



COLLECTIVE ACTION WITH COMMUNITIES

COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR COMMUNITIES

Defining and planning the backbone
to support localities/ rohe
development

Sources include Tamarack Institute and Collective Impact Forum



*Transforming
Healthcare
Outcomes,
Everyday*



COLLABORATIVE
AOTEAROA



DEFINING THE BACKBONE

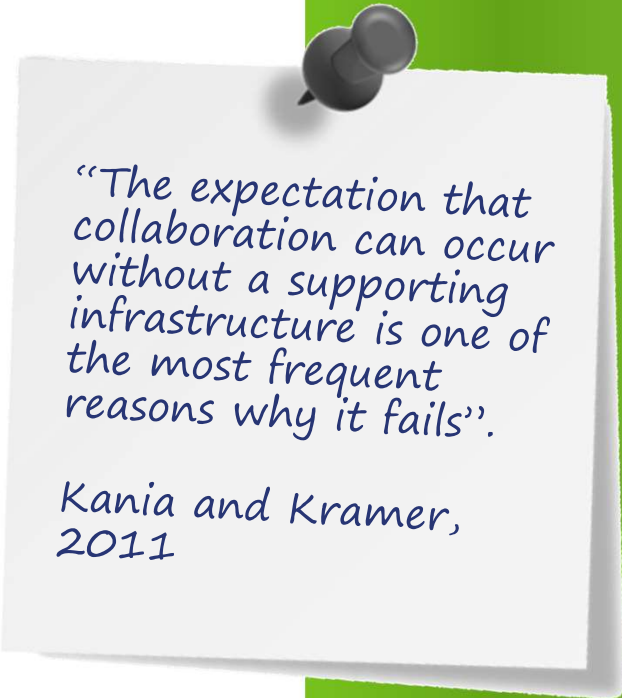
1. What is the backbone?
2. What are its core functions?
3. What doesn't it do?

What is the backbone?

The backbone of a Collective Impact initiative forms the support infrastructure needed to foster the cross-sector communication, alignment, and collaboration required to achieve population-level systems change in the area of focus.

Backbone characteristics

- Backbone makeup is specific to the locality and the population that the initiative hopes to impact.
- The Backbone requires staff / capacity dedicated to this collective impact initiative who can:
 - Plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation,
 - Provide technology and communications support,
 - Produce data collection and reporting, including analytical storytelling
 - Handle the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly.
 - Ensure meticulous processes



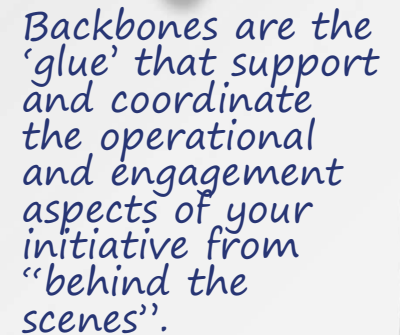
“The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails”.

*Kania and Kramer,
2011*

Backbone Responsibilities

The backbone is a team of dedicated resources responsible for facilitating the aligned day-to-day operational and engagement activities required to fulfil the initiatives collective vision and agenda

1. **Guide Vision and Strategy** –Working with the Collaborative Governance Group to identify CHN priorities, develop a common vision and agenda, and adapt to changing context as the initiative progresses.
2. **Support Aligned Activities** –Facilitating engagement between partners, and supporting the Collaborative Governance and Working Groups as needed, coordinating and align the actions across the initiative, and monitoring progress of these.
3. **Establish Shared Measurement Practices** – Establishing agreed metrics and monitoring activities, including managing data collection among partners and supporting the use of data for learning and evaluation of the effort.
4. **Build Public Will** –Continuing to build consensus and commitment around your initiative through cultivating community relationships and fostering ownership within the community over the long term.
5. **Advance Policy** – Including an aligned policy agenda is part of the Collective Impact effort, to ensure where the initiative impacts on disparate systems and institutions, the overall goals can be achieved.
6. **Mobilise Funding** –Securing resources for the initiatives sustainability, including aligning funding, resources, and other non-monetary support for delivering on the initiatives goals.



Backbones are the 'glue' that support and coordinate the operational and engagement aspects of your initiative from "behind the scenes".

Refer to Backbone resources and tools for more information on the roles and structure

What the back bone doesn't do

When considering the role and functions of the backbone, it can be helpful to examine what the backbone does not do.

The backbone:

- **Does not set the group's agenda:** Rather, it collates the input from different members to collectively build and maintain focus around the common agenda as defined by the Collaborative Governance Group with input from the community.
- **Does not drive or independently determine the solutions:** Rather, it supports the Collaborative Governance Group and Working Group members as they align the activities within their respective organizations with the common agenda.
- **Requires funding to operate but does not receive all of the funding for the initiative:** Funding must also be directed toward the implementation of services, innovation, advocacy, or other types of activities that the partners advance in service of the collective effort's goal.
- **Is not self-appointed:** The Collaborative Governance Group, often in consultation with other key community stakeholders, selects the backbone.
- **Does not operate like an organisation** as it needs to be more nimble and agile – with the minimum amount of structure to enable partners to work together well



By supporting the work of members, highlighting their successes, and authentically attributing or sharing credit with partners, backbones foster shared leadership.

SECTION TWO


PLANNING YOUR BACKBONE STRUCTURE

1. How is the backbone structured?
2. How can equity be embedded into the backbone?
3. What does the backbone consist of?
4. What types of backbones are there?

Creating your backbone structure

Considerations for the Collaborative Governance Group and key partners when forming the backbone structure for an initiative:

- Does it make sense to select an **existing organisation or structure** to house the backbone or **create a new structure**?
 - If selecting an existing organisation/structure, should the selection process be open or closed?
- How much **capacity** does the backbone need? **How many full-time employees** – how do you flex the workforce?
- **Who will the staff report to?**
- Is the organisational home also **where the staff are located**? Or does it make sense to split the fiscal agent from the physical location?
- **Who will fund the backbone infra-structure** (e.g., salaries, benefits, operating expenses)?
 - In the short term?
 - In the long term?
- **Does your backbone reflect the diversity of the community health network that it is seeking to represent?**
 - Factors such as economic class, gender, race, ethnicity, language, and lived experience may be important to consider when selecting staff to serve as the backbone for the collective impact effort.



“Backbone organisations need to have credibility with the communities most affected by inequities.”

*Junious Williams
and Sarah Marxer*

Embedding equity into your backbone

To be authentic and credible within the community they are seeking to represent, the backbone must begin its commitment to equity and inclusion by examining its own internal practices, structures, and staff—paying great attention to equity and intersectionality.

Several important equity considerations when forming your backbone:

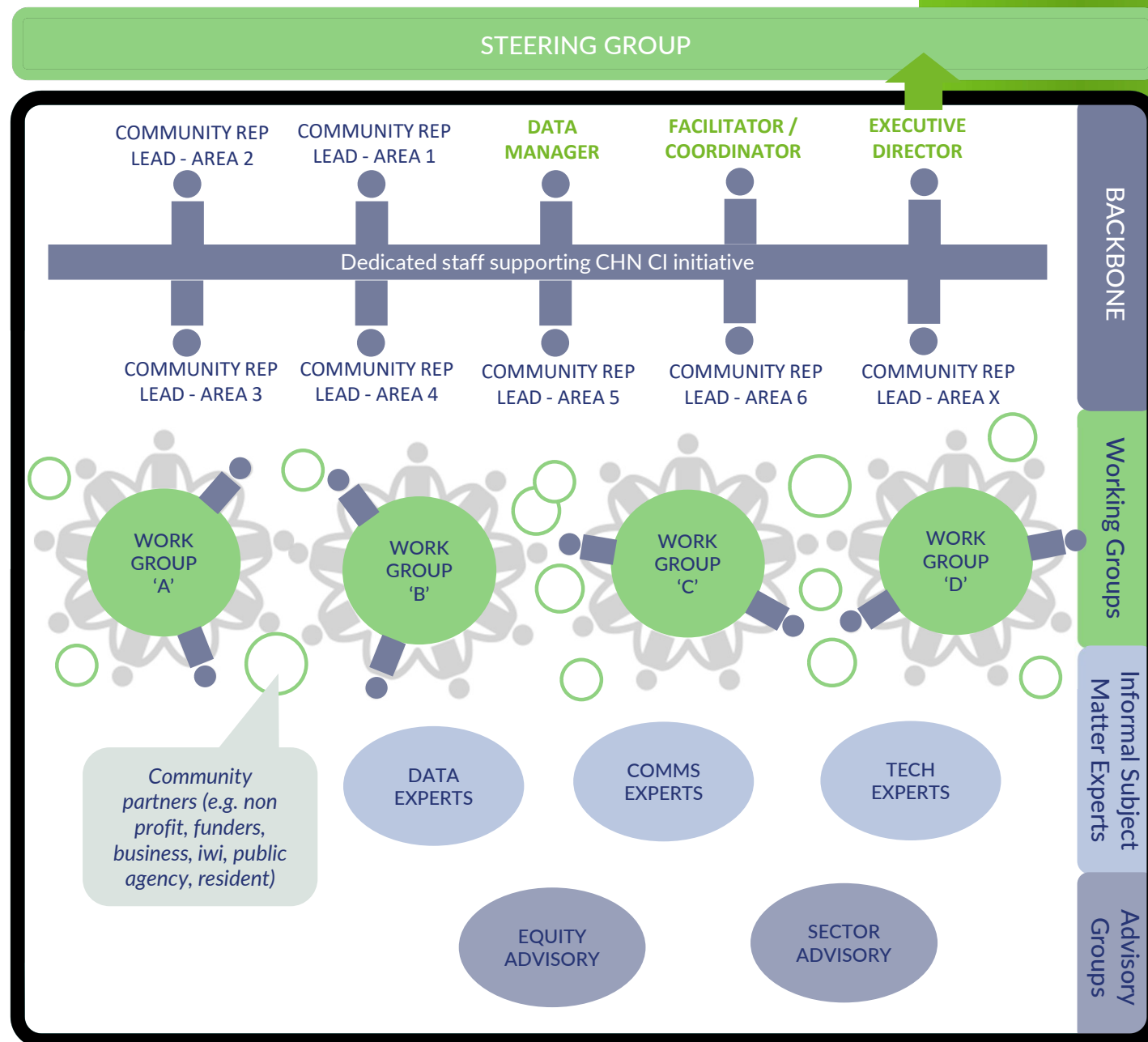
- How do we effectively integrate community voice into institution-heavy collective impact efforts?
- How do we authentically and meaningfully involve communities who have historically been excluded from decision-making processes?
- How do we engage stakeholders in sensitive conversations about race, class, and culture without driving away those who need to sit at the problem-solving table?

What the backbone consists of

EXAMPLE BACKBONE STRUCTURE

The backbone is structured to foster shared leadership and create multiple avenues for cross sector stakeholder engagement.

It is the 'glue' to facilitate across stakeholder engagement, and aligned activity towards achieving the collective outcomes and vision.



Backbone – success factors

Some final thoughts about structure

- The working relationship amongst partners is vital
- Understanding and working within the limits of accountability and structures
- There is a need to focus both on the process and the product of governance in collaboratives
- Use the opportunity to learn together and build connections

Whakawhanaungatanga