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Jennifer Juster
Director
Collective Impact Forum

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How to Integrate Continuous Learning into Collective Impact

COLLECTIVE IMPACT FORUM WEBINAR | NOVEMBER 29, 2016

Introductions

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Webinar Goals

- Understand the concept and practices of continuous learning

- Learn how one place-based funder has woven intentional learning into their CI effort

- Reflect on ways in which you can integrate intentional learning into your CI effort

Poll:

What role(s) do you play in collective impact?

Poll:

How many years have you been involved in a collective impact initiative?

"Life is a learning experience, only if you learn."
--Yogi Berra

Learning…

… Is the act or process by which **behavioral change, knowledge, skills, and attitudes** are acquired. (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998)

.... Is the a) acquisition of skill or **know-how**, and b) the acquisition of **know-why**. (Kim, 1993)

As humans we are always learning;

the key to workplace learning is to make it <u>*intentional*</u>

"Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence." – Abigail Adams

"A commitment to learning requires time, effort, and resources. That is, to support ongoing learning, whether it is in an organization, in long-term partnerships, or in learning communities, people need time to come together, with a clear purpose for learning, with adequate planning and preparation, and with skilled facilitators".*

The Three Elements of Continuous Learning

1 Learning Priorities

2 Learning Plan

3 Learning Culture
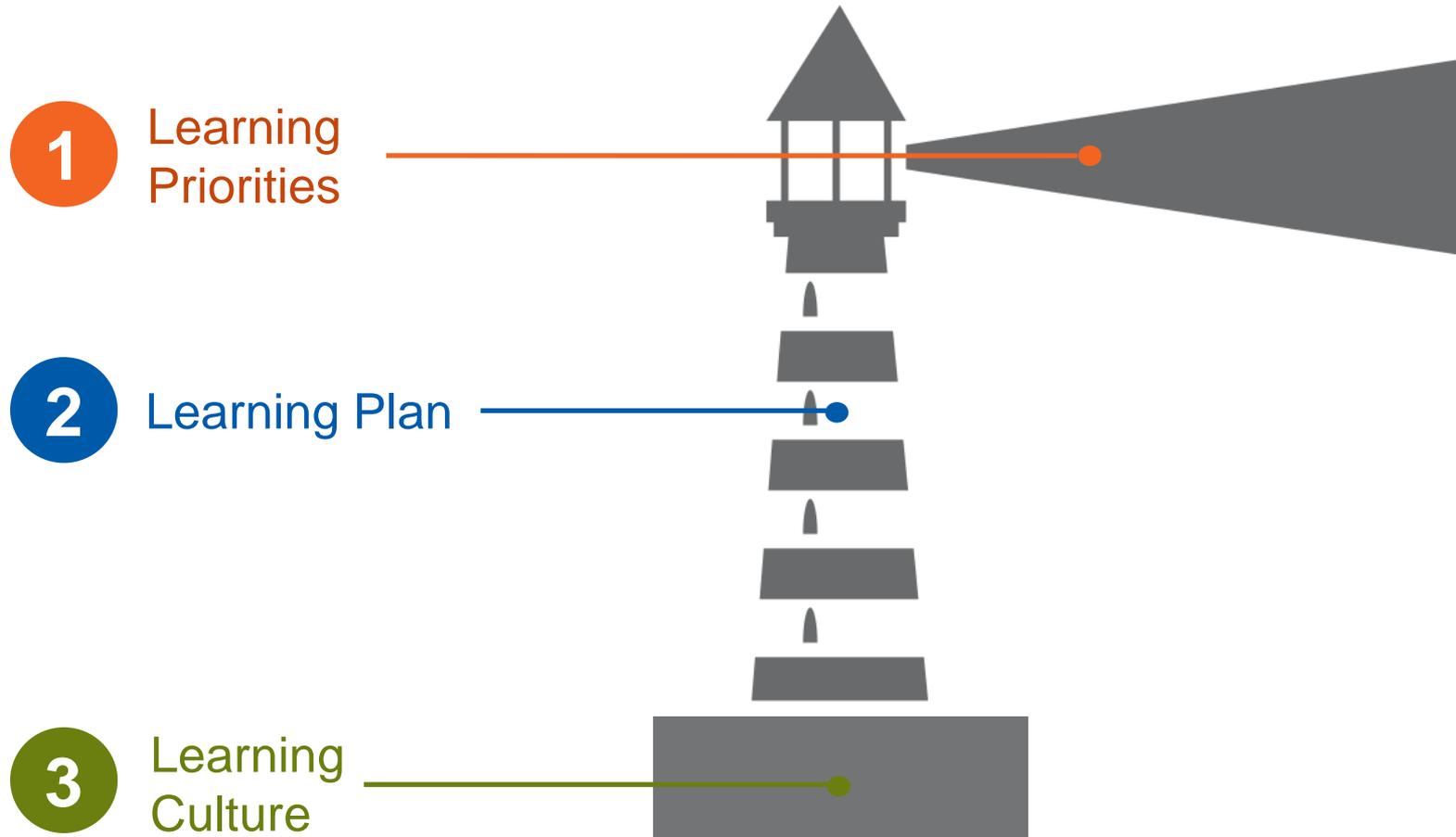
Graph created by Isabel Martinez from the Noun Project

1. Learning Priorities

Agreed upon areas of inquiry and learning for the CI effort in the next 1-2 years. Priorities can be for the overall effort or for specific work groups and other activities.

Three possible categories of learning questions:

Operation of the CI effort	**Progress** toward CI goals	**Changes in context** affecting the effort
To what extent are leaders and influencers in the CI effort championing the work and bringing other stakeholders to the table? What effect is this having?	*What progress have we made in our efforts to engage with families? What is working well? Where are we falling behind?*	*Is funding for our issue increasing or decreasing in our city? To what extent, and how are funding flows changing?*

2. Learning Plan

Includes a set of processes and activities to engage partners in meaningful dialogue, data interpretation, and insight generation on the learning priorities.

Considerations for Developing a Learning Plan

A. Include opportunities for learning from formal and informal data collection activities

B. Have clear goals to facilitate learning and use appropriate methods or activities

C. Create intentional spaces for learning in current and new organizational structures

Every day experiences from members of the effort

Example

Partners' discussion on effective practices and challenges implementing specific programs

Formal data collection methods

Example

Working group members reflection on and discussion of data collected through the shared measurement system

Sensing from context and communities

Example

Discussion with policy experts and CI partners on implications of state policy changes that may be influencing the effort

Potential goals for continuous learning activities might include:

1. To individually and collectively increase our understanding and develop new perspectives

2. To generate new ideas and/or solutions

3. To make important decisions

B. Have clear goals to facilitate learning and use appropriate methods or activities

Learning Activities	Participants	Time Needed	Meeting Goals			Other Criteria	
	Ideal #	Minutes	Promote greater awareness and understanding	Generate new ideas and/or solutions	Make a decision	Involves the use of quantitative and/or qualitative data	Can be used when participants are in different locations
I. Quick Learning Activities							
1. One Question	4–25	15–20	X	X		Optional	Yes
2. Mental Model Drawings	4–25	15–20	X			No	Yes
3. One Data Point	4–100	15–20	X	X		Yes	Yes
4. Think-Pair-Share	6–100	10–15	X	X		No	No
II. Detailed Learning Activities							
5. Data Placemats	2–50	60–180	X	X	X	Yes	Yes
6. Before and After Action Reviews	3–10	30–60	X	X	X	Optional	Yes
7. Chalk Talk	5–10	30–60	X	X		Optional	No
8. Virtual Idea Generation	5–20	45–75	X	X		No	Yes
9. Conversational Moves	6–12	30–60	X			Optional	Yes
10. Gradients of Agreement	6–50	5–45	X		X	No	Yes
11. What's on Your Mind?	8–30	20–30	X			No	No
12. What? So What? Now What?	8–100	45–60	X	X	X	Optional	Yes
13. Collective Story Harvest	10–50	60–120	X	X		No	No
14. Four Corners Perspective Change	10–50	45–90	X	X		No	No
15. Data Walks	10–100	45–120	X	X	X	Yes	No
III. System-Oriented Learning Activities							
16. Timeline Mapping	3–10	60–90	X			Optional	Yes
17. Trend Mapping	5–15	60–90	X	X		Optional	Yes
18. Ecocycle Mapping	10–12	60–75	X		X	No	Yes
19. Actor Mapping	10–25	90–120	X			No	No
20. World Café	20–100	90–150	X	X		No	No
21. Appreciative Inquiry	20–100	60–180	X	X		No	No

B. Have clear goals to facilitate learning and use appropriate methods or activities

1. To collectively increase our understanding and develop new perspectives

Data walks

This activity provides participants with an opportunity to interactively and collaboratively review data generated from research and evaluation studies or from publically available data.

How does it work?
- Write a set of data points in flipcharts or in printed posters (tables, charts, drawings, photographs, quotes) and hang them on the wall around the room.

- Ask participants to get into small groups and spend 6-10 minutes reflecting on the flipcharts or printed posters around the room.

- Bring the group back together and ask a set of reflection questions. What patterns did you see in the data? What gaps? What other data would you want to have a fuller picture of the current context?

2. To generate new ideas and/or solutions

What? So What? Now What?

This activity provides participants who have a shared experience with an opportunity to share understandings, new insights, engage multiple perspectives, address complex challenges, and plan for next steps.

How does it work?

- Engage the group in three rounds of reflection. Each of the rounds includes one minute of individual reflection, 2-7 minutes of small group discussion, and a short share out.

  1. WHAT – What happened?, What did you notice?

  2. SO WHAT – Why is this important?, What patterns or conclusions are emerging?, What hypotheses can I/we make?

  3. NOW WHAT? – What actions make sense?

- Review the actions shared with the group and discuss how to implement them.

3. To make important decisions
Gradients of agreement

This activity provides a means for determining how aligned participants are in their thinking, especially when it comes to making a decision, and offers the means for the group to discuss why there are differences in perspectives.

How does it work?

- Explain that a decision needs to be made on a particular issue and explain the proposed path forward.

- Ask participants to raise their hand and indicate how they are feeling about the proposed path forward using the following scale*:

  1. I cannot accept this decision

  2. I need revisions made before I can accept this decision

  3. I can accept this decision, but I have some reservations

  4. I'm mostly satisfied with this decision – I can support it

  5. I am very pleased with this decision and fully support it

- Discuss different opinions, concerns, and suggested changes to path forward.

C. Create intentional spaces for learning in current and new organizational structures

Meeting Structures or Places

Weekly, Bi-weekly, or Monthly Meetings

- Staff meetings
- Advisory committee/Advisory group meetings
- Working group meetings
- Communities of practice
- Task force meetings
- Steering committee meetings
- Professional (internal or external) affinity groups

Bi-Monthly, Quarterly, Semi-annual, or Annual Meetings

- Annual staff or team retreats
- Board meetings
- Annual learning retreats

Special Topic Meetings

- Brown bag lunches
- Grantee and partner convenings
- Expert talks
- Site visits
- Community fora and town halls
- Fundraising events

3. Learning Culture

Structures, processes, and practices that support increased knowledge sharing, idea generation, and collaboration in Collective Impact efforts

Essential Ingredients of a Strong Learning Culture

A. Establishing cultural norms that support openness, trust, and risk-taking

B. Gathering feedback and insights from community members

C. Fostering a culture of learning, experimentation, and transparency

Provide spaces for participants to get to know each other

Example

Schedule a social hour after meetings to allow partners to learn more about each other

Ensure confidentiality during meetings

Example

Start your meetings reminding everyone that what is discussed in the meeting will only be shared externally if everyone approves

Develop a set of agreements for dialogue

Example

Co-develop a set of agreements for engagement: assume good intent, respect others opinions, disagree respectfully

Be intentional

Allocate appropriate resources (time and $$) to regularly gather feedback and insights from community members

Accommodate community members' needs

Provide the resources required for community members to be at the table (e.g., provide child care, translation, and transportation if needed)
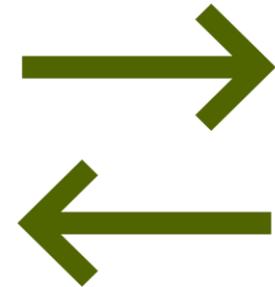
Make it a two-way conversation

Develop bi-directional feedback loops and opportunities for sharing with and learning from the community

C. Fostering a culture of learning, experimentation, and transparency

Demonstrate a genuine commitment to learning

Example
Asking questions, using data to make decisions, encouraging others to explore assumptions
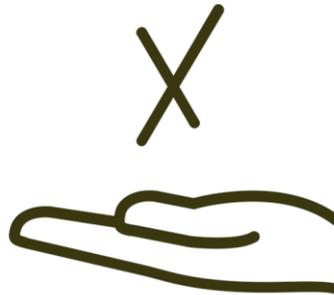
Embrace failure

Example
Share examples of moments when things didn't go as planned, and what was learned from that experience

Provide resources

Example
Allocate sufficient financial, personnel, and capacity-building resources to support continuous learning

In Summary

Priorities - *Plans* - *Culture*

The three components of continuous learning reinforce one another --- together they create opportunities for ongoing and intentional learning in Collective Impact efforts

Greater Cincinnati Foundation's Investment in Continuous Learning

GCF's Investment in Collective Impact

- Provide five years of change capital for cohort of backbone organizations ($3.5M; 2012-2016)

- Establish and convene a community of practice around Collective Impact

  – Provide shared technical assistance opportunities

  – Evaluate backbones to better articulate their value

- Champion the need to support the civic infrastructure (backbones), not just programs

Cross-sector Pollination

Community of Practice

Intersection of evaluation and continuous learning

- Baseline evaluation results drove the development of our learning agenda

- Shared opportunities for Technical Assistance included:
    - Communication
    - Data Use
    - Building Community Will

Communication

Data Use

Building Community Will

Critical elements to building a successful learning culture

- Intentional time and space to learn with one another

- Trust building between funder and among other backbone leaders

- "All teach/all learn" philosophy

- Shared planning and execution of time together

- "Three Big Things" exercise to identify shared opportunities

- Collective problem-solving

- Celebrate success!

Vote for ONE activity you would like to learn more about on this webinar (if we have time)!

1. Mental Model Drawings

2. One Data Point

3. Data Placemats

4. Before and After Action Reviews

5. Collective Story Harvest

6. Four Corners Perspective Change

7. Chalk Talk

8. Actor Mapping

9. Trend Mapping

Poll:

What is ONE activity you would like to learn more about on this webinar?

Thank you to our speakers!

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