

FSLN Coffee Chat: Collective Impact with Rich Pirog

Wednesday, January 16, 2019

4pm -4:45pm EST

Zoom platform

Notes

Intros and Background

- First-ever FSLN Coffee Chat - thank you all for joining, and thank you Rich for being our guest!
- Connecting as peers and colleagues across the country
- 2013/2014 idea of collective impact gains traction, lots of interest in learning more

Articles/resources referenced:

- <https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/480>
- <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/>
- https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact
- Networks That Work (short book)
- Network Weavers Handbook, June Holley

What is CI?

- Much of the work in food systems is complex; CI brings actors together, not just food systems folks but from a number of sectors, recognition that we must work together to solve a specific problem (Kania and Kramer article: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)
- No one institution can solve problems

What conditions need to be in place for something to be considered a CI?

5 conditions:

1. common agenda across organizations
2. Fosters mutually reinforcing activities
3. continuous communication - need to take the extra step, don't make assumptions;
4. measurement and metrics need to be aligned;
5. backbone organization - one org needs to be focused on the collaborative infrastructure - conditions are fair, goes beyond a convener. Funders are appreciating this role more.

Can you offer any tangible examples of CI?

- In Iowa, had partners that met quarterly, even ended meetings with song :) -- passion for the problem-solving ideas and ways that each party had
- Overtime, and resulting from the strong networks/relationships developed, Iowa legislature asked Rich's team to develop a food and farming plan (at Leopold Center)
- Adapted the similar framework in MI - the MI Good Food Charter
- Food Solutions New England & VT Farm to Plate are two other examples of successful CI

Who else wants to share their work?!

- Robyn Keefe (Urban Planner for the City of St. Petersburg, FL)
 - initial intent was a pilot urban ag project in a food desert (not CI) and evolved into a CI
 - education, urban ag, urban planning, academia, school systems working together w/ vision of having a youth farm project and expanding this to create a network of edu. programming for the county and embedded in the school district, lead to careers in ag
 - trying to follow the CI model, hiring a collaboration manager
 - working with an evaluator with CI expertise to develop a evaluation metrics
 - Contact info for more information/experience sharing:
 - robyn.keefe@stpete.org
 - (727)892-5255
- Sunny Baker (MS Farm to School, MS)
 - Using the CI model and an external contractor to develop shared metrics and shared strategic plan; growing steadily
 - Having a backbone is important
 - How to establish 'yourself' as a backbone?

Considerations and strategies to managing backbone orgs?

- One doesn't necessarily anoint themselves as a backbone org, it can evolve and there should be agreement amongst all orgs over which org has those characteristics that can effectively take on this position
- Can have a CI framework w/in a project or over multiple
- To create systems change, need the networking and collaborations that break traditional boundaries → beyond sharing ideas and coming together for meetings
- **Having a plan to manage conflict is imp for CI**
- Employees that work across organizations
- Original conception of CI didn't have a visible policy change stance or racial equity lens
 - Collective Impact Forum (<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/>) includes this more
- Shared agenda is where things start - if this is difficult, the other elements are, too

Distinctions between a network and a CI framework?

- The more risk, the more likely systems change -- ex. short term deliverables to beyond grant period
- High functioning networks doesn't equal CI, but they're part of them → Networks can be a tactic to achieve CI

Tell us about a time this *didn't* go well! An epic fail?

- Folks feel like the only way to make change is if they drive the bus. If just one org feels like they have to drive it, after awhile, others will get off. You have to take turns driving. Becomes harder and more complicated the more partners you have.
- Careful choreography
- Improv for program design - building on what other people say/do
- Value of relationships and trust -- taking the time early on to develop this is very imp

Role of geography in CI models? Can the CI model work at different levels? (local, regional, national)

- Tends to get more complicated the more partners that come in
- Level of trust can get diluted the larger the group
- Tipping point
- norms of reciprocity : I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine
- complex reciprocity: helping each other out, even if others don't always help back. critical mass is strong enough to withhold when an org comes in and doesn't 'play by the rules.' Don't want to be a house of cards.
- Intent of CI is to solve complex problems... but the nature of complex problems isn't always at community or state level: what's our best attempt at solving complex national and global problems? Could CI address this?
 - Having people that can go between boundaries in our networks is valuable, and making connections between practitioners and boundary 'flexers' -- more intra-boundary work.

Kari O'Neill: we are currently working on a tri-state group, but it involves western SD, panhandle of NE, and eastern WY. Very low population, shared growing conditions and shared markets. Would like tips in keeping that equitable and inclusive.

- Check-in on a regular basis (at a human level, too!)
- No substitute for communication
- Add gratitude - honoring and recognizing how valuable they are is helpful

VT Farm to Plate

- State took a lot of leadership, rather than emerging from the nonprofit sector
- Added other ways of collecting data
- Recognized the importance of understanding food systems from a workforce dev standpoint
- Workforce assessments to better characterize food systems jobs, qualifications, etc -- telling a bigger story

Thank you!