Advancing Summer Meals through Collective Impact

Created in partnership with:

dream forward Community Wealth Partners

A Share Our Strength Organization

And with support from:

United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For kids, summertime should mean food, friends and fun. But for kids who rely on school meals, summer can be a time of uncertainty about where and when they'll have access to healthy food. In 2013, of the 21 million kids that received free or reduced-price school lunches during the school year, only 3 million kids (14%) received free meals during the summer. In many communities, a lack of intentional collaboration among current and potential players inhibits large gains in summer meals. Individual players may make incremental improvement on their own piece of the summer meals puzzle, and some organizations, like sponsors and sites, may collaborate with each other to execute their respective duties. In order to understand the pervasive barriers in summer meals and identifying resources to address those challenges will likely be unrealized without more intentional collaboration.

In two U.S. cities, however, significant results were achieved through intentional collaboration around summer meals:

- **Detroit: a collaborative effort prevented the loss of 200 summer meals sites in 2012 and helped achieve a 29% increase in summer meals in 2013.**

- **Baltimore: a collaborative effort helped achieve a 10% increase in summer meals in 2013.**

What is different in these cities? Share Our Strength's Center for Best Practices partnered with Community Wealth Partners[1] to highlight the stories of collaboration occurring in these two cities and to better understand the potential intentional collaboration has to improve results around summer meals in other locations.

In both Detroit and Baltimore, the collaboration between summer meals players reflected the building blocks of *collective impact*, a process of strategically and deliberately aligning the efforts of a diverse group of stakeholders to collectively pursue significant, lasting change at the community-level.[1] By pursuing the collective impact model, these groups saw a number of powerful benefits, including strategic coordination of resources, alleviation of 'red tape' barriers and collective recognition of regulatory challenges, and opportunities for a cohesive, region-wide awareness campaign.

The experiences of Detroit and Baltimore bring to light important considerations for other communities about the value of collaboration. Collaboration around summer meals can lead to broader cooperation around issues of childhood hunger. Collaboration involving a broad range of stakeholders at the local and state level can lead to sustained, long-term results. Involving government "intrapreneurs" and local "influencers" will enhance the success of a collaboration.

THE WHAT & WHY OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

No one person or organization alone can tackle a complex issue like childhood hunger in the summer in a region or state; collaboration is fundamental. Collaboration is nothing new but several recent collaborative initiatives have caught the attention of nonprofit leaders for their impressive results, and more defined structure, direction, and intentionality. Such intentional collaborative efforts are known as *collective impact* initiatives.[1]

DEFINITION

We define collective impact as a process of strategically and deliberately aligning the efforts of a diverse group of stakeholders to collectively pursue significant, lasting change at the community-level.

BENEFITS

At its core, collective impact involves setting, pursuing, and holding group members accountable to a clear definition of success and supporting strategies. The benefits of collective impact initiatives are that they:

- maximize impact by leveraging strengths of each organization and more efficiently managing resources across organizations

- align strategies, reduce duplication, and share best practices

- focus innovation around the areas of greatest need and/or opportunity

- measure social transformation with shared metrics

OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

A number of key factors need to be in place to realize the benefits of collective impact:

- **Need:** Is there opportunity for significant gains to tackle a social problem at the magnitude it exists and that can only be achieved by bringing a diversity of players together?

- **Interest:** Do key stakeholders believe that collaboration will be valuable? And, do these stakeholders want to collaborate?

- **Assets:** Do key stakeholders have, or have access to a diversity of skills and resources that when brought together will achieve significant gains to tackle a social problem?

Figure 1 - Collective Impact Opportunity Assessment

BUILDING BLOCKS

Once these three factors are confirmed, it is critical that key stakeholders spend time articulating *how* they will work together. **Community Wealth Partners' experience working with collaborative efforts across the country**

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[1] For more information on collective impact, see the "Collective Impact" article in the Winter 2011 issues of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review.*

suggests that the success of collective impact efforts depends on seven *building blocks*:

- **Definition of Success & Supporting Strategies***: collective agreement on a clearly articulated goal and strategies.*

- **Measures of Success***: common measures for evaluation are tied to the clear definition of success.*

- **Intentional Culture**: values and behaviors are agreed upon and embraced.

- **Structure & Governance**: clear roles, responsibilities, decision-making processes, and accountability structures are defined.

- **Engagement of Key Stakeholders**: constant evaluation occurs around whether the right mixture of stakeholders is working together and committed to the definition of success and strategies.

- **Strategic Communication**: communication internal to the partnership and with external stakeholders is well planned and executed.

- **Qualitative & Quantitative Data Inform Innovation**: *agreed upon measures are tracked and used consistently across partners in order to continuously learn and innovate.*

Figure 2 - Building Blocks of Collective Impact

BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

Most strong collective impact initiatives rely on a single organization or a team of representatives from several organizations to perform essential duties, or backbone functions that help secure the building blocks of collective impact. These functions may include:

- Serving as project manager for the effort by coordinating initiative meetings, developing and implementing an operational plan, etc.

- Coordinating the flow of information across stakeholders

- Convening key decision makers for visioning, goal setting, decision-making, and knowledge-sharing

- Collecting data and evaluating the results

Figure 3 - Essential Backbone Functions

- Organizations charged with these backbone functions generally hold a stable financial position and have built a reputation as neutral facilitators and trusted partners.
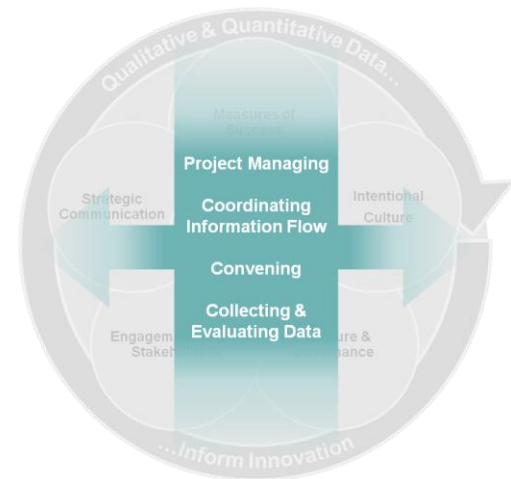
The subsequent case studies examine the evolution of the collaborative efforts around summer meals in Detroit and Baltimore. We explore how these efforts reflect key building blocks of collective impact, and benefit from the more defined structure, direction, and intentionality of collective impact.

PURSUIT OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN DETROIT

FRAMING THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The year 2012 marked a critical point for summer meals in Detroit and the greater Southeastern Michigan region. The City of Detroit faced a potential disaster when the Department of Health, the biggest sponsor of summer meals sites, had its certification revoked. This threatened the loss of 200 summer meals sites and thousands of meals for hungry children.


Detroit Summer Food Sites 2012

A cross-sector team of summer meals champions banded together to avert the loss of 200 sites, effectively "holding the line." Further, the group continued to build on their success in 2012 by realizing a 50% increase in the number of sites (from 200 to 300) and a 29% increase in summer meals in Detroit in 2013. In the process, this team established a collaborative group that is (1) making strides to increase summer meals participation in Detroit, (2) building a model of collaboration around summer meals that could be replicated across Michigan, and (3) laying the foundation to realize statewide No Kid Hungry goals beyond summer meals.

Inception

Although the collaboration sprung into action at the revocation of the Department of Health as a summer meals sponsor, key relationships that underpinned the group's success in 2012 were already in play. In Detroit, the United Way for Southeastern Michigan (United Way) is respected across political, religious, and socioeconomic lines. The relationships the United Way built across sectors in the community allowed the organization to serve as convener and catalyst for collaborative action around summer meals.

Detroit Summer Food Sites 2013

After setting a long-term impact goal to "make Detroit one of the Top 5 cities to work and live in the country by 2030," the United Way intensified its efforts to improve food access and child nutrition. This included spinning a volunteer-led effort to improve access to federal nutrition programs into a formal organization: the Southeast Michigan Food System Navigators (the Navigators) in January 2012. The Navigators serve as "boots on the ground," leading community-based campaigns to educate and connect school administrators, community agencies, food vendors, etc. with opportunities to tackle childhood hunger. Through these efforts, the Navigators developed relationships with major sponsors, community leaders, and government agency representatives.

In addition to formation of the Navigators, the United Way for Southeastern Michigan also became the lead nonprofit partner for Michigan No Kid Hungry in May 2012. This designation served to strengthen the working relationship between the United Way and the Michigan Department of Education, another critical stakeholder for summer meals and a key player in ensuring the success of the statewide No Kid Hungry campaign. The relationship also made it possible for the Department of Education to request assistance from the United Way in mitigating the effect of the decertification of the Department of Health as a summer meals sponsor.
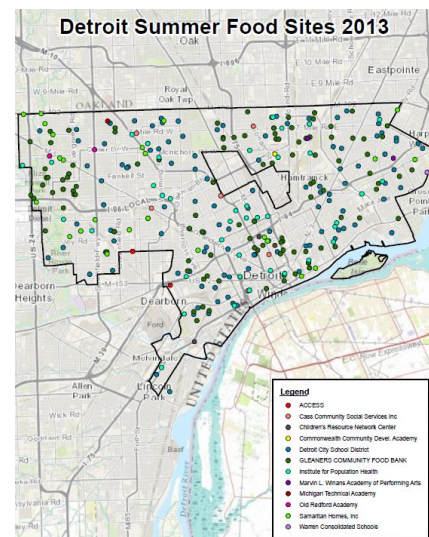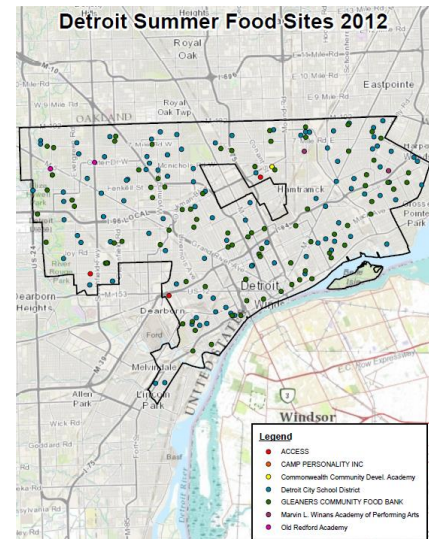
The United Way recruited the Navigators and the largest and most stable sponsors in the region – Gleaners Community Food Bank and the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) – to join the effort. The Navigators brought with them the perspective of local sites and community organizations, and access to a network of anti-hungers leaders. Gleaners Community Food Bank and DPS offered strong organizational and financial sustainability, a willingness to push their capacity to support more sites, and leadership committed to the vision of ending hunger in the region.

Together, this group successfully divvied the sponsor-less 200 summer meal sites between Gleaners and DPS, ensuring that all major sites remained in operation. As a representative from the Navigators indicated, "In 2012, our charge was simply to do everything possible to support summer food in Detroit. We didn't have the flexibility of making lots of proactive decisions. We just had to deal with whatever was in front of us." Nevertheless, the experience of collaborating together successfully in 2012 fostered an environment of mutual trust across the group.

Expansion & Evolution

The network of organizations working on issues of hunger in Detroit is relatively small; most leaders are aware of the work of others and strong relational ties already exist. Additionally, the plight of Detroit has created a collective mentality among social sector leaders. They realize that Detroit is struggling to make progress and, as a representative from the Department of Education remarked, "are grasping at straws to re-invent a city that has been desecrated." They, however, remain passionate about making social progress.

The collaborative effort around summer meals appealed to leaders because the group (1) offered peer support amid work that is often frustrating and (2) demonstrated early wins that suggested real progress was possible. In 2013, the group took advantage of these factors by inviting a diverse set of organizations to join the effort in order to broaden the impact of the collaboration. They focused first on recruiting new sponsors and inviting vendors.

The group also embraced the opportunity to frame their work around Michigan No Kid Hungry, bringing greater cohesion and direction to their efforts. As a representative from the United Way described, "after 2012, we sensed we could have done a better job in terms of aligning and communicating and understanding the work that was supposed to go on. We all felt committed but hadn't yet clearly articulated what the work was. So we created a vision and a framework for guiding our work and keeping momentum outside of the summer." The group consequently identified opportunities to (1) align their summer meals efforts with a broader vision for transforming childhood nutrition in the region, and (2) demonstrate that their model of local collaboration could work in other regions of Michigan. The group, now branded as *Detroit No Kid Hungry*, is currently focused on setting a clear goal and measures of success to guide their efforts, and on clarifying their collaborative structure, culture, and decision-making processes.

PROGRESS TOWARDS COLLECTIVE IMPACT

As the group has grown and evolved, they have made strong progress toward incorporating the building blocks of collective impact[2]. The discussion below focuses on the building blocks (1) of highest priority initially in adopting collective impact and (2) around which the group has invested the greatest effort.

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[2] See page 3 for more information on the building blocks of collective impact.

Definition of Success & Supporting Strategies

The collaborative in Detroit gradually and thoughtfully honed in on a bold goal to guide their efforts. The need to patch the hole caused by the disappearance of the Department of Health gave them a clear purpose in 2012. In 2013, the group continued to focus on summer meals, measuring their success based on a statewide goal set by Michigan No Kid Hungry to increase the number of meals served by 4%.

In order to maintain the interest and commitment of the growing membership of the group and to put the assets of the group towards the most appropriate and effective purpose, the collaborative began to push beyond summer meals. In 2013, they established a clear goal to orient their efforts: "Detroit is a healthy ecosystem where by 2020 kids have sustainable and sufficient access to desirable, nutritious meals where they live, learn and play." With this goal now in place, the group is just beginning to collaboratively develop strategies in support of the goal.

Measures of Success

In 2013, the collaborative began to carve out measures of success to track progress toward their goal and to guide the development of their support strategies:

- *Full Capacity:* "There are enough access points for all children in need to access a healthy meal 3 times per day, 365 days per year."

- *Full Awareness:* "Eligible participants and their families, program providers, and community leaders are aware and supportive of these programs and their positive benefits."

- *Operational Excellence:* "Providers and community implement best practices to maximize revenue potential."

- *Program Quality:* "Providers offer program experiences which put the customer at the center of the program."

As they finalize these measures, they will map out specific quantitative metrics.

Engagement of Key Stakeholders

The core members of the collaborative came together in 2012 by necessity but since then, the group has been slowly recruiting additional members by continually asking the question, "who else should be involved?"

They acknowledge and strive to close gaps in the group composition, which originally skewed towards government agency and sponsor representation. They have successfully recruited a number of vendors and a staff member from a congressional office. They hope to add representation from sites and community residents. Recognizing that success rests on the quality of sites and the interest of residents, they see having representation from the community as critical to the future success of the collaborative. Additionally, they see hope to enhance the influence of the group by further engaging elected officials.
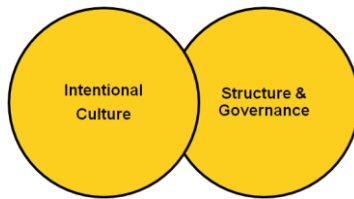
Intentional Culture and Structure & Governance

To date, much of the work around recruiting new members, defining success and measures of success has been driven by the United Way for Southeastern Michigan. Meeting agendas and key decisions are generally set by the United Way, with approval of decisions made by consensus of the group. Members see the United Way as leading essential *backbone* functions[3] for organizing and driving their work forward. Group members are highly complementary of the role of the United Way, describing them as a "liaison," "neutral facilitator," "convener," and "content expert." In taking a leadership role, the United Way has helped to push a clear agenda forward, adeptly influencing the focus and decision-making of the collaborative.

Group members attribute much of their forward momentum to the leadership of the United Way and to the sense of trust developed amongst members as they fought together to avert crisis in 2012. To maintain this sense of trust, the group has taken deliberate steps to enhance members' self-awareness and to encourage open dialogue about needs and barriers. As a representative from the United Way explained, "We've been striving to determine a healthy way to bring conflict into the coalition. Whether or not the conflict should be dealt with out in the open or in sidebar conversation we have to allow [these difficult conversations to happen.]" The group has held conversations about member constraints in honoring requests from the collaborative and explored the key "customers" each organization must prioritize in its decision-making. These conversations help members understand the different priorities and perspectives within the group.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the group seeks to further formalize elements of culture, structure, and governance. The collaborative is working to establish an operating structure that allows for shared leadership while also continuing to engage key stakeholders. This will involve the creation of workgroups and a steering committee with specific roles and responsibilities.

Other opportunities the group may pursue to build their culture, and strengthen their structure and governance include establishing mutually agreed upon "Partnership Principles". A set of guidelines to outline the core values of the group, formalize the "how" and "why" around decision-making, and clearly delineate the unique and critical contribution of each member will help the group to have healthy, productive conversations. They will ensure the voice of one with greater political power in a community is no more or less important than that of a community resident.

BENEFITS OF PURSUING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The pursuit of collective impact has resulted in a number of benefits both to the members' individual successes and their collective success around advancing summer meals.

1. Ensure Strategic Coordination of Resources

Because of the collaboration in Detroit, organizations with a large investment in summer meals are able to compare notes with the state SFSP agency about program data for Michigan. This allows for smarter collective decision-making about site locations, outreach to underserved areas, and meals orders. As a representative from the Gleaners Community Food Bank explained, "the coalition gives us each a place to see the big picture. In planning for the summer, we are able to come together, examine maps with data about the number of kids, the number of current sites, the participation rates, etc. We use this data to determine where we might need new sponsors and new sites."

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[3] See page 4 for more information on the *backbone* functions in collective impact.

2. Accelerate Learning and Improvement

Members bring diverse, cross-sector perspectives, experiences, and assets to the table. Sharing knowledge and resources across the sponsors in the region enables them to make quick adjustments that result in significant gains in the number of children served in the summer. For example, combining data available from the Department of Education with knowledge of a community from the Navigators, and the staff capacity of the region's largest sponsors allowed the group to (1) implement and (2) quickly adapt a mobile meals delivery model once it was determined that apartment complexes had greater participation than neighborhood sites.

As a representative from Gleaners Community Food Bank explained, "We are able to collectively uncover tactics that make a difference. For example, we've discovered that having greenery at a site results in better participation. Because we have representatives from different sponsors, we can really see whether something is a trend or just a blip. We've started to create a comprehensive list for what makes a strong site in Detroit." Additionally, the United Way for Southeastern Michigan's status as a key No Kid Hungry partner ensures that the group is gleaning insights from across the state and from other No Kid Hungry states.

3. Alleviate 'Red Tape' Barriers and Affect Systems Change

Sponsor requirements can often be confusing and frustrating. Regular and open communication between the state agency and the city's largest sponsors allows for conversations about how to ease the regulatory burden on sponsors. As a representative from the Department of Education highlighted, "being a part of the collaboration has allowed me to help break down preconceptions about the difficulty of participating in summer meals. I've been able to help sponsors navigate the regulatory 'red tape,' providing guidance about how to avoid complications and explaining the background for why we require what we do." Based on these conversations, the group has identified changes for system improvements and, simpler processes and requirements. As a representative from Gleaners Community Food Bank remarked, "It never would have been possible to pursue mobile meals without having the state agency and others as collaborative partners."

4. Create the Opportunity for a Shared Awareness Campaign

Establishing broad-based summer meals awareness campaigns can be challenging if there is not a sense of collective identity or if independent groups want to maintain their own branding. Participation in a statewide awareness campaign to brand summer meals - "Meet Up & Eat Up," helped unite the collaboration in Detroit under a shared identity. Because trusted members of the collaborative in Detroit helped develop the campaign, the full group embraced the final product and ensured sites across Detroit adopted the brand. The campaign helped raise awareness and interest across the city of Detroit as well as across the state of Michigan. As a representative from Gleaners Community Food Bank emphasized, "It was great to unify the summer meals messaging across the city. The whole collective branding was incredibly helpful. We couldn't have raised such awareness on our own, and now there's a powerful and neutral brand for the whole region."
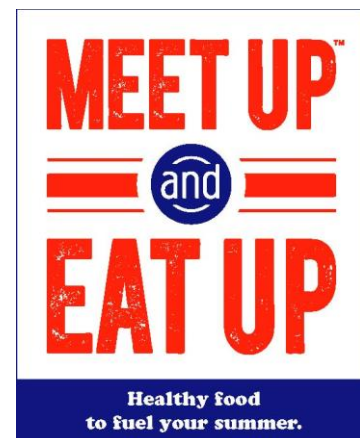
5. Inspire Healthy Sponsor-Site-Vendor Competition

The open communication and data transparency that has arisen from the collaborative effort has cultivated healthy "market" dynamics among sponsors, sites, and vendors. Many sites were unaware that they could choose from

among a set of sponsors and that different sponsors offered different options (e.g., menus, mobile sites, weekend hours, year-round meals). Additionally, sponsors have become more aware of the various vendor options and the trade-offs amongst these vendors. This awareness spurs healthy competition to improve the availability and quality of summer meals.

6. **Uncover New Possibilities**

Trying out a new program or strategy can be risky, and can deter some sponsors and sites from experimenting with new ideas. Participants in the Detroit collaborative, however, are inspired by the success of the group, and derive confidence from the support of members. As a representative from Gleaners Community Food Bank remarked, "we had thought about participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program [in addition to summer meals] for years, but it always seems like such a big lift.[4] Having the support of the coalition gave us the confidence we needed to finally go for it!"

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[4] The Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP) "provides aid to child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes for the provision of nutritious foods that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children, and the health and wellness of older adults and chronically impaired disabled persons." See the USDA website for more information.

PURSUIT OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN BALTIMORE

FRAMING THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

In 2012, the Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, with support from the Mayor of Baltimore City, spun a core advisory group into the Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in order to cultivate stronger collaboration at the local level. Like the Maryland Partnership, the Baltimore Partnership is comprised of cross-sector stakeholders, including the Mayor's Office, Baltimore City Food Policy Initiative, Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore Housing, Baltimore City Health Department, Department of Social Services, and Department of Recreation and Parks, Maryland Farmers Market Association, University of Maryland and Extension, Maryland State Department of Education and Department of Human Resources, Johns Hopkins University, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Hunger Solutions, Share Our Strength, Family League of Baltimore, United Way of Maryland, Maryland Food Bank, St. Vincent De Paul/KidzTable, Parks and People, and Maryland Out of School Time Network.

To tackle the challenge of hunger in the summer, the Baltimore Partnership formed a seasonal Summer Meals Workgroup. In the fall of 2012, the Summer Meals Workgroup hosted a series of roundtable gatherings to identify and overcome gaps in summer meals participation, to track progress and to expand the City's network of summer meals sponsors and sites. The roundtables involved key summer meals players from across the City along with members of the Baltimore Partnership.

Baltimore Summer Meals, 2012-2013

	2013	2012
Dinner	170,577	109,509
Lunch	612,604	587,317
Breakfast	458,723	433,982

As a result of these meetings, the Baltimore Partnership targeted their outreach to critically underserved neighborhoods, especially areas with strong neighborhood associations that could help establish new summer meals sites. A number of the neighborhood associations contacted by the Baltimore Partnership dramatically expanded summer meals opportunities within their neighborhoods. For example, the Upton community established a number of mobile meals sites by using data and local knowledge to identify the most promising locations. They also collaborated with local churches and nonprofits to raise awareness and provide extra staff capacity at the sites. The Park Heights Renaissance neighborhood association collaborated with a new Boys & Girls Club location to turn a closed site into an open site, and used their existing "Service Providers Network" and "Residents Leadership Council" to raise awareness of summer meals among community residents.

The collaborative efforts of the Summer Meals Workgroup to convene existing players and expand the network of summer meals sponsors and sites helped realize a 10% increase in summer meals and laid the groundwork for further collaborative efforts.

PROGRESS TOWARDS COLLECTIVE IMPACT

From 2012 to 2013, the Baltimore Partnership took solid first step toward realizing the building blocks of collective impact[5]. The discussion below focuses on the building blocks (1) of highest priority initially in adopting collective impact and (2) around which the group has invested the greatest effort.

Definition of Success & Supporting Strategies

In considering whether it might make sense to establish a clear, collectively agreed upon definition of success around summer meals in Baltimore, interviewees indicated that setting such a goal may help align and inspire key stakeholders across the city. Although the Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger had a concrete goal to increase summer meals participation in 2013, awareness of this goal did not reach all summer meals providers.

Interviewees also posited that a focus just on summer meals might make it harder to gain full support and committed resources from their respective organizations. Because summer meals is such a specific program and only runs for a certain portion of the year, it may be hard to sustain interest and effort needed for collaboration year round. As a representative from the Upton neighborhood underscored, "we should instead set a goal around nutrition more generally, while still acknowledging that often children are most vulnerable during the summer."

Engagement of Key Stakeholders

In 2013, existing collaborative relationships between community members, nonprofits and churches helped paved the way for robust community outreach. According to interviewees, there is an existing orientation towards collaboration within Baltimore. As the Program Director of the Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger explained, "people in Baltimore are used to coalition meetings. This isn't a foreign concept. Baltimore is 'Small-timore.' We all know each other and work together routinely."

Interviewees recognize that there is room for more stakeholders in the Baltimore Partnership, especially in the Summer Meals Workgroup. Additional stakeholders include:

- Urban farming organizations, to help improve food quality and distributions options
- Residents, to help get the word out and in a way that resonates with target populations
- Neighborhood associations, who are critical to ensure that the community is invested in summer meals, and also to help alleviate the stigma that summer meals is a "hand-out"
- Libraries and churches, who can offer space and staff, and are vital community hubs
- City Council members and representatives from city offices (e.g., the Health Department), who can help coordinate the use of city resources and connect the dots between different programs

The Summer Meals Workgroup is committed to scouring each priority neighborhood to find community champions who can influence the participation of local residents in summer meals. Additionally, a representative from the Workgroup will serve on a steering committee of "Baltimore Super Summer," an effort to coordinate summer

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[5] See page 3 for more information on the building blocks of collective impact.

opportunities across the city. This representative will ensure that awareness of and engagement with summer meals spreads across all summer programming in Baltimore. Some Workgroup members see opportunity to connect their efforts to other coalitions within the city – for example, a representative from the Mayor's Office suggested: "we should look for overlap with other priorities within the city. I'd be interested to see conversations about the overlap with summer learning loss."
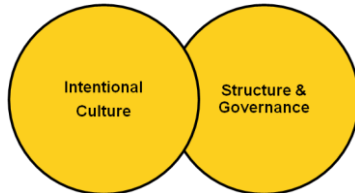
Intentional Culture and Structure & Governance

The collaborative efforts of the Summer Meals Workgroup included a strong network of passionate actors but lacked a sense of shared ownership found within most collective impact initiatives. In 2013, the Program Director for the Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger served as the central organizer for the Summer Meals Workgroup, coordinating the efforts of other players. Interviewees emphasized that the Program Director served a vital and helpful role, acknowledging that she (1) "went in headfirst and took ownership of coordinating efforts across the city" and (2) "was quick to listen and offer support, checking in regularly, and helping us learn about all the different organizations helping with summer meals." Having a central, supportive, and informed point of contact advanced the collective work of organizations participating in summer meals but placed a large and unsustainable burden on the Program Director. The next step will be to create a stronger sense of shared leadership amongst organizations with the resources and clout necessary to serve the functions of the Program Director.

All interviewees remarked that while their working relationships are infused with trust they lack a sense of collective ownership of successes and failure. While issues of funding and territory can sometimes incite difficult conversations, those working on summer meals in Baltimore understand that "[we] must check our egos at the door in order to come together and realize the positive change we hope to." Proactively building culture, establishing decision-making processes, and clarifying leadership and governance structure are critical steps to ensure the longevity of the Summer Meals Workgroup. As a representative from the Upton community commented: "Once we start connecting the dots, we might be able to whip together a network that's not only a summer program, but really something that helps people navigate food insecurity."

Strategic Communication

At the end of the summer, the Summer Meals Workgroup convened a meeting with returning and new summer meals players to debrief about their experiences with the summer meals program. For many new partners, this was their first exposure to the Summer Meals Workgroup. These interviewees remarked that more regular meetings, especially around planning, would lead to beneficial results. Other players felt as though they started planning and community outreach too late in 2013. Hosting regular meetings year-round and inviting a wide range of summer meals players – be they religious leaders, business leaders, nonprofit staff, or simply engaged community members, will ensure all are collectively ready for summer and will help the Baltimore Partnership to reach its goals for summer meals.

Qualitative & Quantitative Data Informs Innovation

For the initial roundtable gatherings and for the Program Director of the Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, data was key to finding neighborhoods where opportunities existed to help close significant gaps in summer meals participation. Data was also used by a diverse group of players – including sponsors, sites, and individuals engaged in community outreach –

in the fall of 2013 to examine and learn about their performance over the previous summer.

Helping sites and sponsors more collaboratively collect and analyze summer meals data will help improve identification and outreach to underserved areas, individual organizational evaluation capabilities, and improve collaborative decision-making. As a representative from the Public Library of Baltimore City explained, "because 'meals served' does not perfectly fit into the case we need to make to our funders and stakeholders, it would be helpful to have support figuring out how to make our data and the citywide data more relevant for our own evaluation purposes."

Additionally, establishing clear goal(s) and measures of success across the collaborative group in Baltimore will provide more direction on data needs and further analysis.

BENEFITS OF PURSUING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The pursuit of collective impact has resulted in a number of benefits both to the members' individual successes and their collective success around advancing summer meals.

1. Ensure Strategic Coordination of Resources

In 2013, using data, the Baltimore Partnership identified neighborhoods where new sites and more coordinated outreach could bridge the gap between student participation in school lunch and in summer meals, opening up conversation between current and new summer meals actors. The Program Director for the Baltimore Partnership evaluated the neighborhood associations and other community groups in the target areas to determine where to invest the Partnership's resources.

2. Accelerate Learning and Improvement

Those who participated in the roundtable meetings and the summer debrief meeting cited these meetings as valuable learning opportunities for their respective organizations. As a representative from the Housing Authority highlighted, "the roundtable meeting opened my eyes to what everybody else was doing." A representative from the Upton community remarked that the summer debrief meeting "allowed us all to see the aggregate data on what we provided collectively over the summer. We were able to see our outcomes in a more holistic way than ever before. It made it clear that the summer meals program was needed and should be expanded, and helped raise the conversation about what worked this summer and what populations we might be overlooking." Participants highlighted the convening as an opportunity to learn from the work happening in other neighborhoods and to learn about program innovations, such as mobile meal delivery. For example, a representative from Public Library of Baltimore City who supported a mobile meals site over the summer emphasized that, "There's always more we can each do and we could learn a lot from each other about how we can each best serve our residents. It's really important that we share best practices so that we can learn what works, especially around participant outreach and citizen engagement. That would be GREAT!"

3. Draw Additional Stakeholders into Summer Meals

A common theme highlighted by those working on summer meals in Baltimore was a need to continue increasing the number of individuals and organizations supporting the program and working together. Smart, intentional collaboration could have a snowball effect: a strong effort that demonstrates early wins will attract the interest of strong potential stakeholders. In cities like Baltimore where – according to interviewees – many efforts have stalled and a

number of social progress indicators seem unwilling to budge[6], being part of a group that is making real progress has significant allure.

Additionally, working together to understand where gaps and opportunities exist, and sharing best practices, creates greater collective awareness about what is possible and what resources are needed. A representative from Park Heights Renaissance explained: "Once we establish a clear plan for how to increase numbers [we could really have the potential] to spark a community-wide movement!" Likewise, a number of interviewees cited further collaboration as a route towards greater "community awareness" about summer meals and as a platform to engage in the "networking and relationship-building necessary to get more folks on board."

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[6] For example, from 2008 to 2012 in Baltimore the percentage of children living below 200% of poverty rose, the percentage of children living in low-income households where no adults work rose, and the percentage of teens ages 16-19 not attending school and not working stayed even. See: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, http://datacenter.kidscount.org.

TAKEAWAYS: COLLECTIVE IMPACT AND SUMMER MEALS

As the stories from Detroit and Baltimore demonstrate, collective impact is can have valuable results for summer meals participation. These stories highlight key benefits of collective impact for summer meals, including:

- *Ensuring strategic coordination of resources*
- *Accelerating learning and improvement*
- *Alleviating 'red tape' barriers and promoting regulatory changes*
- *Creating the opportunity for a cohesive, region-wide awareness campaign*
- *Inspiring healthy sponsor-site-vendor competition*
- *Uncovering new possibilities*
- *Drawing additional stakeholders into summer meals*

Across the stories from Detroit and Baltimore, we saw common factors that supported the evolution of these collaborations as well as similar composition in the initial set of stakeholders:

Common Factors

- A catalyzing event: crisis (e.g., major sponsor decertification in Detroit) *or* opportunity created by new resources (e.g., launch of Michigan No Kid Hungry Campaign, formation of Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger)
- "Small" community of organizations with desire for collaboration
- Current or potential "intrapreneurs" within state and local government
- Willingness among individuals or organizations with appropriate resources to fulfill essential backbone functions[7]

Common Stakeholders

- Local government
- Largest sponsors
- Influential community-wide nonprofits

The experiences of Detroit and Baltimore also highlight important considerations for other communities considering collective impact to help increase summer meals participation:

Collaboration around summer meals can lead to broader collaboration.

A number of stakeholders across both cities acknowledged that an explicit focus on summer meals may be too narrow to sustain year-round interest from key organizations and is unlikely to attract a broader set of stakeholders. Aligning collaboration around broader issues, like childhood nutrition, may entice community leaders to participate in collaborative efforts around summer meals. At the same time, an initial focus on summer meals may lead to early demonstrations of success that could propel a broader effort.

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[7] See page 4 for more information on the *backbone* functions in collective impact.
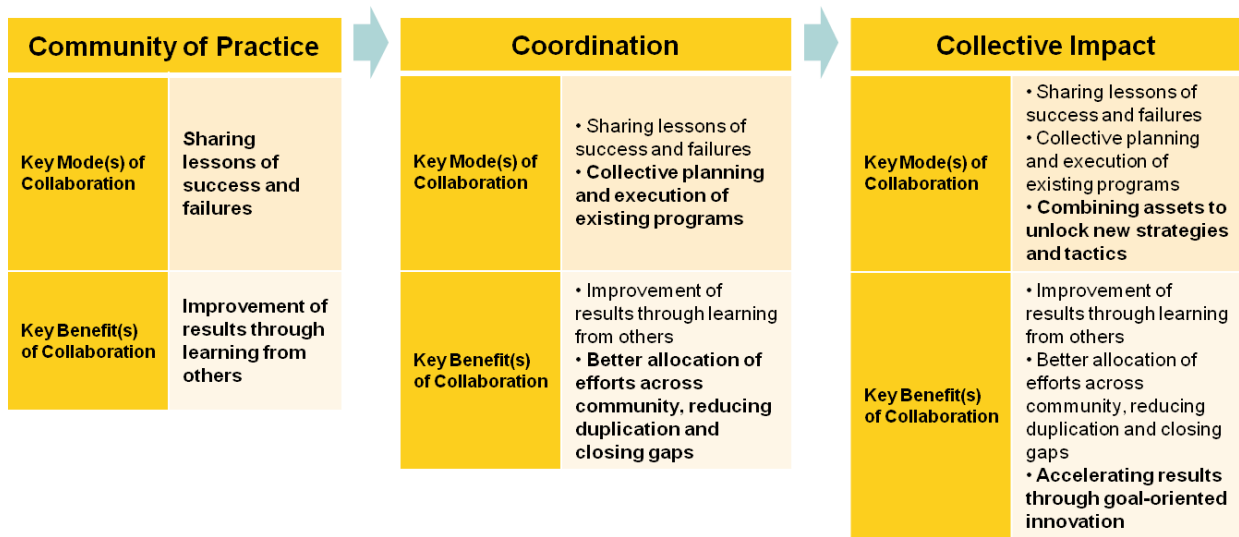
Focusing collaboration within a city or a particular region of a state is likely to produce the quickest results.

Participation in summer meals programs happens site by site, neighborhood by neighborhood. Many local organizations providing summer meals see themselves as serving the residents of a specific neighborhood, though they may also identify with broader efforts to improve their city. They do not, however, see an association with efforts at the state level. Focusing collaborative efforts around summer meals at the community level may be the best approach to win the buy-in of relevant stakeholders. At the same time, the collaborative groups in both Detroit and Baltimore were intimately connected to statewide efforts. Local groups will want to identify relevant state-based stakeholders and statewide groups may want to consider seeding local collaborations.

Recognize and applaud different kinds of collaboration, while moving toward collective impact.

Many collaborative efforts do not start with the intentionality inherent in collective impact but rather evolve over time, compounding benefits along the way. In both Detroit and Baltimore, we have seen that collaboration can generate significant results without looking exactly like the "ideal model" of collective impact. How communities approach collaboration and ultimately collective impact will depend on the local environment. Communities may (1) start with coordination, (2) layer summer meals into existing collaborative efforts, or (3) push current coordination towards collective impact,

Community of Practice		Coordination		Collective Impact	
Key Mode(s) of Collaboration	Sharing lessons of success and failures	**Key Mode(s) of Collaboration**	• Sharing lessons of success and failures • **Collective planning and execution of existing programs**	**Key Mode(s) of Collaboration**	• Sharing lessons of success and failures • Collective planning and execution of existing programs • **Combining assets to unlock new strategies and tactics**
Key Benefit(s) of Collaboration	Improvement of results through learning from others	**Key Benefit(s) of Collaboration**	• Improvement of results through learning from others • **Better allocation of efforts across community, reducing duplication and closing gaps**	**Key Benefit(s) of Collaboration**	• Improvement of results through learning from others • Better allocation of efforts across community, reducing duplication and closing gaps • **Accelerating results through goal-oriented innovation**

Support from government "intrapreneurs" and local "influencers" may determine the success of the collaborative effort.

In both Detroit and Baltimore, an advantage of the collaborative efforts was participation of change agents within government agencies who (1) were willing to advocate within the government for the interests of community organizations and (2) could help provide perspective on the requirements and regulations of the government to community organizations. Additionally, both efforts benefitted from participation of influential individuals who had enough clout within the community to bring key players to the table and persuade group members to place the goals of the collaborative above their own immediate needs.