Determining Your Role in Collective Impact: For Grantmakers

Spectrum of Collective Impact Backbone Organizational Models: Most Influence to Least

**Backbone Organization in Your Institution**

- **Governance Implications:**
  - Funder's governing board holds ultimate decision-making, fiduciary, risk, and accountability responsibility
  - May retain executive seat on steering committee
  - May have majority representation on steering committee
  - May also have representatives on working groups

- **Org. Culture Implications:**
  - Requires high threshold for collective process management
  - Requires frequent collaboration with partners (act as key convener)

- **Branding Implications:**
  - Increased freedom to shape branding efforts and align with your core messages, and potentially shape the branding parameters for collaborator agencies.

- **Resource Implications:**
  - Requires physical space and staffing capacity
  - Requires management capacity to oversee staff
  - Likely requires capacity from support functions within foundation such as IT, finance, fundraising/communications, evaluation
  - All or portion of funding for direct and indirect staffing costs

**Incubated or Adopted External Backbone Organization**

- **Governance Implications:**
  - Representatives on steering committee
  - Chair of steering committee may be your representative or a rotating position
  - Representatives may be on working groups

- **Org. Culture Implications:**
  - Moderate participation in collective process
  - Requires regular collaboration with multiple partners
  - Requires comfort with some loss of control of process and outcomes

- **Branding Implications:**
  - Somewhat limited ability to shape branding and messaging

- **Resource Implications:**
  - Likely to provide some funding for operations of backbone organization
  - May provide staff time to backbone work or to act as liaison in areas of program and evaluation

**Backbone Organization in a Partner Institution**

- **Governance Implications:**
  - Representatives on steering committee
  - Representatives may be on partner's board
  - Representatives may be on working groups

- **Org. Culture Implications:**
  - Less frequent or extensive collaboration with partners
  - Less direct participation in collective process

- **Branding Implications:**
  - Limited ability to leverage collective's initiatives for your branding

- **Resource Implications:**
  - Likely to provide some funding for operation of backbone organization
  - Little to no involvement of staff in management activities

**Glossary**

Backbone Organization: Functions as central management body coordinating strategy, activities, funding, research and analysis

Steering Committee: Oversees strategic direction for entire collective

Working Group: Focuses on specific topics. May implement aspects of strategy related to topic or engage external stakeholders
**HOW TO USE BACKBONE MANAGEMENT DECISION TREE**

- For each factor determine which branch of the decision tree best describes your organization
- Note the number of outcomes for each color; i.e., Decision Making = 1 blue, Organizational Culture = 1 green + 1 blue
- Count results for each color coded management structure
- The color with the highest number corresponds to the best backbone organizational structure for your needs

**IF** the results for different colors are close or tied **THEN** results are mixed **THEN**:
- Review the four factors and determine which one or two are the most important to your organization. For example: We wouldn’t mind to share decision making power but we **NEED** to own the branding of initiatives