SUPPORT FOR NEW PARENTS AND BABIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: fams

Name: Ms Julie Hourigan Ruse

Position: Chief Executive Officer

Date Received: 17 November 2017

Fams submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services

Inquiry into support for new parents and babies in NSW

November 2017

Fams
Level 4, 52 William Street
Woolloomooloo NSW 2011

Julie Hourigan Ruse
Chief Executive Officer
ceo@fams.asn.au

Kim Stace
Capacity Building Consultant

Contents

Who is Fams?

Fams is the peak body for non-government, not-for-profit organisations working with vulnerable children and families across NSW.

We encourage and help these organisations to deliver quality support services and provide them with strong representation across rural, remote and metropolitan districts. Fams has always been driven by strong values, and our vision is:

> Safe Children
> Strong Families
> Supportive Communities

Fams was established in the late 1980s and provides support to about 200 services throughout NSW. Our members provide services such as home visiting, parenting groups, playgroups, case management, individual counselling, 'connections to community' activities and supported referrals.

We provide support to our members through:

- Systematic policy and advocacy: to inform and enable the government to implement solutions that support vulnerable children and families, while keeping members well informed about emerging issues, reforms and current policy related to the child and family sector.

- Building skills and knowledge: to share knowledge and resources about evidence informed approaches related to the child and family sector.

- Modelling and promoting outcomes-based frameworks: to enable the sector to collect and use date to inform practice and collaborate to provide better results for clients, practitioners and organisations.

Outcomes measurement

Fams has specialised knowledge and skills in outcomes measurement using the Results Based Accountability™ framework (RBA™). We work extensively with the sector to build skills and implement evidence based systems. One way we do this is to organise and facilitate forums that focus on increasing knowledge in evidence based approaches or building capacity on practice issues.

Fams sits on a number of working groups led by government and non-government organisations that enable us to stay abreast of emerging issues and influence policy related to the child and family sector.

What is a Family Service?

A family service is a non-government organisation (NGO) that works with vulnerable children and families. These NGOs reflect the diversity of their community and can be small, medium or large in size. They are usually located in the most disadvantaged communities within their district or they outreach into those areas.

Family services work with vulnerable children and families to deliver a wide range of services including:

- case management;
- home visiting;
- parenting groups;
- playgroups;
- evidence based parenting programs;
- children's groups;
- counselling; and
- engagement activities such as family fun days.

Workers use evidence based approaches including strengths-based, trauma-informed and child-centred practice. The nature of the work is holistic and underpinned by an ecological approach whereby communities, families and children are inter-connected and require multi-faceted solutions.

Our members work is guided by 10 endorsed core principles:

1. All members of a family should be safe from violence
2. Children should be provided with safe quality alternatives if it is deemed they cannot live with their birth family
3. There is recognition that families have multiple forms, not necessarily biologically based
4. In family services, staff and families work together in relationships based on trust and respect
5. Family services enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members - adults, young people and children
6. Family services affirm and strengthen families' social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a pluralist society
7. Family services are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process
8. Family services are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues
9. Principles of family services are modeled in all aspects of the project, including planning, service delivery, management and administration
10. The priority at the heart of all our work is the safety, health and wellbeing of children and families

Introduction

Fams welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into support for new parents and babies in New South Wales. Fams specialises in child and family sector work and has comprehensive knowledge and expertise in early intervention and prevention programs.

In 2015, FACS commissioned the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to conduct a strategic literature review. The paper, *Better systems, better chances: a review of research and practice for prevention and early intervention*, "presents the findings of broad and rapid review of the key features and components of systems that support prevention and early intervention to promote the wellbeing of children, youth and families", (ARACY 2015).

The paper's Executive Summary concluded:

> The aim of [targeted earlier intervention] reform must be the development of infrastructure for an 'intelligent system' that collects and uses data to measure the outcomes it is achieving, and which has mechanisms for decision-making that are responsive to evidence, data and changing local contexts. Effective systems are designed around the factors that promote the wellbeing of children and reflect the ways families work. They leverage trusted universal service platforms to promote the factors known to be important for child development and they respond early to emerging problems.

Better systems, better chances provides compelling evidence that the system is fragmented, requires more focus on outcomes and a better understanding of what works for vulnerable children and families.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised from the outset that there is also significant work happening across NSW that is making a positive difference to children and families. For example, the Australian Early Childhood Index (AEDI) shows that at a population level there has been an improvement in developmental outcomes for many children in NSW. Accordingly, we believe that investment in early intervention programs has contributed to this improvement and many of the elements of these programs should be maintained.

Fams believes that all stakeholders (FACS, the sector and communities) need to be open to new ideas and ways of working while at the same time building on the strengths, expertise and innovative work happening in communities. We must strengthen our systems and practices to ensure less children are entering the statutory out of home care, fewer children are deemed at risk of significant harm (ROSH) and more children are thriving and happy.

Service system design

What does the service system look like now?

The current service system is designed to fund NGOs to deliver a range of programs and activities to vulnerable children, young people and families. Predominantly, programs are classified as prevention or early intervention, that is, intended to identify challenges early in

the life of issue, or early in the life of a child. Clients come into contact with these services either through professional referral or self-referral.

Services rely predominantly on FACS funding plus complementary funding from other NSW Government sources (including for disability, ageing, homelessness, health, education or justice programs), plus funding from the Federal Government, local government grants or philanthropic opportunities.

Together, typically a number of funding sources are pooled to create an opportunity to provide a suite of responses to vulnerable children, young people and families. But together, they also create a rather inflexible service system of artificial programmatic and geographic boundaries.

The current child and family service system creates unnecessary barriers that frustrates practitioners and limits the potential for families to acquire a service quickly and efficiently. According to ARACY (2015) our current system is "fragmented and poorly coordinated, structured around organisational needs and priorities, focused on individuals and individual problems, responding to crises and solving established problems rather than preventing the problems from occurring and has limited knowledge on what is working".

What do we want the system to look like?

Fams considers the service system should be built around the safety, health and wellbeing of children, young people and families, with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention, measuring outcomes, engaging in continuous quality improvement and using evidence informed practices that work. Essential to this are:
- recognising the importance of early intervention and prevention;
- the ongoing role of family services within the service system; and
- service coordination.

Recognising the importance of early intervention and prevention

The definition for early intervention and prevention is contentious and different across sectors and organisations. Fams understands the importance of early intervention and prevention programs having a clear focus on preventing vulnerable children from escalating to being at ROSH. But, we are very concerned that early intervention and prevention funding is being eroded in NSW. Genuine early intervention approaches must be maintained, valued and adequately resourced.

"There is a strong and growing evidence base that supports the effectiveness of many prevention and early intervention programs and approaches", (ARACY 2015). The evidence is clear that early intervention works and a system focussed on preventing problems rather than waiting until crises occur would deliver better population level outcomes for children. Importantly, the business case for early intervention is undeniable – government investment in early intervention also delivers cost savings by reducing the need for long term intensive service responses at the ROSH and statutory out of home care end of the continuum. Fams strongly supports a service system that is more proactive and less reactive.

Fams does not dispute that ROSH families must not miss out on a service. The challenge is ensuring that all vulnerable children and families are able to access the response they need for as long as they need it. Fams strongly supports a service system in which NGOs can be flexible in the referrals they accept so they can meet the broad needs of local communities.

There is no doubt that there is a significant and deliberate shift for services in the child and family sector to be working with families closer to the ROSH threshold than the traditional early intervention and prevention end of the continuum.

Fams is extremely concerned by a genuine risk that the Government's continued focus on responding to ROSH families to the exclusion of lower risk children families will result in a long term failure to reduce the number of substantiated ROSH reports. Therefore Fams considers there is an urgent need for further investment by the NSW Government in early intervention and prevention services.

A key example of the shift in the Government's focus from early intervention to ROSH is the realignment of the Brighter Futures program. There is some debate about the triggers for this realignment, particularly as program guidelines have been already been revised once since the initial implementation of Brighter Futures.

The Brighter Futures program was first rolled out by the NSW Government (through what was then called DOCS) over five years – between 2003/04 and 2007/08.

A DOCS flyer from 2007 described Brighter Futures as a program to "provide targeted support to vulnerable families to prevent them from entering or escalating into the child protection system" (emphasis added). Brighter Futures was always for non-ROSH families. If a child was assessed as being at risk of significant harm the program guidelines prevented that child from receiving support through the Brighter Futures program.

Now, FACS describes Brighter Futures as a program that "delivers targeted early intervention services to families with children aged under 9 years, or who are expecting a child, where the children are at high risk of entering or escalating within the statutory child protection system" (emphasis added).

The change in language from "vulnerable" to "at high risk" is critically important. It means that children and families once precluded from Brighter Futures are now the target cohort for that program.

This is a significant shift of tens of millions of dollars away from the clients who require an early intervention response. To suggest that the total pool of funds available to deliver genuine early intervention and prevention services to vulnerable children and families has not changed is slightly difficult to comprehend. Without doubt, vulnerable children and families who were once eligible to receive a service through Brighter Futures must now be squeezed into the other programs. Without doubt, vulnerable children and families are now missing out on a service and being relegated to waiting lists.

The role of family services within the service system

The diversity of family services is a real strength in NSW and Fams strongly oppose a standardised approach regarding the size of services. Fams supports a strong, viable, diverse sector with qualified workers. The majority of family services have the capacity to work across the service spectrum including universal, targeted or tertiary interventions. Family services spend considerable and essential time engaging and building relationships with families and the broader service system which means they are often the gateway to other services and a cornerstone within the service system.

Service coordination

Fams members tell us that in their district there are initiatives focused on coordinated responses, but independent of each other, which contributes to program duplication and hinders effective service coordination. A lack of communication between the different levels of government and across the community sector can create disjointed community planning and coordination.

Fams members have told us of examples where there are multiple funded programs available to provide a very similar service for families within that district. NGOs are focussed on the same location resulting in other areas within that district not receiving a service. This is unacceptable and must be addressed if we are to provide a targeted and coordinated service system.

Having a well–informed and collaborative service system will support new parents and babies to access the support they need without barriers. We need strong governance structures, and processes, such as a common assessment and referral process, to encourage effective relationship building and service coordination.

We believe that it is imperative for Government to consider the whole system that supports vulnerable children and families. Services and programs funded by Health, Education and Communities, and Police, must complement FACS funded early intervention programs to ensure better coordination and less duplication of programs within communities. While the NSW Government has no control over federally funded initiatives, Fams considers it is nonetheless necessary to be consciously and deliberately aware of these to maximise opportunities and avoid duplication.

Fams believes that a best practice framework that would improve service coordination and enable responses to local need is the Collective Impact approach based on Kania and Kramer (2011) five conditions of collective success:
1. common agenda;
2. shared measurement systems;
3. continuous communication;
4. mutually reinforcing activities; and
5. a backbone support agency (a neutral organisation that is the lead).

Collective Impact will increase and enhance cross-sector collaboration, will pull organisations out of silos and help government and NGOs to start thinking about the system

as a whole rather than just about their organisation or specific programs. For more information on Collective Impact refer to Appendix 1.

Fams believes that the Results Based Accountability (RBA™) framework is the best way to achieve Collective Impact. Collective Impact using RBA™ is internationally recognised through the Promise Neighbourhoods (supporting over 60 communities that work to improve educational and developmental outcomes of children, serving 14.7 million children experiencing poverty in United States) and Living Cities initiatives.

Further, Fams encourages Government to embrace established proven technology to support service coordination. The Clear Impact Scorecard™ (formerly known as Results Scorecard) is a cloud based innovative state of the art system that would support service coordination, encourage outcomes focused service delivery, improve data collection and reporting, support community strategic planning and streamline funding contracts. Through our partnership with Clear Impact (formerly Results Leadership Group), Fams is aware that earlier this year, the New Zealand Ministry of Health adopted RBA™ and the Results Scorecard™ to administer nearly $1 billion worth of outcomes based contracts with the NGO sector.

Locally, Fams has been engaged in trials for two projects using RBA™ and the Clear Impact Scorecard™: one with the Brighter Futures Lead Agency forum; the other in partnership with Youth Action and 10 NGOs receiving Child, Youth and Family Support funding in the Nepean Blue Mountains District. We have also led community projects with Aboriginal Affairs relating to the Local Decision Making Accords, plus work with individual FACS districts.

Fams is keen to further engage with Government on how these projects can inform TEI reform. For more information on these specific projects refer to Appendix 2.

Recommendations

1. Fams recommends that Government commit to increased investment in services providing intervention services along the continuum from prevention and early intervention to risk of significant harm to give the sector the best chance of achieving a long term sustainable reduction the number of substantiated ROSH reports.

2. Fams recommends that Government, (through FACS) take the lead in developing district plans that are focussed on community wellbeing outcomes and shared outcomes measurement. Fams recommends that Results Based Accountability™ and the Collective Impact approach should be used to develop this plan.

3. Fams recommends that Government endorse, support and resource Collective Impact initiatives across NSW. These initiatives should begin with the most disadvantaged communities and build on the strengths of the local community and initiatives within it. This would enhance service coordination and lessen duplication of services.

4. Fams recommends that Government explore new technologies such as the Clear Impact Scorecard™ that will enhance and support service coordination in communities.

Service delivery

How are we doing on service delivery?

When the Community Service Grants Program (CSGP) was reformed in 2010 it had adverse effects on service delivery for many family services in NSW. For example, the new Child Youth and Family Support (CYFS) program did not allow for engagement strategies which are a vital component for early intervention family programs.

The resulting changes to program guidelines from this earlier reform also prevented many family support services from working with families experiencing complex issues even though they had been doing that work for years. It removed flexible service delivery that had allowed services to respond to community need.

Fams believes that there is real strength in service delivery for vulnerable families in NSW; however we want to see more focus on evidence informed practice. The *Keep Them Safe* evaluation in 2014 reported that there has not been enough focus on holistic multi-agency interventions. We agree – we need a strong and increased focus on best practice.

In regards to service delivery Fams believe that areas that require consideration in regards to this reform are:
- engagement of vulnerable families;
- integrated service delivery;
- flexible service delivery; and
- evidence based practice.

Engagement of vulnerable families

Vulnerable children and families are often the most difficult to engage and generally do not access services. Consequently, extra time, commitment and innovation are required to engage these children and families. The risk that services do not engage the children and families who require a service the most is too great to be ignored.

Fams agrees with Grace (2015) that a possible unintended consequence "(i)n the current competitive environment, (is that) pressure to demonstrate productivity and short term results to funding bodies may cause under–resourced services to focus the delivery of their services on those who are easiest to engage and for whom change will be most evident."

Domestic violence, mental illness, drug and alcohol misuse and risk of homelessness compound the complex challenges families are facing and limits their capacity to access services. When children and families do not have the capacity to seek support themselves, or are unaware of how to navigate the service system, they can remain invisible until they require a crisis intervention. Family services have the skills to engage these children and families effectively, link them to other services and support them by using evidence based approaches to achieve their goals.

Given family services are well placed to engage and work with families with complex needs we believe that building the professional specialist capacity of family workers around areas

such as domestic violence and mental illness would be a holistic and cost effective way of ensuring families are receiving an appropriate service that meets their needs.

Integrated service delivery

Fams believe that family services, must work together with others, including Child and Family Health Nursing Services, to provide a more integrated service for vulnerable children and families. "There is a strong compelling case for the creation and systematisation of a comprehensive and holistic child and family service platform. A platform that encompasses outcomes driven parenting, learning and health programs and practices, accessed through the gateways such as early education" (ARACY 2015).

Improving our service system requires all levels of government and NGOs to work together and create shared policies, frameworks and systems. The ARACY report (2015) indicated that the system was fragmented and poorly coordinated, structured around organisational needs and priorities, risk averse and unaware of what is working. Clearly we need investment and focus on planning a system built around outcomes for children, strong implementation processes and a commitment from all stakeholders to achieve improved population level outcomes for vulnerable children in NSW. Service provision focussed on outcomes for children should be the platform for integrated service delivery.

Fams' members have told us that current practice of FACS districts having different data collection requirements, performance measures and referrals processes is a major hindrance to the effective delivery of services. It limits flexibility in transitioning children and families between the current programmatic structures and leads to unnecessary paper work. Fams is very concerned that artificial boundaries are created by program guidelines and district borders which stifle integrated service delivery. Fams supports localisation, but believes that this must be tempered with flexibility to operate in a truly integrated way.

Flexible service delivery

Without doubt, the resounding outcome that Fams and our members are seeking is more flexibility to respond to children and families in need. Overwhelmingly, family services want to be able to work with vulnerable children and families for as long as they need to achieve their case plan goals. This could range from very short support of a few weeks to long term intervention and support for many months.

Currently, program contracts are too prescriptive and hinder service delivery by restricting the capacity of services to take on higher needs families when appropriate. Fams acknowledge that some NGOs are operating in a flexible way to ensure that vulnerable children and families receive a service even where they may not be strictly eligible under current program guidelines. Others consider the guidelines more as prescriptive rules and are far more rigid in their approach. The difficulty with this situation is that data capture and reporting is skewed and is not a true representation of the work being done and the outcomes being achieved.

The time frame for working with children and families should be more flexible and allow for longer interventions, particularly when working using a trauma informed approach. Fams members commonly express that when families have the chance to experience

complete healing and reconnect attachment with their child it is rare that these families come back into the system.

Evidence based practice

Evidence based practice needs to be an integral part of service delivery if the aim is to achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable children and families. Evidence should guide work and support informed decision making. It can be derived from best research evidence, evaluations, theory and practice wisdom.

Family services work with vulnerable children and families to deliver a wide range of services. Regardless of what service or program is being delivered workers need to be using evidence based practice including strengths based, trauma informed and child centred practice.

Supporting Children and Responding to Families (SCARF) is a good example of a robust, evidence based case management system that guides practice. This system is very similar to the system in the *Getting it right for every child* approach that is reviewed in *Better systems, better chances* by ARACY (2015).

In Fams' experience most services funded to deliver early intervention services are highly professional and have the capacity to provide services and interventions for children and families across the continuum including prevention, early intervention, and working with ROSH families. Many of these services are already working with ROSH families, or have done this work in the past and would willingly return to this work.

Evidence based parenting programs

Evidence based parenting programs are an important element of evidence base practice. When an organisation uses this type of program it must be used in its entirety to maintain the efficacy of the program. These programs are an important contributor to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. However, services need to be supported with the proper resources and support to ensure an effective implementation process.

One size does not fit all when it comes to evidence based parenting programs. Therefore, we believe that the districts need to look at the different types of evidence based programs provided to ensure a range of programs are on offer. Rather than a blanket approach (which is what Fams considers happened with *Triple P*), there should be a suite of programs available that can be utilised according to the needs of children and families within the district. Fams believes that evidence based programs, coupled with evidence informed practice, should be the underpinning of service delivery across all government funded services. For example, a family may require support for mental health and for attachment or managing a child's behaviour. To achieve this there must be a coordinated approach to identifying appropriate interventions, that also recognises the importance of allowing a family to participate in decision making. "To be genuinely effective, a program must also be part of an effective system". (ARACY 2015)

Fams thinks it is important to openly recognise the debate within the sector around whether the rigid structure of evidence based programs can make it difficult for some children and

families to engage depending on their personal circumstances. Fams does not hold a strong view either way as the reasons for a family not engaging with a program would be as many and varied as the families themselves. Rather, Fams strongly considers that it is critical for services to have a suite of strategies and approaches available to respond in a flexible and appropriate way to engage clients when they are ready, and most importantly, to keep them engaged and supported to achieve case plan goal. We cannot risk losing contact with vulnerable children and families only to have them present again to the system when issues and risk have escalated.

Case management

Providing vulnerable children and families with a designated case worker where a range of interventions can be delivered (including referrals and support to access services) is an excellent way of ensuring the very vulnerable are receiving the support they need. We believe that it is important for vulnerable children and families experiencing a range of issues to have someone to support them to navigate the system. According to Schmied et al 2006, case management is often considered to be "the glue that holds the system together." Case management has been a part of family service core work for many years, playing a pivotal role to support vulnerable children and families experiencing a range of issues to navigate a complex system to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

Groups

Many organisations provide supported playgroups or parenting groups that work collaboratively with other services allowing for a coordinated response and early identification of child and family needs. These groups provide a non-stigmatised gateway for families who may need support but unlikely to access other services. Rather than waiting for families to self-identify and present themselves to services they have the opportunity to access a service early. Communities should not lose access to these services – they link, refer and support vulnerable families so it is paramount that they are enhanced and maintained.

Recommendations

1. Fams recommends that all child and family services are supported to implement local engagement strategies to engage the most vulnerable families. Engagement strategies must be valued and implemented in all early intervention programs.

2. Fams recommends that Government maintain supported playgroups and groups that focus on parenting skill development, helping families' access services and building positive social networks.

3. Fams recommends that services should be using evidence based case management systems that guide best practice.

4. Fams recommends that Government contracting and procurement processes allow for more flexibility so that services can respond to the presenting needs of vulnerable children and families. Children and families should be able to access the services they need for as long as they need them to achieve case plan goals and lasting positive outcomes.

5. Fams recommends that Government provide NGOs with better access to local data to strengthen the process of localisation and inspire action and collaboration in communities.

Program support and improvement

Some of the challenges for family services in recent years have been:
- the restrictions posed by funding contracts;
- the expectation to collaborate without any extra support;
- inflexible timeframes to support vulnerable children and families; and
- a lack of time and resources to focus on professional development.

It is paramount that family services are valued and supported so that they can continue to support their communities. Some of the key areas for program support are:
- organisations working with ROSH families; and
- workforce development.

Fams believes that a culture of outcomes driven, continuous quality improvement should be embraced and encouraged in the child and sector. Evaluation and program improvement should be embedded within all NGOs and considered an essential part of core business in the delivery of quality services for vulnerable children and families.

FaCS has named its targeted earlier intervention reform goals as: "client-centred service delivery, evidence based service design and delivery, intensive responses that address causal factors and measuring effectiveness, focus on outcomes and interventions that work".

Fams agree with these goals and identify the specific factors below as key elements in creating a culture of continuous quality improvement in programs and best practice:
- outcomes measurement;
- minimum standards for funded NGOs; and
- independent academic research.

Organisations working with ROSH families

Regardless of current program guidelines many family services have been working with very vulnerable families experiencing complex issues. This is largely due to the gaps in services for medium risk families. Many family services are responding to the ever increasing demand for access to services by accepting referrals of vulnerable children and families not strictly eligible for programs being offered. There is no evidence that these demands will decrease, rather the opposite is more likely, so there is a necessity to allow services to work with these families for longer periods of time and ensure realistic unit costings.

ROSH families do voluntarily access groups funded under programs such as Families NSW and CYFS. It is not unusual for workers to be unaware that these families should be classified as ROSH or are experiencing a range of complex issues until they have built a relationship. Families do not fit neatly into boxes and are not aware of how they are

expected to fit into different programs in order to be supported. Therefore we need to ensure all family workers have the skills to support children and families along the full continuum whenever possible.

It is imperative that all family workers have skills and knowledge in areas such as: domestic and family violence; mental illness; drug and alcohol misuse; trauma informed care, having difficult conversations; and good referral processes. Investment in upskilling all family workers in evidence based practice relating to the named issues could contribute to breaking down some of the barriers that prevent families from receiving quality client-centred service delivery.

Workforce development

Ongoing professional development for practitioners working with vulnerable children and families to be using evidence based approaches is crucial. Services need to have adequate funding to ensure staff have opportunities to access current research, time to engage in reflection, action learning and participate in ongoing professional supervision provided by an experienced worker.

The sector needs to explore innovative ways to build the capacity of the sector to ensure a focus and commitment to best practice. Innovative programs such as peer mentoring programs and reflective practice are cost effective ways to build a culture of best practice and lifelong learning.

Unfortunately, the best program in the world will not be effective if it is delivered poorly – investment in building the skills and knowledge of practitioners is imperative, particularly when more NGO's are taking on highly complex families than ever before.

Outcomes measurement

Through our participation on the Social Innovation Council, and engagement with FACSAR, Fams has actively supported the Government's work on a NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework. We are keen to assist in its early roll-out and adoption.

For the most part, NGOs do not have the funds or resources to regularly use scientific methodologies when evaluating services delivered. However, every organisation has the capacity to embed evaluation through an outcomes framework and regularly monitor performance if this becomes a part of their funding contract and they are resourced to do it. Services delivered to vulnerable children and families should be focussed on measureable outcomes for clients, include feedback, and focus on evidence based approaches that support ongoing improvement. When data is collected regularly an evidence base can be built, trends and patterns identified and an opportunity created to reflect on results and improve practice.

Further, Fams believe that funding contracts needs to be outcomes based rather than just outputs. Organisations should be expected and supported to measure and report on outcomes related to the difference they made for their clients, as well as on and their internal governance practices, and partnerships within the sector.

Fams expertise in outcomes measurement tells us that it will assist organisations to engage in continuous quality improvement and support best practice. In addition, it will provide the framework and discipline to articulate the population outcomes and program performance measures to show the demonstrable impact NGOs are making to vulnerable children and families.

Service standards

Service delivery in the child and family sector has improved over the years because services have embraced evidence based programs, evidence informed practice and have professionalised. Nevertheless, Fams believe that we do need to ensure all services meet minimum service standards to ensure every family can be confident they are referred to a family service that reflects best practice and quality standards.

Fams believe that family services would benefit from a set of enforced service standards that align with an outcomes framework. There is no doubt that NGOs working in the child and family sector must be able to safely and appropriately respond to clients who are experiencing domestic violence, mental illness and/or drug and alcohol misuse.

Fams strongly supports a mechanism that has a strong practice focus, and includes benchmarks for a qualified workforce that embraces reflective practice and experience beyond clinical knowledge. Change to introduce minimum standards should be commenced immediately to allow the child, youth and family a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate they do (or can easily) comply before the end of current contracting arrangements (30 June 2020 for most Fams members).

The Social Innovation Council has led work on an NGO Benchmarking framework which creates a solid base from which those NGOs without formal accreditation can commence working.

Fams has the expertise to lead the child and family sector through the implementation of minimum standards. The Fams *Principles in Practice: the family support approach to family work* is a sound initial reference point to ease the transition toward full implementation of the NGO Benchmarking framework.

Independent academic research

The type of research required to evaluate programs in the Australian contemporary community is expensive and long-term – it is not work done alone by child, youth and family workers. Fams believe that funding should be available to conduct more research and build the evidence base for early intervention and prevention work with families.

An important issue in academic research on early intervention is that there are long-time frames for evaluation. Fams believes that it is important to have studies that follow a family, for say five years, and evaluates the lasting impact (or not) of early intervention.

Recommendations

1. Fams is recognised for its expertise in embedding quality improvement through the robust outcomes measurement RBA™ framework. We are recognised internationally

for our significant expertise in outcomes measurement using RBA™ and Collective Impact. It is recommended that Fams should be funded to build the capacity of the sector to be embedding outcomes measurement.

2. Fams recommends that services are provided with a suite of evidence based programs that can be utilised according to the needs of children and families.

3. Fams recommends that practitioners be supported to engage in recognised ongoing professional development, including reflective practice.

Conclusion

Our response to this inquiry is based on recent forums with our members and our strong connections to the child and family sector, including through our District Reps program. Fams is extremely well placed to actively engage and contribute to developing innovative ways to improve our service system and ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved for all children in NSW.

We believe that the priority at the heart of all work in the child and family sector should be the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people. This underpins all of our work including our response to this reform. Measureable outcomes for children, young people and families in communities must be central to decisions made in regard to partnerships, planning, service delivery and practice.

References

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY),. *Better Systems, better chances 2015, pg 1 & 6*

Grace, Rebekah. *Hard To Reach Or Not Reaching Far Enough? Supporting Vulnerable Families Through A Coordinated Care Approach*. Children and Families Research Centre, Macquarie University, 2015. A Review Of The Literature To Support The Healthy Homes And Neighbourhoods Project, pg 13 & 18

Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. *Collective Impact*. Leland Stanford Jr. University, 2011. Print. Stanford Social Innovation Review , pg 39 & 40

Schmied, Virginia, Suzanne Brownhill, and Peter Walsh. *Models Of Service Delivery And Interventions For Children And Young People With High Needs*. Centre for Parenting and Research, NSW Department of Community Services, 2006, pg. 35

StanfordSOCIAL
INNOVATION REVIEW

Collective Impact
By John Kania & Mark Kramer

Stanford Social Innovation Review
Winter 2011

Collective Impact

LARGE-SCALE SOCIAL CHANGE REQUIRES
BROAD CROSS-SECTOR COORDINATION,
YET THE SOCIAL SECTOR REMAINS
FOCUSED ON THE ISOLATED INTERVENTION
OF INDIVIDUAL ORGANIZATIONS.

BY JOHN KANIA & MARK KRAMER

Illustration by Martin Jarrie

T he scale and complexity of the U.S. public education system has thwarted attempted reforms for decades. Major funders, such as the Annenberg Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Pew Charitable Trusts have abandoned many of their efforts in frustration after acknowledging their lack of progress. Once the global leader—after World War II the United States had the highest high school graduation rate in the world—the country now ranks 18th among the top 24 industrialized nations, with more than 1 million secondary school students dropping out every year. The heroic efforts of countless teachers, administrators, and nonprofits, together with billions of dollars in charitable contributions, may have led to important improvements in individual schools and classrooms, yet system-wide progress has seemed virtually unobtainable.

Against these daunting odds, a remarkable exception seems to be emerging in Cincinnati. Strive, a nonprofit subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, has brought together local leaders to tackle the student achievement crisis and improve education throughout greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. In the four years since the group was launched, Strive partners have improved student success in dozens of key areas across three large public school districts. Despite the recession and budget cuts, 34 of the 53 success indicators that Strive tracks have shown positive trends, including high school graduation rates, fourth-grade reading and math scores, and the number of preschool children prepared for kindergarten.

Why has Strive made progress when so many other efforts have failed? It is because a core group of community leaders decided to abandon their individual agendas in favor of a collective approach to improving student achievement. More than 300 leaders of local organizations agreed to participate, including the heads of influential private and corporate foundations, city government officials, school district representatives, the presidents of eight universities and community colleges, and the executive directors of hundreds of education-related nonprofit and advocacy groups.

These leaders realized that fixing one point on the educational continuum—such as better after-school programs—wouldn't make much difference unless all parts of the continuum improved at the same time. No single organization, however innovative or powerful, could accomplish this alone. Instead, their ambitious mission became to coordinate improvements at *every* stage of a young person's life, from "cradle to career."

Strive didn't try to create a new educational program or attempt to convince donors to spend more money. Instead, through a carefully structured process, Strive focused the entire educational community on a single set of goals, measured in the same way. Participating organizations are grouped into 15 different Student Success Networks (SSNs) by type of activity, such as early childhood education or tutoring. Each SSN has been meeting with coaches and facilitators for two hours every two weeks for the past three years, developing shared performance indicators, discussing their progress, and most important, learning from each other and aligning their efforts to support each other.

Strive, both the organization and the process it helps facilitate, is an example of *collective impact*, the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But collective impact initiatives are distinctly different. Unlike most

collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants. (See "Types of Collaborations" on page 39.)

Although rare, other successful examples of collective impact are addressing social issues that, like education, require many different players to change their behavior in order to solve a complex problem. In 1993, Marjorie Mayfield Jackson helped found the Elizabeth River Project with a mission of cleaning up the Elizabeth River in southeastern Virginia, which for decades had been a dumping ground for industrial waste. They engaged more than 100 stakeholders, including the city governments of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach, Va., the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Navy, and dozens of local businesses, schools, community groups, environmental organizations, and universities, in developing an 18-point plan to restore the watershed. Fifteen years later, more than 1,000 acres of watershed land have been conserved or restored, pollution has been reduced by more than 215 million pounds, concentrations of the most severe carcinogen have been cut sixfold, and water quality has significantly improved. Much remains to be done before the river is fully restored, but already 27 species of fish and oysters are thriving in the restored wetlands, and bald eagles have returned to nest on the shores.

Or consider Shape up Somerville, a citywide effort to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in elementary school children in Somerville, Mass. Led by Christina Economos, an associate professor at Tufts University's Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, the program engaged government officials, educators, businesses, nonprofits, and citizens in collectively defining wellness and weight gain prevention practices. Schools agreed to offer healthier foods, teach nutrition, and promote physical activity. Local restaurants received a certification if they served low-fat, high nutritional food. The city organized a farmers' market and provided healthy lifestyle incentives such as reduced-price gym memberships for city employees. Even sidewalks were modified and crosswalks repainted to encourage more children to walk to school. The result was a statistically significant decrease in body mass index among the community's young children between 2002 and 2005.

Even companies are beginning to explore collective impact to tackle social problems. Mars, a manufacturer of chocolate brands such as M&M's, Snickers, and Dove, is working with NGOs, local governments, and even direct competitors to improve the lives of more than 500,000 impoverished cocoa farmers in Cote d'Ivoire, where Mars sources a large portion of its cocoa. Research suggests that better farming practices and improved plant stocks could triple the yield per hectare, dramatically increasing farmer incomes and improving the sustainability of Mars's supply chain. To accomplish this, Mars must enlist the coordinated efforts of multiple organizations: the Cote d'Ivoire government needs to provide more agricultural extension workers, the World Bank needs to finance new roads, and bilateral donors need to support NGOs in improving health care, nutrition, and education in cocoa growing communities. And Mars must find ways to work with its direct competitors on pre-competitive issues to reach farmers outside its supply chain.

These varied examples all have a common theme: that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations. Evidence of the effectiveness of this approach is still limited, but these examples suggest that substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create collective impact. It doesn't happen often, not because it is impossible, but because it is so rarely attempted. Funders and nonprofits alike overlook the potential for collective impact because they are used to focusing on independent action as the primary vehicle for social change.

ISOLATED IMPACT

Most funders, faced with the task of choosing a few grantees from many applicants, try to ascertain which organizations make the greatest contribution toward solving a social problem. Grantees, in turn, compete to be chosen by emphasizing how their individual activities produce the greatest effect. Each organization is judged on its own potential to achieve impact, independent of the numerous other organizations that may also influence the issue. And when a grantee is asked to evaluate the impact of its work, every attempt is made to isolate that grantee's individual influence from all other variables.

In short, the nonprofit sector most frequently operates using an approach that we call *isolated impact*. It is an approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution embodied within a single organization, combined with the hope that the most effective organizations will grow or replicate to extend their impact more widely. Funders search for more effective interventions as if there were a cure for failing schools that only needs to be discovered, in the way that medical cures are discovered in laboratories. As a result of this process, nearly 1.4 million nonprofits try to invent independent solutions to major social problems, often working at odds with each other and exponentially increasing the perceived resources required to make meaningful progress. Recent trends have only reinforced this perspective. The growing interest in venture philanthropy and social entrepreneurship, for example, has greatly benefited the social sector by identifying and accelerating the growth of many high-performing nonprofits, yet it has also accentuated an emphasis on scaling up a few select organizations as the key to social progress.

Despite the dominance of this approach, there is scant evidence that isolated initiatives are the best way to solve many social problems in today's complex and interdependent world. No single organization is responsible for any major social problem, nor can any single

JOHN KANIA is a managing director at FSG, where he oversees the firm's consulting practice. Before joining FSG, he was a consultant at Mercer Management Consulting and Corporate Decisions Inc. This is Kania's third article for the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

MARK KRAMER is the co-founder and a managing director of FSG. He is also the co-founder and the initial board chair of the Center for Effective Philanthropy, and a senior fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. This is Kramer's fifth article for the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

TYPES OF COLLABORATIONS

Organizations have attempted to solve social problems by collaboration for decades without producing many results. The vast majority of these efforts lack the elements of success that enable collective impact initiatives to achieve a sustained alignment of efforts.

Funder Collaboratives are groups of funders interested in supporting the same issue who pool their resources. Generally, participants do not adopt an overarching evidence-based plan of action or a shared measurement system, nor do they engage in differentiated activities beyond check writing or engage stakeholders from other sectors.

Public-Private Partnerships are partnerships formed between government and private sector organizations to deliver specific services or benefits. They are often targeted narrowly, such as developing a particular drug to fight a single disease, and usually don't engage the full set of stakeholders that affect the issue, such as the potential drug's distribution system.

Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives are voluntary activities by stakeholders from different sectors around a common theme. Typically, these initiatives lack any shared measurement of impact and the supporting infrastructure to forge any true alignment of efforts or accountability for results.

Social Sector Networks are groups of individuals or organizations fluidly connected through purposeful relationships, whether formal or informal. Collaboration is generally ad hoc, and most often the emphasis is placed on information sharing and targeted short-term actions, rather than a sustained and structured initiative.

Collective Impact Initiatives are long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication, and are staffed by an independent backbone organization.

organization cure it. In the field of education, even the most highly respected nonprofits—such as the Harlem Children's Zone, Teach for America, and the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP)—have taken decades to reach tens of thousands of children, a remarkable achievement that deserves praise, but one that is three orders of magnitude short of the tens of millions of U.S. children that need help.

The problem with relying on the isolated impact of individual organizations is further compounded by the isolation of the nonprofit sector. Social problems arise from the interplay of governmental and commercial activities, not only from the behavior of social sector organizations. As a result, complex problems can be solved only by cross-sector coalitions that engage those outside the nonprofit sector.

We don't want to imply that all social problems require collective impact. In fact, some problems are best solved by individual organizations. In "Leading Boldly," an article we wrote with Ron Heifetz for the winter 2004 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, we described the difference between *technical problems* and *adaptive problems*. Some social problems are technical in that the problem is well defined, the answer is known in advance, and one or a few organizations have the ability to implement the solution. Examples include funding college scholarships, building a hospital, or installing inventory controls in a food bank. Adaptive problems, by contrast, are complex, the answer is not known, and even if it were, no single entity has the resources or authority to bring about the necessary change. Reforming public education, restoring wetland environments, and improving community health are all adaptive problems. In these cases, reaching an effective solution requires learning by the stakeholders involved in the problem, who must then change their own behavior in order to create a solution.

Shifting from isolated impact to collective impact is not merely a matter of encouraging more collaboration or public-private partnerships. It requires a systemic approach to social impact that focuses on the relationships between organizations and the progress toward shared objectives. And it requires the creation of a new set of nonprofit management organizations that have the skills and resources to assemble and coordinate the specific elements necessary for collective action to succeed.

THE FIVE CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE SUCCESS

Our research shows that successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment and lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.

Common Agenda | Collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. Take a close look at any group of funders and nonprofits that believe they are working on the same social issue, and you quickly find that it is often not the same issue at all. Each organization often has a slightly different definition of the problem and the ultimate goal. These differences are easily ignored when organizations work independently on isolated initiatives, yet these differences splinter the efforts and undermine the impact of the field as a whole. Collective impact requires that these differences be discussed and resolved. Every participant need not agree with every other participant on all dimensions of the problem. In fact, disagreements continue to divide participants in all of our examples of collective impact. All participants must agree, however, on the primary goals for the collective impact initiative as a whole. The Elizabeth River Project, for example, had to find common ground among the different objectives of corporations, governments, community groups, and local citizens in order to establish workable cross-sector initiatives.

Funders can play an important role in getting organizations to act in concert. In the case of Strive, rather than fueling hundreds of strategies and nonprofits, many funders have aligned to support Strive's central goals. The Greater Cincinnati Foundation realigned its education goals to be more compatible with Strive, adopting Strive's annual report card as the foundation's own measures for progress in education. Every time an organization applied to Duke Energy for a grant, Duke asked, "Are you part of the [Strive] network?" And when a new funder, the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, expressed interest in education, they were encouraged by virtually every major education leader in Cincinnati to join Strive if they wanted to have an impact in local education.[1]

Shared Measurement Systems | Developing a shared measurement system is essential to collective impact. Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations not only ensures that all efforts remain aligned, it also enables the participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other's successes and failures.

It may seem impossible to evaluate hundreds of different organizations on the same set of measures. Yet recent advances in Web-based technologies have enabled common systems for reporting performance and measuring outcomes. These systems increase efficiency and reduce cost. They can also improve the quality and credibility of the data collected, increase effectiveness by enabling grantees to learn from each other's performance, and document the progress of the field as a whole.[2]

All of the preschool programs in Strive, for example, have agreed to measure their results on the same criteria and use only evidence-based decision making. Each type of activity requires a different set of measures, but all organizations engaged in the same type of activity report on the same measures. Looking at results across multiple organizations enables the participants to spot patterns, find solutions, and implement them rapidly. The preschool programs discovered that children regress during the summer break before kindergarten. By launching an innovative "summer bridge" session, a technique more often used in middle school, and implementing it simultaneously in all preschool programs, they increased the average kindergarten readiness scores throughout the region by an average of 10 percent in a single year.[3]

Mutually Reinforcing Activities | Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring that all participants do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.

The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts, but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Each stakeholder's efforts must fit into an overarching plan if their combined efforts are to succeed. The multiple causes of social problems, and the components of their solutions, are interdependent. They cannot be addressed by uncoordinated actions among isolated organizations.

All participants in the Elizabeth River Project, for example, agreed on the 18-point watershed restoration plan, but each is playing a different role based on its particular capabilities. One group of organizations works on creating grassroots support and engagement among citizens, a second provides peer review and recruitment for industrial participants who voluntarily reduce pollution, and a third coordinates and reviews scientific research.

The 15 SSNs in Strive each undertake different types of activities at different stages of the educational continuum. Strive does not prescribe what practices each of the 300 participating organizations should pursue. Each organization and network is free to chart its own course consistent with the common agenda, and informed by the shared measurement of results.

Continuous Communication | Developing trust among nonprofits, corporations, and government agencies is a monumental challenge. Participants 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. They need time to see that their own interests will be treated fairly, and that decisions will be made on the basis of objective evidence and the best possible solution to the problem, not to favor the priorities of one organization over another.

Even the process of creating a common vocabulary takes time, and it is an essential prerequisite to developing shared measurement systems. All the collective impact initiatives we have studied held monthly or even biweekly in-person meetings among the organizations' CEO-level leaders. Skipping meetings or sending lower-level delegates was not acceptable. Most of the meetings were supported by external facilitators and followed a structured agenda.

The Strive networks, for example, have been meeting regularly for more than three years. Communication happens between meetings too: Strive uses Web-based tools, such as Google Groups, to keep communication flowing among and within the networks. At first, many of the leaders showed up because they hoped that their participation would bring their organizations additional funding, but they soon learned that was not the meetings' purpose. What they discovered instead were the rewards of learning and solving problems together with others who shared their same deep knowledge and passion about the issue.

Backbone Support Organizations | Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization and staff with a very specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. Coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails.

The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly. Strive has simplified the initial staffing requirements for a backbone organization to three roles: project manager, data manager, and facilitator.

Collective impact also requires a highly structured process that leads to effective decision making. In the case of Strive, staff worked with General Electric (GE) to adapt for the social sector the Six Sigma process that GE uses for its own continuous quality improvement. The Strive Six Sigma process includes training, tools, and resources that each SSN uses to define its common agenda, shared measures, and plan of action, supported by Strive facilitators to guide the process.

In the best of circumstances, these backbone organizations embody the principles of adaptive leadership: the ability to focus people's attention and create a sense of urgency, the skill to apply pressure to stakeholders without overwhelming them, the competence to frame issues in a way that presents opportunities as well as difficulties, and the strength to mediate conflict among stakeholders.

FUNDING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Creating a successful collective impact initiative requires a significant financial investment: the time participating organizations must dedicate to the work, the development and monitoring of shared measurement systems, and the staff of the backbone organization needed to lead and support the initiative's ongoing work.

As successful as Strive has been, it has struggled to raise money, confronting funders' reluctance to pay for infrastructure and preference for short-term solutions. Collective impact requires instead that funders support a long-term process of social change without identifying any particular solution in advance. They must be willing to let grantees steer the work and have the patience to stay with an initiative for years, recognizing that social change can come from the gradual improvement of an entire system over time, not just from a single breakthrough by an individual organization.

This requires a fundamental change in how funders see their role, from funding organizations to leading a long-term process of social change. It is no longer enough to fund an innovative solution created by a single nonprofit or to build that organization's capacity. Instead, funders must help create and sustain the collective processes, measurement reporting systems, and community leadership that enable cross-sector coalitions to arise and thrive.

This is a shift that we foreshadowed in both "Leading Boldly" and our more recent article, "Catalytic Philanthropy," in the fall 2009 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. In the former, we suggested that the most powerful role for funders to play in addressing adaptive problems is to focus attention on the issue and help to create a process that mobilizes the organizations involved to find a solution themselves. In "Catalytic Philanthropy," we wrote: "Mobilizing and coordinating stakeholders is far messier and slower work than funding a compelling grant request from a single organization. Systemic change, however, ultimately depends on a sustained campaign to increase the capacity and coordination of an entire field." We recommended that funders who want to create large-scale change follow four practices: take responsibility for assembling the elements of a solution; create a movement for change; include solutions from outside the nonprofit sector; and use actionable knowledge to influence behavior and improve performance.

These same four principles are embodied in collective impact initiatives. The organizers of Strive abandoned the conventional approach of funding specific programs at education nonprofits and took responsibility for advancing education reform themselves. They built a movement, engaging hundreds of organizations in a drive toward shared goals. They used tools outside the nonprofit sector, adapting GE's Six Sigma planning process for the social sector. And through the community report card and the biweekly meetings of the SSNs they created actionable knowledge that motivated the community and improved performance among the participants.

Funding collective impact initiatives costs money, but it can be a highly leveraged investment. A backbone organization with a modest annual budget can support a collective impact initiative of several hundred organizations, magnifying the impact of millions or even billions of dollars in existing funding. Strive, for example, has a $1.5 million annual budget but is coordinating the efforts and increasing the effectiveness of organizations with combined budgets of $7 billion. The social sector, however, has not yet changed its funding practices to enable the shift to collective impact. Until funders are willing to embrace this new approach and invest sufficient resources in the necessary facilitation, coordination, and measurement that enable organizations to work in concert, the requisite infrastructure will not evolve.

FUTURE SHOCK

What might social change look like if funders, nonprofits, government officials, civic leaders, and business executives embraced collective impact? Recent events at Strive provide an exciting indication of what might be possible.

Strive has begun to codify what it has learned so that other communities can achieve collective impact more rapidly. The organization is working with nine other communities to establish similar cradle to career initiatives.[4] Importantly, although Strive is broadening its impact to a national level, the organization is not scaling up its own operations by opening branches in other cities. Instead, Strive is promulgating a flexible process for change, offering each community a set of tools for collective impact, drawn from Strive's experience but adaptable to the community's own needs and resources. As a result, the new communities take true ownership of their own collective impact initiatives, but they don't need to start the process from scratch. Activities such as developing a collective educational reform mission and vision or creating specific community-level educational indicators are expedited through the use of Strive materials and assistance from Strive staff. Processes that took Strive several years to develop are being adapted and modified by other communities in significantly less time.

These nine communities plus Cincinnati have formed a community of practice in which representatives from each effort connect regularly to share what they are learning. Because of the number and diversity of the communities, Strive and its partners can quickly determine what processes are universal and which require adaptation to a local context. As learning accumulates, Strive staff will incorporate new findings into an Internet-based knowledge portal that will be available to any community wishing to create a collective impact initiative based on Strive's model.

This exciting evolution of the Strive collective impact initiative is far removed from the isolated impact approach that now dominates the social sector and that inhibits any major effort at comprehensive, large-scale change. If successful, it presages the spread of a new approach that will enable us to solve today's most serious social problems with the resources we already have at our disposal. It would be a shock to the system. But it's a form of shock therapy that's badly needed. ■

Notes

1 Interview with Kathy Merchant, CEO of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, April 10, 2010.

2 See Mark Kramer, Marcie Parkhurst, and Lalitha Vaidyanathan, *Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact*, FSG Social Impact Advisors, 2009.

3 "Successful Starts," United Way of Greater Cincinnati, second edition, fall 2009.

4 Indianapolis, Houston, Richmond, Va., and Hayward, Calif., are the first four communities to implement Strive's process for educational reform. Portland, Ore., Fresno, Calif., Mesa, Ariz., Albuquerque, and Memphis are just beginning their efforts.

Appendix 2

Project study 1
Nepean Blue Mountains Pilot Project – Shared Measurement

NSW Family Services (Fams), the peak body for Family Support Services and Youth Action, the peak body for Youth Services, are working together for their members, to come up with a different way to measure outcomes for clients in a way that is meaningful to their clients, their service and their funders. We began this initiative based on feedback we received from our members and from their funding body, FaCS. Our members who are receiving Early Intervention & Placement Prevention (*EIPP*) funding are collecting outputs and outcomes data regularly and sending this data to FACS. The data collection process has been identified as cumbersome yet ineffectual and inaccurate by the services and by FaCS. The measures are unclear and each service is interpreting the language to mean different things. As a result, they are collecting different data, which makes the data that FaCS is interpreting invalid.

Fams and Youth Action believe that by using an Outcomes Framework, Results Based Accountability™, we can support services to implement a shared measurement system that is meaningful and accurate, individually for the service and for the funding body overall. Fams has been supporting services to implement outcomes since 2010 and can use this expertise to achieve effective shared outcomes measurement.

The introduction of localisation, finding local solutions to local problems gave us the perfect opportunity to recommend our idea as a pilot project in the Nepean Blue Mountains District. The concept of localisation invites districts to be innovative in their approach and do things differently to better meet the needs of their individual communities. It gave us an opportunity to work together as peaks to support our members who were doing similar work under EIPP funding.

There are 10 EIPP funded services involved in the pilot. They have bravely embraced this opportunity to try something different instead of waiting for FaCS to come up with the answer. They believe strongly that the current system was not giving their clients, service or the funder useful information. FaCS is supporting the initiative by giving those piloting the program permission to halt the existing data collection for the duration of the pilot. These services are driven towards collecting data that they can use internally to improve the impact of their programs, as well as usefully inform their funder.

We are working with 10 EIPP funded services in the Blue Mountains Nepean District, five provide Family Services, three provide Youth Services and two provide both Youth and Family Services. This trial aims to demonstrate how using a disciplined outcomes approach can provide data, stories, analyses and action from a local area or district across family and youth services. This will show how using an outcomes-based approach to service delivery contributes to better outcomes for clients.

We used the Results Based Accountability™ Outcomes Framework to support these services to come up with shared outcomes measures. We believe that this process will give

services the data they need to assess and analyse the success of their individual program. We also believe that it will give FACS universal data across EIPP funded services which will help them to analyse the success of the EIPP Program overall. The reason for this is:

1. Services were trained in the Results Based Accountability™ Outcomes Framework, understand it and recognise the value of outcomes measurement to their clients, service and funding body.
2. Services collaborated and agreed on the Performance Measures that will best represent the outcomes that they are trying to achieve for children and families in their program.
3. There were lengthy discussions about the language in each measure to ensure that every agency is on the same page in terms of what is being collected. We have created a language terms of reference document which clearly outlines what was agreed upon.
4. Services are dedicated to using this framework internally towards the on-going quality improvement of their program. They have all agreed to capture the data regularly and enter the data into the Results Scorecard™. They will also use this tool to analyse the data and develop actions to improve their program.
5. Services are also dedicated to using this framework to inform their funding body, FaCS, on the impact the program is having on families, what is working, challenges, partners, etc.
6. In addition to agencies doing their own internal analysis, Fams will facilitate the group analysis process. We will involve FaCS in this process, and other partners as relevant.
7. As we analyse the data, we will continue to have conversations about data collection to ensure that it is accurate and meaningful.

There are many successful programs out there but unless organisations are supported in measuring the outcomes of these programs, we will never have a clear understanding of what is working and what isn't. For each program, region and service, what works will vary. The services involved in this pilot are no exception. If we continue to force a one size fits all approach, we will minimise the benefits of the work. Funders deserve to know that the work that they are funding is making a difference to the people they serve. However, if they mandate what data is to be collected, without clear definitions and input from service providers around language and without organisational analysis of the data, they will never have a true reflection of the impact their funding is having on the communities being served.

Project study 2

Brighter Futures – Shared Measurement

NSW Family Services (Fams) has been involved with the Brighter Futures Lead Agencies since its inception in 2009. We saw how damaging the competitive funding process was to the relationships between the organisations who received the funding and those who did not. We wanted to provide the Lead Agencies with a forum where they could work together, collaborate, and share their experiences and best practice.

Over the years, Fams has been inspired by the positive outcomes that the Brighter Futures program is having on families. However, as Fams became involved in outcomes measurement, we saw that this was the missing link in supporting Brighter Futures Lead Agencies to clearly articulate the impact that they are having on the clients they serve. They have been working well together for years, are in agreement on the fundamental aspects of the program, have the knowledge and experience to represent a valid argument, but they felt as though they were not being heard by their funders.

Fams has offered our expertise to support the Brighter Futures Lead Agencies to work together to develop shared performance measures and are providing use of the Results Scorecard™ to capture that data and the analysis.

FaCS has been collecting shared measurement across all lead agencies for years but the data is primarily outputs. Where there are outcomes measures, FaCS is finding that the data is inaccurate. We believe that this is primarily because agencies are interpreting the language of the measures to mean different things. As a result the data they are collecting is invalid.

We used the Results Based Accountability™ Outcomes Framework to support these agencies to come up with shared outcomes measures. We believe that this process will give services the data they need to assess and analyse the success of their individual program. We also believe that it will give FACS universal data across Lead Agencies which will help them to analyse the success of the Brighter Futures Program overall. The reason for this is:

1. Agencies were trained in the Results Based Accountability™ Outcomes Framework, understand it and recognise the value of outcomes measurement to their clients, agency and funding body.
2. Agencies collaborated and agreed on the Performance Measures that will best represent the outcomes that they are trying to achieve for children and families in their program.
3. There were lengthy discussions about the language in each measure to ensure that every agency is on the same page in terms of what is being collected. We have created a language terms of reference document which clearly outlines what was agreed upon.
4. Agencies are dedicated to using this framework internally towards the on-going quality improvement of their program. They have all agreed to capture the data regularly and enter the data into the Scorecard™. They will also use this tool to analyse the data and develop actions to improve their program.

5. Agencies are also dedicated to using this framework to inform their funding body, FaCS, on the impact the program is having on families, what is working, challenges, partners, etc.
6. In addition to agencies doing their own internal analysis, Fams will facilitate the group analysis process at the Brighter Futures Lead Agency Forums. We will involve FaCS in this process, and other partners as relevant.
7. As we analyse the data, we will continue to have conversations about data collection to ensure that it is accurate and meaningful.

There are many successful programs out there but unless organisations are supported in measuring the outcomes of these programs, we will never have a clear understanding of what is working and what isn't. For each program, region and service, what works will vary. Brighter Futures is no exception. If we continue to force a one size fits all approach, we will minimise the benefits of the work. Funders deserve to know that the work that they are funding is making a difference to the people they serve. However, if they mandate what data is to be collected, without clear definitions and input from service providers around language and without organisational analysis of the data, they will never have a true reflection of the impact their funding is having on the communities being served.