participants within the ENTF WFD have varying perspectives on the role of the subcommittee and what it is ultimately trying to accomplish (as evidenced in the Process Evaluation conducted by Petersen Research Consultants). The open nature of membership also means participants with the collaborative also have varying opportunities to engage in discussions that help them understand and/or inform goals and strategies. As the ENTF WFD continues to shift its collective influence towards system change, it is necessary for the collaborative to make 'room' for goals to adjust and be refined over time. A reiterative approach can also position the ENTF WFD to be more responsive to shifting community needs; otherwise, it may try to adhere to a set goal that may no longer be feasible or relevant.

FLEXIBILITY IN ACTION PLANNING
A common theme to success in collective work is identifying and following through on opportunities for 'quick wins' or 'low hanging fruit.' The pace of system change is often slow and complex; members need to witness tangible progress on a regular basis to feel their contributions lead to impact and gain confidence in their work. As such, a key component to how collectives should approach strategy implementation is to have a shared process or approach to prioritize what steps to take and when in order to foster a sense of progress and accomplishment (Kramer et al., 2019). Since the ENTF WFD utilizes action teams and ad hoc project groups to advance key work, it is important to identify approaches that provide a balance of structure and accountability and latitude for these diverse groups to operate effectively.

Hoelscher at el. (2017) argue that "leaders should recognize the need for flexibility throughout the decision-making process and avoid insisting upon 'rational' decision making [which] will not always be

possible or beneficial, particularly in a collaborative context" (p. 63). Flexibility can be achieved by willingly deviating from planned agendas or processes and encouraging more autonomy among participants to reach decisions (Hoelscher et al. 2017). This more fluid approach to action planning is congruent with the "Garbage Can Model" from Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972) to decision-making, which is more reflective of how decisions are often made in collaboratives rather than demonstrating how decisions *ought* to be made (Einsiedel, Jr., 1983).

Though this approach to determining action steps can seem lackadaisical, it can actually influence the outcomes of a collective in impactful ways (Hoelscher et al., 2017). While it is likely more practical in more informal collaborative settings (for example, action teams), the approach also acknowledges the benefit and sometimes the necessity to deviate from planned processes to capitalize on unplanned opportunities or interactions (Hoelscher et al., 2017, 61).

The ENTF WFD 'data decision tree' illustrates this practice. While the collective has established a shared approach to reviewing and utilizing data, the tool is truly designed to enable autonomous decision-making regarding strategy and action planning depending on the type of organization, population served, and/or geography. It promotes balance between aligning focused goals with flexibility for unforeseen but necessary shifts.

Allowing for more flexibility within action planning can free collectives from feeling beholden to set solutions or goals and factor in knowledge and information acquired along the way; working groups within collectives "grapple with complex problems, so strategy experimentation, learning, and tweaking are crucial parts of the work" (Uribe et al., 2017, p. 22). As a convener, the ENTF WFD can provide tools and structures that would promote a culture of experimentation in action planning rather than one of prescription.

Lipmanowicz & McCandless (2013) discuss the tendency of prescriptive approaches to stem from an overemphasis on large structures that cannot be easily changed, as they are built for the long term (i.e. goals, strategies, processes). Organizations try to find an "ideal formula" for making decisions and taking actions that would yield desired results, but that approach underestimates the value of "microstructures" or "liberating structures," the routinely selected small structures that support interaction and innovation that can be easily changed over time or immediately (Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2013, ch. 2, para. 7). Several examples of these structures can be found in Appendix B.

Why This Matters
The ENTF WFD has conducted previous strategic action planning efforts with varying success. Leaders and facilitators have provided processes to help guide action planning (particularly around annual goals and quarterly action steps), but those processes seemed to support some groups while stifling the progress of others. If the ENTF WFD pursues a more iterative approach to refining its goals, its approach to action planning will need to be more responsive as new data and knowledge is acquired and new and different perspectives are brought into the fold. Furthermore, ENTF as a whole is in the midst of strategic transformation with the design and development of a new strategic plan (as of Summer 2020). The ENTF WFD will need to adopt practices that honors the work completed to date while encouraging members to adaptively pivot their action as needed.

FRAMING & BALANCING POWER DYNAMICS
It is vital to understand how institutional power dynamics influence strategic decision-making, especially within a network with fluctuating members that bring "competing institutional logics" with them as well as historically driven patterns of behaviors or perspectives that shape their perspectives on the work (Bryson

et al. 2006). Each member not only brings their individual experience and background to the subcommittee but represents their own agency. As such, a particular idea, structure, or practice may seem legitimate from that member's perspective because it aligns with their own agency's mission, programming, or organizational culture. Another member may think the same idea is "illegitimate" (Bryson et al. 2006, p.50). As long as there is collaboration, especially within a system change or cross-sector context, there will be competing institutional perspectives and logic. As time passes, collaboratives will likely experience shocks that further impact relationships across the network; e.g. shifts in funding streams, demographic shifts in clientele or target populations, political landscape, or changing membership (Bryson et al, 2006).

These dynamics are further complicated by the presence of varying levels of power. Power dynamics, particularly when imbalanced, are most influential when collaborators cannot agree on a shared agenda or purpose. As Gold (2013) states, "cross-sector partnerships often try to accomplish big things with people who lack power, and little things with people who have a lot of power" (p. 22). There must be strong leadership and buy-in from the key decision makers and upper level management of organizations participating in a collaborative or little to no movement will be made outside of collaborative meetings (Johnson et al., 2003).

Characteristics of leaders that need to be involved for collaborative success include:

- Someone that truly understands the agency's position and priorities
- Someone with enough authority to make decisions on behalf of the agency
- Someone that can provide immediate and direct assistance when problems arise
- Someone that can authorize the utilization of their agency's resources to support the collaboration
  (Johnson et al., 2003)

However, even as the need for formal organizational authority is well recognized, this emphasis on top-down change is also one of the primary critiques of collective impact as a model. When a collaborative focuses on coordinating executive level leaders, the implication is that the power of change rests in organizations, not in individuals. This in turn reinforces existing social hierarchies of power as public leaders are often still white, male, and middle class. In addition, prioritizing formal authority can prioritize corporate strategies that can be in conflict with justice-oriented approaches from grassroots groups. For example, corporate-led approaches to solving food systems problems are often at odds with food sovereignty tenants of community-based groups (Hoey et al., 2017).

These realities leave collaborations with the complicated task of involving those with formal power while also ensuring more powerful actors do not co-opt the collaborative decision-making process in order to legitimize their own interests. One helpful way to frame this balance is to recognize different types of formal and informal power that most people can bring to the collective table. There are three types of power commonly recognized within collaborations:

- The authority to make decisions as a representative of another organization or group;
- The capacity to bring resources to the work;
- Discursive legitimacy—the ability to advocate effectively for changes in the public sphere (Cooper, 2017).

Proactive and intentional structure building can help mitigate the potential disruptive or corrosive impact power imbalances can have in a collaborative setting; tactics that specifically address such imbalances or

anticipate shocks can help collectives better 'ride the wave' of collaboration over time (Bryson et al. 2006). As the ENTF WFD considers its membership makeup, it can be useful to understand when these aspects of power are at play and how organizations or participants are privileged within the collaborative because they hold a certain type of power. Consider asking:

- "Whose experiences and solutions are privileged through the CI partnership?"
- "How do we reconcile the fact that CI partnerships may inherently exclude certain partners through inequitable practices, despite promises to forge relationships among 'unlikely partners' to foster collective responsibility?"
(Mayan et al., 2019, p. 15)

At the same time, recognizing and naming the power that residents and smaller grassroots organizations bring to the collaborative can help to consciously balance dynamics if the group places equal value on different power types. For example, valuing the resources and political clout of larger organizations while recognizing the equal value of residents bringing situational expertise or supporting community buy-in.

Fratantuono and Sarcone (2017) summarize how shifts in power structures are often viewed as a consequential outcome of collaborative work:

> "the activities of stakeholders are coordinated via mutual adjustment and co-evolution [and] leads to calls for engagement and decisions by those who hold the highest governance positions in their respective organizations, and more generally to a request for stakeholders to accept new approaches to knowledge formation and problem solving" (p. 9).

Establishing a shared decision-making or decision-framing model or can help ensure that all members are situated as equal partners and help support and maintain buy-in (Garber & Adams, 2017). Identifying the type of organizational representation of members is another mechanism for more deeply understanding the power dynamics within the collaborative.

As an example, Partners for a Competitive Workforce (PCW) utilizes a structure that identifies its partners that serve three primary roles within their collaborative: "designees," "doers," and "decision-makers" (Gold, 2013, p.11). PCW's governing body (the Partners Council) consists (almost exclusively) of decision makers and are responsible for guiding strategy and reviewing the overall progress of the collective's work. Additionally, PCW has three sub-committees composed of 'doers' from organizations that focus on developing and implementing the specifics of activities aligned with overall strategy. Figure 4 lists the characteristics of each representative type. Additionally, we have provided a link to the full article in Appendix A.

TRAIT	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
4. Representatives The stature and power of the individuals within their own organizations/ communities who are serving as representatives to the partnership.	Designee	An individual who represents the organization or community, but does not have decision-making or implementation powers within their organization or community
	Doer	An individual who may be responsible for implementing changes to behaviors and strategies in their organization or community, but lacks the formal authority to mandate them
	Decision-maker	An individual who has the authority or influence in their organization or community to require that it change its behaviors and strategies

Figure 4, Partners for a Competitive Workforce's framework for understanding representative power dynamics (Gold, 2013, p.11)

At an organizational level, participating groups have to be ready to give up 'turf' in favor of working together. Johnson et al. (2009) and Mayan et al. (2019) suggest several strategies:

- Group training in appreciative inquiry
- Leaders of participating organizations providing their staff with positive view of the collaboration by highlighting potential positive outcomes
- Provide examples of impact from previously effective collaborations
- Use preplanning to understand organizational contexts to anticipate and minimize turf issues

Finally, a word of caution. Intentional efforts to balance multiple perspectives can result in a "tyranny of the median" as argued by Kasa (2005) (Hoey et al., 2017, p. 205). When groups settle on a decision where all agree as opposed to seeking equity based, progressive action, opportunities are missed for the types of systemic change needed to meet big collaborative goals. Some mechanisms for supporting mindsets focused on progressive change include:

- Commitment to intensive racial equity training for staff and partners
- Examining internal hiring practices and other structures that support/impede equity and inclusion
- Maintaining a space for resources on structural racism within systems relevant to the collaboration's work
  (Hoey, 2017)

(The ENTF WFD Equity Toolkit also provides key strategies and exercises to help further operationalize these mindsets).

Overall, the goals of the collaborative should encourage shared ownership over current inequities and proposed solutions. For individuals, this means adopting a sense of humility and empathy. Members should seek to reflect on the experiences and insight shared in the group and pursue aligning personal objectives with the collective's purpose so that members can take satisfaction in shared accomplishments (Daymond, 2015.; Mayan et al., 2019).

Why This Matters
It is important to establish clear, shared decision-making structures and processes. However, underlying power dynamics can influence whether these processes are effective in promoting equitable collaboration. Unfortunately, the ENTF WFD has struggled with this; instead of confronting power dynamics, the subcommittee rarely discusses power dynamics and therefore these dynamics are hardly addressed. Individuals and organizations then end up trying to "disrupt" within the system that exists, rather than trying to deconstruct and rebuild a system that is more equitable.

Understanding the power dynamics that are present and discerning how best to balance competing agenda, priorities, and values can allow for the ENTF WFD to more effectively "[mobilize] their relationships for action" (Christens & Inzeo, 2015, p. 429). It will help provide clearer context to current resident involvement (rather, the lack thereof). It will also position the subcommittee to address their decision-making processes; in fact, those processes could be structured to directly combat any power dynamics that limit equitable participation. Mapping the power dynamics and then reflecting on them on a more continuous basis can ultimately help ensure that decisions made at the various levels and settings within the ENTF WFD align and/or calibrate with the longer-term goals and success measures.

The ENTF WFD has long been in conversation about how to best engage CEOs/Executive Directors vs managers vs service-level staff. There is a general recognition that buy-in from leadership and the ability

to make decisions is critical, and that the perspectives of people with tactical experience are valuable. However, the ENTF WFD has yet to fully engage people with lived experience, and there are no structures or practices in place to help people bring their most useful types of power to the table for the good of the group. Reflecting on the particular strengths of existing and desired members, and discerning how best to balance their competing agendas, will be critical for long term impact (see also *Asset-Based Community Development* on page 34).

MEMBER PARTICIPATION

What member participation practices within the WFD subcommittee are necessary for effectively achieving goals?

Although ENTF is composed of member organizations, individual representatives are the people actually collaborating. The collaborative skill level of individuals impacts the performance of the collective. Likewise, highly skilled collaborators can still be limited by the design of their organizations, so the structures, processes, supports, and culture of their home organizations are also critical to coalition success (Ainsworth & Chesley, 2018). As members vocalized in IPS' recent Capacity Trends survey, there will be a need for a deeper level of commitment from membership in order to transform the workforce development system. At the same time, members report being at full capacity, not understanding the immediate value of ENTF WFD activities, or feeling burnt out by their current level of participation. This illuminates a significant need for ENTF to consider its membership structures and supports.

The literature discussing factors for successful collaboration participation is extensive. For example, Johnson et al. (2003) summarized the perspectives of 33 participants in mid-western collaboratives into seven factors key to successful interagency collaborations:

- Commitment
- Communication
- Strong leadership
- Understanding organizational cultures
- Preplanning
- Resources
- Minimizing turf issues

A meta-analysis from Helmstetter, et al. (2017) resulted in a table suggesting 20 factors essential for collaboration, many of which overlap the work of Johnson et al. (2003) and the work of many other authors IPS reviewed. The table from Helmstetter et al. (2017) has been provided in Appendix B. Taking trends from all the reviewed literature into account, this section discusses practices that IPS recommends *as the most useful and relevant to the ENTF WFD at this time.*

DEFINING ROLES IN WRITING

Role clarity is essential for preventing conflict, promoting efficiency, supporting unified action, and encouraging continued engagement of all members (Bunger, 2010). Several aspects of ensuring role clarity are relevant for the ENTF WFD, some of which have been covered extensively in *Developing Core Competencies* (on page 28). In addition to IPS' recommendations for formal leadership roles as discussed in that section, there is also a need to consider how general membership should view their roles within the collective.

Interviews of 12 human services administrators involved in collective work in Southern California found that the staff of these administrators were, like the ENTF WFD, participating in the various collaborations on a voluntary basis. While a few had distinct job descriptions related to their participation, the majority participated by volunteering for tasks that were based on their interest or experience. While completing tasks and fulfilling roles was an unspoken expectation, many administrators felt that the lack of formal accountability lead to conflict when work was not executed, or burn out from individual employees when home agencies did not link the success of the collaborative with the primary roles and duties of each staff person participating (Gil de Gibaja, 2001).

In response to similar findings with other collaboratives, Bunger (2010) and Rog (2004) found that clearly defined responsibilities for both collaborative staff and member organization participants helped to mitigate the risk of member disengagement, foster better relationships, clarify expectations, and assist in facilitating more teamwork across members and staff.

Why This Matters
The literature makes clear that the ENTF WFD is not alone with members that have mixed understandings of how they relate to the collaborative staff or with one another. However, the literature also indicates that these common realities lead to common ailments—disengagement, confusion, and a lack of shared accountability. The ENTF can begin by being very clear, perhaps in writing, about the roles that ENTF WFD staff members will play (see also *Backbone Staff Allocation* on page 27). With this in place, the necessary roles of member leaders (Steering Committee, action team chairs) and general members can begin to come into focus. Written descriptions of these roles will not only bring clarity to current participants but can assist with recruiting and onboarding new membership.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

A practice within the *Common Understanding* section (*Consensus on Desired Collaboration* on page 15) discusses the importance of members understanding how they will interact with one another and the overall purpose of the group. Building on that concept, it is also important that members have realistic expectations for the role the collaborative as a structured body will have in community. The ENTF WFD staff have already made it clear that the ENTF WFD does not provide direct services. An evaluation of 12 anti-violence collaborations similarly found that the majority served as facilitators, not service providers. Moreover, those collaborations that did choose to provide direct service generally ended up in competition with member organizations and found that their already limited resources were quickly consumed. In contrast, (Rog et al., 2004) collaborations participating in the evaluation that served as facilitators found that they were able to:

- Expand their reach and influence
- Preserve focus on broader community change
- Build community capacity

Understanding that the ENTF WFD is on the right path regarding collaborative facilitation, IPS would like to put forward the following categories of facilitative action, taken from the Rand Corporation's evaluation of the Big Lift educational collective impact initiative out of San Mateo, California:

- Organizing partners to collaborate across community
- Building community awareness of need and solutions
- Gain support from community and partners for collaboration as opposed to competition
- Gain support for strategies built on a consensus understanding of the problem definition
- Increasing funds for the system
- Launching initiatives
- Improving data culture and processes (Faxon-Mills et al., 2018)

These categories should not be considered exhaustive, and the ENTF WFD may wish to add additional categories for the sake of conversations with membership. However, the findings of the evaluation do reinforce the decisions the ENTF WFD has already made regarding areas of focus.

The ENTF WFD leadership can use the provided categories to have conversations with members about appropriate roles for the ENTF WFD. Further, the ENTF WFD can determine which categories are the most important to invest time and resources into given current context. As the Subcommittee continues to solidify its vision, goals, and strategic plan, the categories from the Big Lift evaluation can be revisited and used to shape means of evaluating the success of the ENTF WFD as a convening body. Having a means to define the value of the ENTF WFD through identifying successes and growth opportunities of the ENTF WFD as a convener and facilitator can help to increase support from individual members and their home organizations.

To that end, IPS also recommends considering the POETQ tool (see Appendix A). This tool was developed to allow members of collaboratives to evaluate the efficacy and importance of the collaborative. The online questionnaire can be completed in 30 minutes and asks users to respond to a series of statements about a collaborative's success. Although some practitioners have rejected the tool because it does not simply say whether a collaboration is 'working or not', the researchers point out that collective work is more complex and that the very act of relationship building and collaboration can in fact positively impact system outcomes, so there is symbolic value that needs to be evaluated (Jeffares & Dickinson, 2016). ENTF WFD leadership can determine whether the POETQ tool (or an adaptation) is useful for members to utilize but considering a means of evaluating the ENTF WFD as a facilitating body would help to reinforce the overall purpose and value of the collective.

ENCOURAGING FULL ENGAGEMENT & INNOVATION

In addition to the role of ENTF staff in encouraging membership engagement and innovation (see *Iterative Goal-Setting* on page 36 and *Flexibility in Action Planning* on page 37), home organizations of participating members are critical to ensuring effective participation. In a study of six coalitions averaging 40 member agencies each, Ainsworth & Chesley (2017) identified key elements within home organizations that support successful collaboration. The full table of identified elements is available in Appendix B. Of particular note for ENTF are the following:

- Providing decision-making power to collaborators
- Ensuring the free flow of information within the organization
- Selecting employees to participate in coalitions based on collaborative skill
- Considering the goals of the coalition when making decisions about organizational strategy
- Dedicating staff time and resources to the collaboration

The ENTF can utilize the information provided by Ainsworth & Chesley (2017) in a few ways. ENTF leadership could meet with existing member organization leadership to discuss what organizational design elements have proven effective for participation in collaboration. This education may motivate some leaders to make structural adjustments that can help participants be more effective in the collaboration. ENTF leadership can also use this information as a lens when considering which future partners should be pursued by providing criteria about what makes an agency a 'good fit' for systemic and collaborative work.

DIVERSIFYING THE COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

Problems addressed by the ENTF, like disparities in employment, are inherently complex and will not be solved by a single organization or even a single sector (Kania et al., 2014). This section presents two primary benefits to diversifying any collaborative seeking to address complex problems; increasing sustainability and increasing efficacy. These benefits are captured through enhanced understanding of the

problem, stronger social capital, and greater buy-in from those that can impact and are impacted by the problem.

Tactically, cross-sector collaboration has been shown to enhance sustainability and increase productivity. A cross-site evaluation of 12 anti-violence collaboratives, all funded by the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention, focused on the question of collaborative sustainability. Findings corroborated previous research that indicates collaborations with a strong mix of resident, grassroots, nonprofit, and professional members are more likely to expand and sustain their work. In addition, Rog et al. (2004) argue collaborations with cross-sector partners can:

- Eliminate the competition for resources with initiatives that have similar goals
- Gain access to a larger variety of resources
- Reduce logistical barriers in implementing chosen strategies

In addition, working across sectors builds the 'bridging' social capital that is critical for community-wide strategy implementation (Hoey et al., 2017; Rog et al., 2004). While building 'bonding' social capital involves connecting people with similar backgrounds across multiple settings and roles (e.g. the diversity of roles and organizations represented in the workforce development system), 'bridging' social capital entails connecting diverse actors to each other and others from outside the current pool of participants (Hoey et al., 2017). Members of the Appalachian Foodshed Project are encouraged to be 'double links' to create both bonding and bridging capital by strategically serving in more than one committee or network. Such 'double link' strategies create natural opportunities for boundary spanning, or opportunities for cooperation across existing networks (Hoey et al., 2017).

The work of boundary spanning will mean seeking out people and organizations with radically different perspectives on the work, which can feel disruptive. However, increasing such diversity of perspective can also lead to meaningful dialog that results in a more robust common understanding of the problem to the benefit of the collaboration and to each individual/organization involved (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

As explored in *Asset-Based Community Development* (page 34) and *Framing & Balancing Power Dynamics* (page 29), ensuring resident involvement has proven to be particularly important for efficacy and sustainability. Rog et al. (2004) defines 'high resident involvement' as a collaborative having multiple resident representatives on all governance bodies and residents that are very active in the collaboration and its decision-making. In the study of 12 anti-violence collaborations, those groups with high resident involvement were more likely than others to be expanding operations while those with low involvement had disbanded. In addition to sustainability, the study states the following advantages of high resident involvement:

Several exercises can be used to determine needed networks. The ENTF WFD is already familiar with the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Who is at Our Table?" exercise, which can be found in the ENTF WFD Equity Toolkit. Interact for Health, a regional health conversion foundation operating in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana, created a more in-depth Relationship Mapping exercise which can generate a common understanding about the strength of current network connections and missing opportunities. Interact for Health created this and other tools to aid collaboratives funded through the foundation's Thriving Communities initiative when Interact for Health staff noticed a trend in challenges many of its funded collaboratives were facing. The full article, linked in Appendix A, provides the Relationship Mapping exercise and other tools.

Over the past several years, the ENTF WFD has done commendable work at generating and sustaining 'bonding' social capital among workforce development agencies that were previously isolated or in competition. However, as the collective actively considers systemic strategies for impact, there is a clear need for enhanced bridging and boundary spanning. There is a natural opportunity between service sectors represented by other ENTF subcommittees, and the ENTF WFD has recruited some consistent membership from housing, philanthropy, Talent 2025, and others.

However, this work will need to be deeper and more intentional to avoid competing with other systemic strategies to address employment needs coming out of business, local and state government, and education. In addition, the ENTF WFD has regularly spoken about the value of resident input but has yet to make a significant commitment to integrating residents in decision-making. By determining a mechanism for regularly assessing and enhancing membership, the ENTF WFD will recognize potential inroads it already possesses into desired connections and consciously identify needed areas of growth.

CAPACITY BUILDING

As mentioned in the Member Participation introduction, the collaborative skills of individuals representing the organizational member are critical to the success of the network. Supporting the development of both knowledge and skills among participating members of a collective has been proven to inform changes at the agency level as well as increase the positive distal outcomes of collaborative strategies (Javdani & Allen, 2011). In addition, such opportunities provide participants value that will continue to serve them outside of direct network activities. Particularly for residents participating in collective impact, skill building can help to off-set the costs of participation (Hoey et al., 2017). Williams (2002) has highlighted several skills found in highly successful collaborators, as featured in Figure 4:

Collaboration Skills of Highly Effective Collaborators	
Skill	*General Descriptors as Identified by Williams (2002)*
Interpersonal	Can cultivate, build, and sustain effective personal relationships; manages conflict; good empathy skills, can see other's point of view; can gain and build trust; flexible; manages conflict and criticism; disagrees without harming relationships; respected, open, honest, approachable.
Technical	Effective at performance management, project management, program evaluation.
Risk taking	Innovative risk-taking; rule breaking; can see things in a different way.
Communication	Effective facilitation skills; oral, written, and presentation skills; active listening skills.
Networking	Can connect, gain information from strategic players; can influence to advance an agenda; displays diplomacy; ability to effectively work in network forms of governance; continually builds and grows network.
Political/ leadership	Works across organizational boundaries to bridge interests and find common ground; ability to work in nonhierarchical environments; influences without direct authority; negotiation skills; brokers deals among a number of players; strategic thinker; works well in multiple cultures; can balance need of network with that of individual organization.
Systems thinking	Can work in complex environments; takes a systems view, can see beyond organization's interest and boundaries; understands interdependencies of systems; couples problems, policies, and politics; sees connections and interrelationships.

Figure 5 (as cited by Ainsworth & Chesley, 2018, p.10)

In Appendix A, IPS has provided a link to a toolkit published by FSG titled "How to Lead Collective Impact Working Groups" (Uribe et al., 2017). Modules include:

1. How to Build Membership
2. How to Plan for and Run an Effective Meeting
3. How to Build a Culture of Collaboration
4. How to Put Systems Thinking into Practice How to Engage with Community Members
5. How to be Data-Driven and Learn Along the Way

Many of these modules cover content that would support skill building in areas identified by Williams (2002).

Why This Matters

Throughout our time supporting the ENTF WFD, IPS has engaged with many members that step into volunteer positions that drive the Subcommittee's work forward. While members often begin with enthusiasm, many demonstrate burn-out. Providing skill building in areas directly related to their roles within the ENTF will help to ensure members are equipped and feel supported. In addition, this skill building can provide an ongoing professional benefit to participants to help offset the overall burden of collaborative participation. Finally, as ENTF seeks to more proactively engage residents and clients in its work, providing collaborative skill building can help to ensure all ENTF WFD participants have common foundational skills. This can further promote leadership from a greater pool of members and can offset uneven power dynamics between professionals and residents.

BUILDING A COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE BASE

In order to successfully participate in the collective, members must understand both the culture and norms of the collective itself as well as understand the other players in the room. Taking time to learn and understand each agency's mission and priorities can help to reveal agency motivation for participating and opportunities for partnership (Johnson et al., 2003). This could be accomplished in several ways, including:

- Regular time for presentations from members about their home agencies
- Sharing printed materials
- Guided networking with particular discussion and sharing prompts

As members interact more, some may even consider developing a staff loan program for representatives from one agency to spend time working from the site of another agency for the purpose of understanding operations and determining opportunities for better synergy (Johnson et al., 2003).

Findings from any of these practices can be housed in a repository maintained by ENTF staff so that new members have a resource for introductory information about other partners.

In addition, ENTF staff can craft 'Terms of Reference' so that all members have a document to reinforce how the group has defined certain terms that may otherwise have unclear or multiple meanings (Weaver, 2015). This is particularly useful when members come from multiple sectors or disciplines (Johnson et al., 2003). Terms may include the group's understanding of principals like 'equity' or 'empowerment' as well as definitions of commonly used acronyms, any industry-specific jargon, and definitions of any collaborative model structures (i.e. sub-committees, action teams, steering committee, etc.).

Why This Matters

As indicated in IPS' 2019 survey of regular ENTF WFD attendees, newer participants often feel overwhelmed and unsure of how to connect to the work. A repository of basic information about existing members as well as ENTF WFD structures can help to orient people and illuminate where they and their agency may have the greatest impact. In addition, an ongoing commitment to understanding all member agencies' cultures, goals, and structures can ensure that the group is aware of commonalities and competing needs. This can promote healthy dialogue and promote efficiency.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Although the fact that good personal relationships drive coordination (Bunger, 2010) may seem intuitive, many collectives have tried to push past trust and relationships in order to pursue strategy change as

quickly as possible. Skipping opportunities to establish trust, boundaries, clarity, and consensus makes success very difficult, and collaboratives often have to 'start over' and build relationships reactively after stagnation or failure (Gold, 2013).

As stated by Kania and Kramer when discussing the realities of collective impact, the process of "developing trust among nonprofits, corporations, and government agencies is a monumental challenge. Partners need several years of regular meetings to build up enough experience with each other to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts" (Mayan et al., 2019, p. 3). While this slow pace can be frustrating in light of the social realities that collectives are seeking to address, the benefits of relationship building are substantial.

Relationship building is generative in the sense that it builds social capital and synergy among diverse stakeholders in ways that may not otherwise happen. This is true of both inter-personal, informal relationships and inter-organizational, formal relationships. Social capital builds institutional change, which in turn enhances sustainable long term outcomes (Javdani & Allen, 2011). In fact, when considering relationship building in isolation from all other near-term factors, Javdani and Allen (2011) found that relationship building still had a positive impact on long term outcomes.

One mechanism of such social capital is 'complex reciprocity', where members help one another without expecting something in return because they understand the value of the network. Among several regional food system initiatives, this move away from quid-pro-quo collaboration has been evaluated as a tipping point where collectives are able to be more effective and network impact is deepened (Hoey, 2017). Partners in these systems cite extensive social interaction, relationship building, and trust as the drivers of complex reciprocity.

In addition, deep understanding of goals, priorities, and context through relationship building can actually reduce the need to undergo complex shared action implementation. Encouraging extensive stakeholder engagement during the development of the Michigan Good Food Charter has resulted in partners recognizing shared values and how their organizations fit within a larger vision without the need to agree on specific shared action. As a result, the partnership has come out with a diversity of place-based strategies and is able to use an iterative approach to defining problems and solutions (Hoey, 2017).

In short, people collaborate, not organizations, and deep relationships lead to significant outcomes. So, taking time to build relationships and trust is essential to any collaborative's impact (Ainsworth & Chesley, 2018; Duncan, n.d). This is such a critical component of collaborative success that this final smart practice has been divided into three sections that discuss elements of effective relationships: trust building, meaningful interactions, and conflict management.

TRUST BUILDING

Simply stated, trust is built over time, when people or organizations involved in a relationship consistently demonstrate follow through on expectations. If members of a partnership do not believe in the reliability, truth, or ability of their partners as well as the partnership structure itself, it will be very difficult for the collaborative to achieve its goals (Gold, 2013). Conversely, trust building:

- Reduces the process cost of collaborating
- Increases information sharing and coordination
- Helps participants accept network leadership (Temby et al., 2017)

While prior relationships and experience outside the collective can drive trust (Daymond, 2015; Gazley, 2017), collaborations must also seek to build their own platforms of trust to bridge partners with little

previous contact. Accessible, functioning systems for regular communication is one key element for trust (Faxon-Mills et al., 2018; Gajda, 2004), and more information on communication practices can be found on page 21.

When considering how to build trust, collaboratives must consider both relational trust (how do I feel about this person) and procedural trust (do I trust there are processes to ensure fair play) (Temby et al., 2017). While research has shown that staff collaborating across agencies report the use of formal communication and procedural trust in maintaining the partnership, *relational trust and informal communication are found to have a greater impact on the effectiveness of coordination*. However, these mechanisms were found to be underutilized in public service collaborations in comparison to efforts in formal communication and procedural trust (Temby et al., 2017).

Relational trust can be built through opportunities for partners to connect on personal and emotional levels (Gajda, 2004), as well as through encouraging informal opportunities to connect, inviting partners to work across service sites, and removing institutional barriers to coordination (Temby et al., 2017). Finally, trust in both dimensions is built through ongoing direct personal experiences, which are discussed more in the next section (Gazley, 2017; Temby et al., 2017).

Why This Matters

As trust is critical for effective collaboration, the ENTF can use principles of relational and procedural trust to build trusted connections among both service-level and leadership-level participants. For example, convening executives from member organizations on a regular basis for a shared work experience would not only solidify common understanding of ENTF strategies, but would also provide opportunities to build relational trust (Gazley, 2010). These connections would then lead to increased leadership commitment to the more procedural trust structures (data sharing agreements, MOUs, etc.) and executives would hopefully decide to support greater commitment from participating mid-level managers. The current System Navigator meetings are a strong example of building relational trust at the service provider level.

MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS

In order for the collaboration to run effectively, participants must have meaningful interactions with each other, ENTF staff, and ENTF WFD leadership. A common theme from interviews captured in a study of 15 collaborative leaders was the need for integrative thinking, or working to understand the dominant logics of participants in order to bridge and overcome these motivations and ways of thinking as a way to build shared identity and encourage emotional engagement in collaboration (Daymond, 2015). When administrators see relationship building not only as a function of recruiting and integrating new partners but also as a process for maintaining relationships and open communication with current members, administrators are able to nurture connections that keep people engaged (Gil de Gibaja, 2001).

Likewise, member to member interaction is an essential part of diffusion, the process in which innovation is spread through social connectivity. Without trust and relationships, even evidence-based practices are likely to fail to spread (Kania et al., 2014).

In *Diversifying the Collaborative Network* (on page 45) we discussed boundary spanning as an important element of bridging social capital to ensure diversity of thought within a group. In the same vein, 'boundary experiences' can help collaborative members to push beyond their organizational affiliation into involvement in other areas of focus important to the collaborative. These experiences help to form collective identity and catalyze collaborative action. Boundary experiences may be facilitated by administrators or organically pursued between members. Examples include dialogue, personal

relationship building outside of scheduled meetings, and focused workshops to identify and resolve conflict or facilitate alignment (Daymond, 2015).

Why This Matters

Given the nature of the work the ENTF WFD is pursuing and the limited amount of time in monthly meetings, there is an understandable sense of urgency and need for action among members. However, both research and intuition support that meaningful interpersonal interactions are critical to successful strategy and worth the time investment. The ENTF WFD leadership has worked to increase personal connections over the past several years through ice breakers, forming subcommittees, providing networking opportunities, and organizing summits or longer workshops to move certain projects forward. However, group meetings often have tight agendas and members are reticent to engage in more meaningful dialog. Considering ways to increase trust and promote shared personal experiences may encourage all group members to more consistently speak up and add a deeper level of nuance to conversations and decision-making.

MANAGING CONFLICT

The premise of collective impact is not to be a neutral convening body, but rather to take a strong stance and seek to disrupt business as usual in a given system in order to see improved outcomes. This call to bold action necessitates a collaborative space where diversity of perspective and constructive conflict is welcomed. As organizational integration and member's personal involvement deepens, interpersonal conflict should be recognized as normal and even expected (Gajda, 2004). ENTF WFD leaders can actively structure and facilitate the collaborative in ways that promote recognizing and valuing the differences each participant brings. Respecting and understanding differences, as opposed to repressing them, has been found to be key to effective problem solving. Considering the strengths and implications of differences between participants in organizational structures, leadership styles, culture, and personality can help to proactively mitigate barriers to strategy implementation (Gil de Gibaja, 2001). One tactic is to promote 'brave spaces' as opposed to 'safe spaces' as a strategy for relationship building in diverse groups, particularly those with an equity focus. The elements of a brave space are as follows:

- Controversy with civility (varying opinions accepted)
- Owning intentions and impacts-- recognizing when dialogue affects the emotional well-being of another person, regardless of original intent
- Challenge by choice (the option to step in and out of challenging conversations)
- Respect-- for everyone's basic personhood
- No attacks-- agreement to not intentionally inflict harm (Ali, 2017)

Creating and regularly referring to shared values is another tactic for deepening the constructive output of conflict. Rather than looking for ways to dismiss conflict or analyze it in isolation, discussing the conflict of perspectives as it relates to the larger objectives of the group can help reground individuals in the work. As an example, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction adopted the shared value of 'no blame', which provided a driver to shift conversation and conflict back towards solutions to transform the experience of people living in poverty (Weaver, 2016).

Why This Matters

Although this section provides some preliminary tactics for encouraging and then working through healthy conflict, the ENTF WFD is situated in a community context that often avoids conflict by settling for compromises and middle ground solutions that neither offend nor result in any significant change. It is our hope that if ENTF WFD leaders proactively consider how to create environments for constructive conflict,

more conflict may actually surface. This would indicate a level of comfortability and trust between members, as well as a commitment to risk and innovation, that is currently muted or likely to be demonstrated by a select few members. Particularly as the ENTF WFD grows to consider its interconnectivity to other sectors and residents, the need to be prepared to leverage conflict will increase.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - RECOMMENDED TOOLS & RESOURCES

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	AUDIENCE/USE
SOARing Towards Positive Transformation and Change	Explores how the SOAR model can help to build strategies based on collaborative strengths and incorporates an Appreciative Inquiry approach to strategy development.	Full Subcommittee
Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning	A toolkit from the Annie E. Casey Foundation on creating Theory of Change models to fit a variety of different contexts.	Backbone Staff Steering Committee Membership Leaders
Living Cities Resource Page	A regularly updated websites that includes several tools on community engagement, racial equity, and capacity building for collaboratives.	Membership Leaders Full Subcommittee
Equity: The Soul of Collective Impact	An accessible primer that provides a strong rationale for why equity is essential and what equity focused collaboration looks like.	New Members Equity strategies
The Advocacy Strategy Framework	Proposes reflection questions to help connect strategies back to a theory of change and can help connect ongoing strategy development to a defined Theory of Change.	Policy & Advocacy Action Teams
The Four Essential Elements of an Asset-Based Community Development Process	From the ABCD Institute at DePaul University, this paper highlights the resources, methods, functions, and evaluation of an ABCD process.	Backbone Staff Steering Committee Membership Leaders
Partners for a Competitive Workforce: Insights from Solving Problems Through Cross-Sector Partnerships	A 2013 case study examining three key themes to collective problem solving: aligning structures and representatives, intervening in a way that can plausibly achieve your goals, and the importance of trust in collective impact.	Backbone Staff Steering Committee
Partnership Online Evaluation Tool (with) Q (POETQ) methodology	A tool to allow members of collaboratives to evaluate the efficacy and importance of the collaborative. Users can complete the online questionnaire in 30 minutes as they respond to statements about a collaborative's success.	Steering Committee
Thriving Communities: A Model for Community-Engaged Grantmaking	Explores the efforts of Interact for Health, a regional health conversion foundation. The Relationship Mapping exercise (pp. 78-80) can generate common understanding about current network connections and missing opportunities.	Full Subcommittee
How to Lead Collective Impact Working Groups	A toolkit from FSG that provides six modules to support effective workgroup collaboration that can support skill building general membership capacity-building.	Full Subcommittee

Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFRA) (Gajda 2004)

Level of Integration	Purpose	Strategies and Tasks	Leadership and Decision-Making	Interpersonal and Communication
Networking 1	Create a web of communication Identify and create a base of support Explore interests	Loose or no structure Flexible, roles not-defined Few if any defined tasks	Non-hierarchical Flexible Minimal or no group decision making	Very little interpersonal conflict Communication among all members infrequent or absent
Cooperating 2	Work together to ensure tasks are done Leverage or raise money Identify mutual needs, but maintain separate identities	Member links are advisory Minimal structure Some strategies and tasks identified	Non-hierarchical, decisions tend to be low stakes Facilitative leaders, usually voluntary Several people form "go-to" hub	Some degree of personal commitment and investment Minimal interpersonal conflict Communication among members clear, but may be informal
Partnering 3	Share resources to address common issues Organizations remain autonomous but support something new To reach mutual goals together	Strategies and tasks are developed and maintained Central body of people Central body of people have specific tasks	Autonomous leadership Alliance members share equally in the decision making Decision making mechanism are in place	Some interpersonal conflict Communication system and formal information channels developed Evidence of problem solving and productivity
Merging 4	Merge resources to create or support something new Extract money from existing systems/members Commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long-term outcomes	Formal structure to support strategies and tasks is apparent Specific and complex strategies and tasks identified Committees and sub-committees formed High	Strong, visible leadership Sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	High degree of commitment and investment Possibility of interpersonal conflict high Communication is clear, frequent and prioritized degree of problem solving and productivity
Unifying 5	Unification or acquisition to form a single structure Relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving organization	Highly formal, legally complex Permanent re-organization of strategies and tasks	Central, typically hierarchical leadership Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	Possibility of interpersonal conflict very high Communication is clear, frequent, prioritized, formal and informal

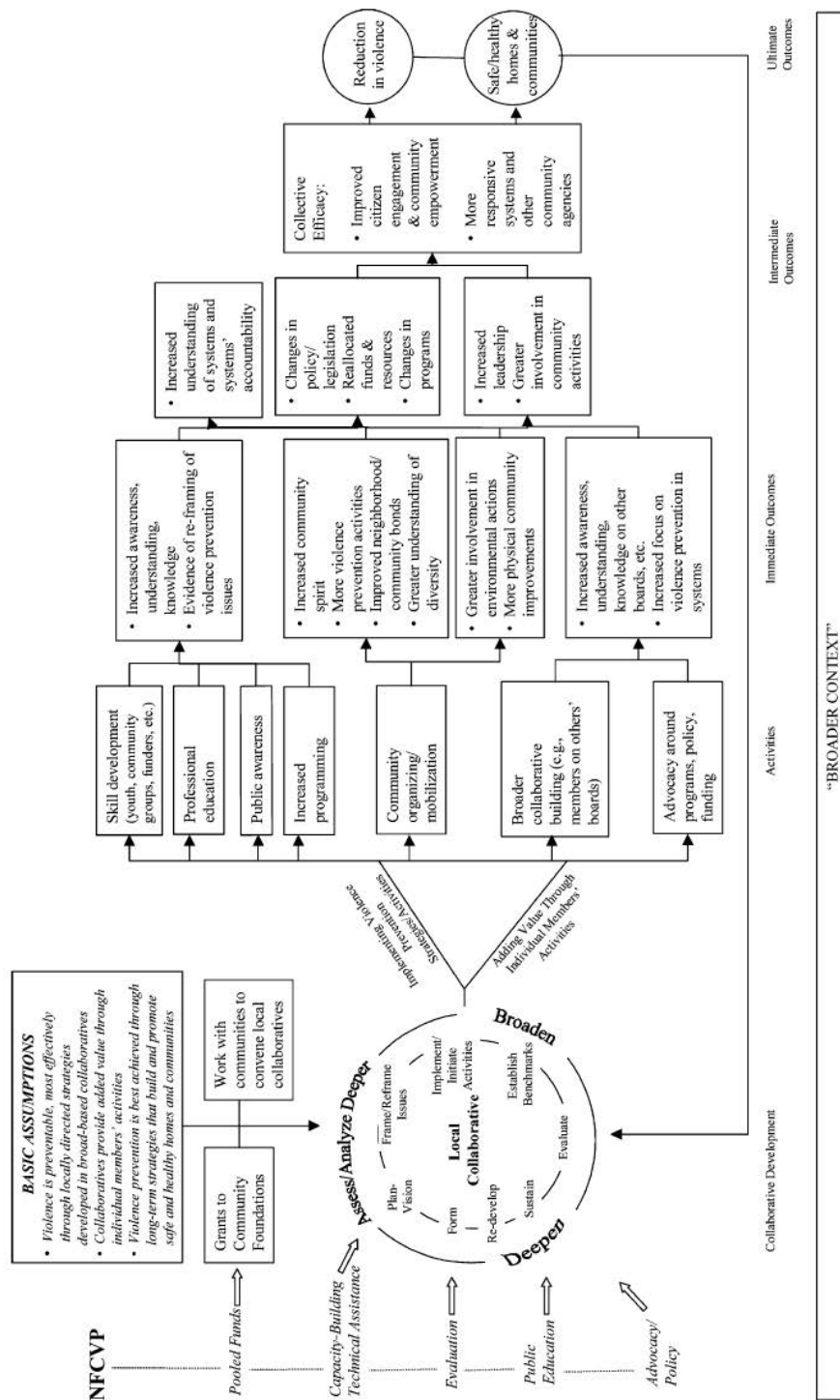Theory of Change Example, National Funding Collaboration for Violence Prevention (Rog et al. 2004)

Fig. 1. NFCVP theory of change.

Microstructures that support collaborative innovation (Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2013)

Impromptu Networking
Rapidly share challenges and expectations, building new connections

9 Whys
Make the purpose of your work together clear

What, So What, Now What?
Together, look back on progress to-date and decide what adjustments are needed

TRIZ
Stop counterproductive activities & behaviors to make space for innovation

Appreciative Interviews
Discover & build on the root causes of success

1-2-4-All
Engage everyone simultaneously in generating questions/ideas/suggestions

User Experience Fishbowl
Share know-how gained from experience with a larger community

15% Solutions
Discover & focus on what each person has the freedom and resources to do now

25-To-10 Crowd Sourcing
Rapidly generate & sift a group's most powerful actionable ideas

Troika Consulting
Get practical and imaginative help from colleagues immediately

Conversation Café
Engage everyone in making sense of profound challenges

Min Specs
Specify only the absolute "Must do's" & "Must not do's" for achieving a purpose

Wise Crowds
Tap the wisdom of the whole group in rapid cycles

Wicked Questions
Articulate the paradoxical challenges that a group must confront to succeed

Drawing Together
Reveal insights & paths forward through non-verbal expression

Improv Prototyping
Develop effective solutions to chronic challenges while having serious fun

Agreement-Certainty Matrix
Sort challenges into simple, complicated, complex and chaotic domains

Shift & Share
Spread good ideas and make informal connections with innovators

Heard, Seen, Respected
Practice deeper listening and empathy with colleagues

Social Network Webbing
Map informal connections & decide how to strengthen the network to achieve a purpose

Design StoryBoards
Define step-by-step elements for bringing projects to productive endpoints

Open Space
Liberate inherent action and leadership in large groups

Discovery & Action Dialogue
Discover, spark & unleash local solutions to chronic problems

Integrated~Autonomy
Move from either-or to robust both-and solutions

Generative Relationships
Reveal relationship patterns that create surprising value or dysfunctions

Critical Uncertainties
Develop strategies for operating in a range of plausible yet unpredictable futures

Purpose-To-Practice
Define the five elements that are essential for a resilient & enduring initiative

Ecocycle Planning
Analyze the full portfolio of activities & relationships to identify obstacles and opportunities for progress

Panarchy
Understand how embedded systems interact, evolve, spread innovation, and transform

What I Need From You
Surface essential needs across functions and accept or reject requests for support

Celebrity Interview
Reconnect the experience of leaders and experts with people closest to the challenges at hand

Helping Heuristics
Practice progressive methods for helping others, receiving help, and asking for help

Simple Ethnography
Observe & record actual behavior of users in the field

Key elements for home organizations that support successful collaboration (from Ainsworth & Chesley, 2017)

APPENDIX
Collaboration Skills of Highly Effective Collaborators

Skill	General Descriptors as Identified by Williams (2002)
Interpersonal	Can cultivate, build, and sustain effective personal relationships; manages conflict; good empathy skills, can see other's point of view; can gain and build trust; flexible; manages conflict and criticism; disagrees without harming relationships; respected, open, honest, approachable.
Technical	Effective at performance management, project management, program evaluation.
Risk taking	Innovative risk-taking; rule breaking; can see things in a different way.
Communication	Effective facilitation skills; oral, written, and presentation skills; active listening skills.
Networking	Can connect, gain information from strategic players; can influence to advance an agenda; displays diplomacy; ability to effectively work in network forms of governance; continually builds and grows network.
Political/ leadership	Works across organizational boundaries to bridge interests and find common ground; ability to work in nonhierarchical environments; influences without direct authority; negotiation skills; brokers deals among a number of players; strategic thinker; works well in multiple cultures; can balance need of network with that of individual organization.
Systems thinking	Can work in complex environments; takes a systems view, can see beyond organization's interest and boundaries; understands interdependencies of systems; couples problems, policies, and politics; sees connections and interrelationships.

Factors for successful collaboration (Helmstetter et al. 2017)

TABLE 4
Findings Summary: Design Configurations That Support Collaboration

Design Component	Configurations That Support
Strategy	• Strategy acknowledges collaboration as a means of meeting organizational goals
Structure	• Informal, nonhierarchical • Fluid and flexible, structure changes based on organization's operating context • Enables autonomous functioning by those collaborating; provides collaborator direct access to leadership • Supports free-flow of information giving real-time access to workers • Size of organization or department is small
Processes	Decision-making processes • Provides clear parameters pertaining to limits of decision-making authority of collaborators • Individual collaborators are empowered to make decisions that are binding to the organization • Decision criteria include consideration of the coalition and its interest • Organization has established criteria used in deciding to participate in coalition Resource allocation • Organization dedicates staff and funding to support coalition activities
Human resource systems	Performance appraisal • Performance appraisal includes an assessment of employee's collaboration skills • Ongoing supervisory feedback on individual's use of collaboration skills • Individual receives feedback from other members in the coalition Recruiting, job description, training • Employee's collaboration skills are examined and considered when recruiting and selecting • Job descriptions explicitly outline the use of collaboration skills in coalition settings • Formal collaboration training available to employees that collaborate on behalf of the organization
Measurement Systems	• Extend beyond organization's boundaries to measure impact of the coalition
Culture	• Culture of "do-whatever-it-takes" attitude in accomplishing tasks • Informal, inclusive culture, nonhierarchical • Culture of psychological safety that values diversity of thought • Values risk-taking and innovation