

**Promising Practice: Partnerships with Collective Impact<sup>i</sup>**  
**San Diego Workforce Partnership**  
**Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry**

When asked how she and the San Diego Workforce Partnership's Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry have been so successful, Cindy Perry, the project's director, answered, "Collective impact." She added "Today, it is no longer acceptable to work in silos." Collective impact is the principle that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, not the isolated intervention of individual organizations.

The San Diego Workforce Partnership's (Workforce Partnership) Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry program brings together a broad cross section of business, government, education, and community organizations around a common agenda of social change. For this HPOG program, the signed memorandums of understanding that the Office of Family Assistance recommends its grantees use specify that these partner organizations participate as stakeholders who provide ongoing guidance and support to the program at strategic and operational levels.

For example, the HPOG state partnership group meets quarterly and includes the San Diego County Department of Health and Human Services, the California Workforce Investment Board (WIB), and the State Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Registered Apprenticeship Standards. The HPOG advisory board members include the Workforce Partnership (local WIB), the County of San Diego's Department of Health and Human Services, and representatives from local employers and the hospital association. By coordinating and convening several different groups, this HPOG program ensures that connections, communication, and relationship building among the partner organizations take place on multiple levels that are mutually reinforcing.

Cindy Perry, the HPOG Program Director, began with open communication and built relationships one at a time. Because HPOG staff knew the manager of one of the CalWORKS offices (the organization that provides TANF services in the state), they began their efforts by learning about the TANF program—what was important to their colleagues in TANF and what TANF professionals needed to do to achieve their goals. Cindy and her staff did their homework before the meeting. As they learned about TANF regulations and such things as "work participation rates," they were able to show their TANF colleagues how the HPOG program would benefit TANF participants while still enabling the TANF program to achieve its goals. Once the TANF organizations and contractors were convinced, they invited others to join the meeting to see how this community relationship building could help produce positive performance and benefit all of the programs. Some members of the groups initially met weekly, participating in lots of discussion on the front end.

One group that Cindy identified and convened monthly was the common customer group. All of these organizations had "service to a common customer" (TANF-eligible, low-income, and/or refugee participants) as their fundamental goal. Cindy made the case that, by working together, they could all help each other do a better job for their clients. The San Diego

program's common customer group included the Workforce Partnership, County of San Diego HHS, the County's CalWorks/TANF contractors (ResCare and Public Consulting Group), County and City of San Diego Subsidized Housing Authorities, and the Workforce Partnership's Navigators.

To help them learn about each other, the group developed a matrix of support services that participants needed—to be able to stay in the HPOG training program and become successful—along with the organizations that were able to supply the services. All the community organizations had rules that governed what participants they served and how. By agreeing to share information and resources, the common customer group was able to make the most effective decisions for the most customers. To illustrate, TANF can provide childcare and books, but it can't pay for tuition or housing allowance. Others in the partnership group could supply those needs.

The HPOG program did not offer financial support to any of these partners. As a result, they were already taking steps toward the sustainability of the program when the HPOG funds were no longer available. As they worked together, the various community organizations helped each other to understand their strengths and their limits, something very important as the program began to plan for how it could successfully function in the future. This group has continued to work on collective problems associated with their target population.

HPOG grantees can replicate this strategy with partnerships based on collective impact:

1. Identify appropriate organizations; build on existing relationships.
2. Open lines of communication, and try to ensure that you are working with multiple levels of people.
3. Do your homework to learn about other organizations, their goals, and the benefits they provide to participants.
4. Work hard to build trust with potential partners in your community. Make and keep all commitments.
5. Convene community groups frequently to reach an understanding about the common customers they all serve and the ways everyone, but most importantly the participants themselves, can benefit from the organizations working more closely together.
6. As an early concrete step, begin by developing a matrix of support services that identifies the needed services along with the organizations that can supply each service.
7. Use the matrix to determine how and when to call upon different organizations in the community to help accomplish the overall goals.
8. Building on early efforts, establish systems that lead to ease of referral and have everyone working as a team for the benefit of all.

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of collective impact, see Mark Kramer and John Kania, *Collective Impact*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, (48) Winter 2011, at [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact/articles](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact/articles).