



Design:

- Theory of Change development
- Network model design
- Focus Groups & community listening sessions
- Identifying potential partners and bringing them to the table
- Landscape research
- Determine structure for network activities



Data Collection & Reporting:

- Performance measurement design and management including: development of shared outcomes/milestones, design of shared data collection system, tracking of shared milestones, facilitating network wide analysis, reporting



Strategic Planning:

- Sustainability planning
- Refining or strengthening existing models
- Facilitation of funder-based convenings and research about additional funders



Implementation & Capacity Building:

- Coaching and supporting existing backbone organization
 - Strengthen/build existing organization's capacity to lead and coordinate network activities and growth
- Serve as backbone organization including:
 - Facilitating regular network meetings
 - Supporting data reporting processes
 - Planning and supporting Marketing & Communications functions
 - Supporting communications and decision-making protocols across the network



Supporting and building strong relationships:

- Create environments that support building strong relationships across network stakeholders, this includes ensuring the network is inclusive and there is space for many voices and perspectives
- Support the initiative (this might include funders or established organizations) in stewarding strong relationships with participants

Collective Action Projects



Primary Services

- Serve as backbone convener
- Data collection & reporting
- Strategic & sustainability planning
- Design

Location: Boston, MA

Topic: Education & Youth Development

Dates: 2015 - present

Boston WINS (Workforce Investment Network)

Creating college and career opportunities for Boston Public School Students.

Boston Public Schools have an increasing high school graduation rate. Yet evidence shows that students struggle once they enroll in college. To better prepare Boston youth for future careers, Root Cause partnered with the State Street Foundation to plan and implement the [Boston Workforce Investment Network \(WINS\)](#). In this \$20 million venture philanthropy initiative, the Foundation supports five Boston-based nonprofits as they collaborate with Boston Public Schools to advance college and career readiness for youth.

Starting in 2015, State Street partnered with Root Cause to provide structured facilitation for the network's stakeholders, identify desired outcomes, create a performance measurement system, and facilitate regular communication between stakeholders. WINS has expanded from working in five high schools in its first year of operation to 26 high schools.

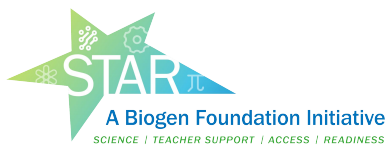


Biogen STAR Initiative (Science, Teacher Support, Access & Readiness)

Developing local STEM ecosystems and decreasing disparities in STEM education.

The Biogen Foundation partnered with Root Cause to invest \$10 million into a coordinated network of grantees over four years. The [STAR Initiative \(Science, Teacher support, Access and Readiness\)](#) is designed to develop a local STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) ecosystem across Cambridge and Somerville, Massachusetts, public schools. The Foundation's initiative addresses this disparities in STEM education by supporting the development a coordinated ecosystem of organizations that help low-income students develop and sustain their interest in STEM, gain necessary STEM exposure and enrichment opportunities, and successfully transition into post-secondary education in pursuit of STEM careers.

In 2017, Root Cause worked with Biogen Foundation to develop a theory of change for the initiative, design the model, and screen and select grantees. Root Cause continues to partner with Biogen to strengthen relationships and coordination amongst STAR grantees and other stakeholders in Cambridge and Somerville as STAR grows and develops.



Primary Services

- Serve as backbone convener
- Data collection & reporting
- Support marketing & communications
- Design
- Strategic & sustainability planning

Location: Cambridge and Somerville, MA

Topic: STEM Education, Youth Development

Dates: 2017- present



Guilford County Coalition on Infant Mortality

Using a radically inclusive approach to address racial inequities and health disparities in birth outcomes.

Primary Services

- Support/coaching of backbone organization
- Radically Inclusive Design
- Strategic & sustainability planning
- Implementation & capacity building

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 847 babies died in North Carolina in 2017. Sixty-one of those deaths occurred in Guilford County, which is seeing an infant mortality rate of 9.8 deaths per 1,000 live births. When you take a closer look by race, the infant mortality rate for African-American infants at 15.1, compared to White infants at 2.9, Hispanic infants at 3.75, and Asian infants at 5.8 out of 1,000 live births.

Root Cause is working with [The Guilford County Coalition on Infant Mortality](#) to develop a five-year strategic plan grounded in our collective action framework to reduce these disparities. The Coalition identified its need for a strategic plan that envisions bold goals, develops collective action strategies, is **radically inclusive**, and redesigns the Coalition in order to address the stark racial health disparities.

Location: Guilford County, NC

Topic: Health & Well-being

Dates: 2020 - present



James B. Duke

THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Initiative in NC

A collaborative effort to build a connected, innovative system of care with and for Guilford County's youngest children and their families.

Primary Services

- Coaching and capacity building of the cohort
- Data collection & reporting

In Guilford County, North Carolina, only 45% of children enter kindergarten literacy-ready. Despite a well-regarded county school system and notable state early childhood efforts, many of Guilford's youngest residents are not prepared for kindergarten and later academic success.

To address these needs in Guilford County,, Ready for School, Ready for Life and The Duke Endowment have partnered to form the [Get Ready Guilford Initiative](#) to achieve better childhood outcomes. To advance this work, the Initiative partnered with Root Cause in forming the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) cohort and a county-wide effort to create a culture of continuous quality improvement among early childhood programs. Thirteen programs were selected to participate in the cohort - together, they serve more than 23,000 children and their families from prenatal health through pre-kindergarten education.

Location: Guilford County, NC

Topic: Education & Youth Development

Dates: 2017-2020



Live Mutual Project

Primary Services

- Support/coaching of backbone organization

Bringing resources and partners together to strengthen financial stability in Springfield, MA

Location: Springfield, MA

Topic: Economic Security

Dates: 2021 - present

MassMutual is partnering with Root Cause to strengthen its collaboration pilot among partners and resources in Springfield, Massachusetts' North End to increase the financial stability of local residents. **This project is in its preliminary phase and kicked off in March 2021.**

Elements of Collective Action



Common Purpose

A common purpose is the organizing principle at the center of any collective effort to improve people's lives. The common purpose is grounded in the needs of the community, emphasizes equity, and aims to reduce disparities. It shapes the design of the network, activities of its partners, and measures of success.



Cross-Sector Partnerships

Collective action initiatives are co-created with a cross-sector of local partners to ensure the network is positioned to influence the broader systems that help or hinder people's success in the community. When a diverse network of partners brings to bear its collective expertise and resources, and designs its activities to be synergistic with the efforts of key stakeholders and institutions (i.e. school districts and public agencies), the network can affect greater change than if it consists of a limited set of partners.



Mutually-Reinforcing Activities

Partners in collective action align and coordinate their efforts - including service delivery, fundraising, and communication. Network members collaboratively shape their work to maximize their collective reach so that more people access and participate in the services they need to thrive. In designing collective strategy, service providers work to minimize redundancy, build referral pathways, and fill gaps in service delivery so that people can advance from one resource to the next to help them succeed at each stage in life.



Collective Performance Measurement

Partners use data to continuously learn, adapt, and improve their individual services as well as their collective action approach. Network members define common outcomes that align with and advance the common purpose. Each partner measures progress against their individual goals, while the network's performance data is managed centrally and shared transparently with all stakeholders.



Shared Accountability for Outcomes

Partners in collective action initiatives are invested in and hold themselves and fellow stakeholders accountable for achieving outcomes agreed upon during the design of the initiative. Accountability to shared goals strengthens as stakeholders trust and value each other and their respective contributions to the common purpose.



Backbone Support

Backbone organizations are an independent coordinating organization that ensures highly effective and adaptive networks by managing the logistical aspects of the project and ensuring all partners are equally represented while maintaining focus on a common purpose. Backbone organizations ensure that decision-making is shared, strategic, and reflective of the network's needs while promoting a culture of trust and accountability among stakeholders.



Continuous Communication

Networks foster strong formal and informal communication channels to build a culture that fosters relationships, trust, respect, collaboration, and shared accountability. Backbone organizations design forums and protocols for regular, transparent communication that often includes network convenings, working group meetings, and the use of online platforms (email, Slack, etc.).



Funding for Collaboration

Funding is allocated for partners to invest the time and energy needed to develop strong relationships and create and maintain tools, processes, and systems to work together. While collective action may happen without philanthropic investments, it is more likely to succeed with designated funding so participating organizations have the capacity to fully participate in and sustain their contributions to the common purpose.

Collective Action: A NETWORK-BASED APPROACH TO IMPROVING LIVES

Collective action is the action taken together by a group of people who share knowledge, resources, and effort to achieve a common purpose.

Collective Action is an approach to systems change that brings together grantmakers, nonprofit service providers, public agencies, and the business community in the pursuit of a common purpose for improving people's lives.

Collective action aims to improve lives across a community by aligning philanthropic resources, direct social services, public institutions, and community efforts to reduce barriers to success, such as those connected to race, class, gender, and geography.

Root Cause helps partners design, implement, and measure the performance of collective action initiatives. We apply a holistic Collective Action Framework that is grounded in relationships to guide networks in designing strategy, facilitating partnerships, coordinating service delivery, and sharing responsibility for outcomes. Each component of our Collective Action framework is interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Collective Action Framework

