

# Collective Action

**A community-led process for advancing equity and achieving social change.**

It's the movement of a group of people impacted by and impacting a challenge who share power, trust, resources, and effort to achieve a common purpose.

## Collective Action Framework



## Principles of Collective Action

These principles guide collective action initiatives towards their common purpose while ensuring a focus on, practice, and advancement of equity.

### Collective action is equity work

Equity is the aim, practice, and approach needed for systems- and population-level change.

### Relationships & community first

Building, rebuilding, and nurturing trusting relationships is core to all collective action work.

### Shift & share power

Cede space for the leadership of those most directly impacted by, and most directly impacting, the central challenge.

### Seek to learn

Foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

### Balance flexibility & focus

Hold to the common purpose and values of the initiative; be adaptive as new learnings emerge.

### Context matters

Ground work in the history, vision, and other data local to the community and challenge.

### See the larger ecosystem

Understand the ecosystem in which the challenge sits to determine where and how collective action is needed.



## Common purpose

At the center of a collective action initiative is a common purpose to achieve population- and systems-level change. This purpose is the organizing principle for the initiative; it shapes the design of the collaborative, its community partnerships and actions, and measures of success.



## Strong ecosystem of partnerships

A collective action initiative is co-designed and led by those most closely impacted by, and impacting, the common purpose. Partnerships and their collective range of expertise reflect this ecosystem—including community leaders, service providers, government agencies, and funders—to ensure the collaborative is deeply rooted in the realities of its community, synergistic with the efforts of key local stakeholders and institutions, and well positioned to influence the broader systems that help or hinder social change.



## Mutually-reinforcing activities

Partners in collective action work adapt, strengthen, and coordinate new and existing efforts in alignment with the common purpose. This includes building strong throughlines across individual and collective vision, strategy, and action; evolving how partners at their home agencies do existing work and take on new efforts towards shared goals; and finding opportunities to amplify the work through collaboration with complementary efforts.



## Collective performance measurement

Partners use data to continuously learn, adapt, and improve how they do their work, ranging from the individual to the collective. Network members define key 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, disaggregated, and shared transparently with all stakeholders.



## Shared accountability

Partners in collective action initiatives are invested in and hold themselves and fellow stakeholders accountable to the community and for achieving the goals of the initiative. Accountability to shared goals strengthens as stakeholders build trusting relationships with one another and value their respective contributions to the common purpose.



## Backbone support

Backbone teams provide critical long-term support for collective action initiatives. They help ensure that a collaborative has the capacity it needs to be highly effective and adaptive while staying true to its mission and values. Backbones play a key role in facilitating shared decision-making processes, collaboration, and data management work across the initiative. They are also important to building and promoting a culture of trust, learning, and accountability among stakeholders.



## Continuous communication

Collaboratives foster strong formal and informal communication channels to build a culture that fosters relationships, trust, respect, collaboration, and shared accountability. In the initiative, backbone teams facilitate the design of forums and protocols for regular, transparent communication that often include 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, maintain, and nurture strong relationships and systems for tighter collaboration. While collective action may happen without investment, 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.