



Transforming Library Services  
for the Job Seeker  
through Collective Impact

## **COMMON AGENDA**

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**The Paschalville Partnership**  
**SEPTMEBER 2014**

# Transforming Library Services for the Job Seeker Through Collective Impact

## COMMON AGENDA

### BACKGROUND

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In addition to offering traditional lending services, libraries have very much become a critical resource for job seekers: an estimated 29% of patrons who come to the library are looking for jobs<sup>1</sup>, and 40% of people who use library computers are doing so for career or employment purposes.<sup>2</sup> Libraries – especially branches located in neighborhoods plagued with high unemployment – are often the only accessible community-based resource for job seekers, particularly those with low education attainment, undeveloped job skills, interrupted work histories, a lack of English language skills, or other barriers to employment. Indeed, for neighborhoods such as those served by the Paschalville Neighborhood Library (PNL) of the Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP), located in Southwest Philadelphia, the library branch is considered a “sanctuary,” a safe haven where residents can begin or progress through a job search to gainful employment. Recognizing this special status of local branches, FLP has launched the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries Initiative, a major campaign to remake the branches physically and programmatically, ensuring that strong, community-specific programming and resources are offered in a warm, state-of-the-art space.

In this spirit, FLP has declared its intention to transform the services PNL provides to Southwest Philadelphia job seekers. It proposes to do this not just by retooling the branch’s own offerings, but also by engaging a set of partner organizations dedicated to the economic well-being of the community in an effort to explore the potential of working collaboratively. For the past year, FLP has convened a group of representatives of community-based organizations, citywide workforce development organizations, and other public agencies to develop a “common agenda,” following the model of “collective impact.” Fels Consulting of The Fels Institute of Government facilitated the convening and collaborative planning of this “advisory council.” This document represents the culmination of the Advisory Council’s work on a common agenda for serving job seekers in Southwest Philadelphia over the next four years.

### COLLECTIVE IMPACT MODEL

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In describing collective impact, the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (SSIR) says: “Large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, SSIR identifies four components that the authors believe characterize successful collective impact initiatives:

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Initiative, *The Library in the City: Changing Demands and a Challenging Future*, 2012.

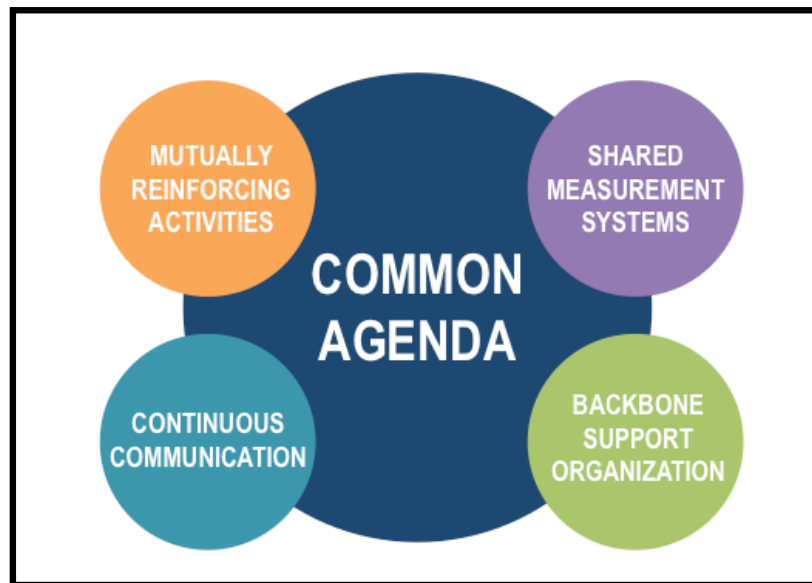
<sup>2</sup> Becker, et.al., *Opportunity for All: How Library Policies and Practices Impact Public Internet Access* (2011).

<sup>3</sup> “Collective Impact”, John Kania & Mark Kramer, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011.

- **Mutually reinforcing activities:** “Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring them to do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake their specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.”
- **Shared measurement systems:** “Collective impact includes collecting data and measuring results consistently for a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations, not only to ensure that all efforts remain aligned, but also to enable participants to hold each other accountable and to learn from each other’s successes and failures.”
- **Continuous communication:** “Continuous communication refers to consistent and open communication that is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation.”
- **Backbone support organization:** “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 have any to spare.”

See the figure below for our depiction of SSIR’s collective impact model. The planning process used to develop our common agenda closely followed this model, as described in the next section.

COMPONENTS OF THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT MODEL



## COMMON AGENDA PLANNING PROCESS

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To implement the collective impact model and explore the possibilities of a common agenda, a three-phase planning process was put in place: first, FLP identified and invited prospective members of the Advisory Council; second, Advisory Council members participated in a kick-off retreat and a series of planning meetings, during each of which one of the components of the collective impact model was featured; and finally, Fels developed a common agenda based on member input that was affirmed by Advisory Council members at the final retreat. Fels facilitated the planning process through activities designed to “break the ice,” lay the foundation for the group to work together, and prompt self-reflection of the group. Furthermore, the planning structure was iterative; feedback provided in one meeting was summarized and revisited in the next meeting. This design helped to ensure that member input formed that basis of the common agenda. More detail on each of the phases is provided below:

- **Phase I: Advisory Council Formation.** To build the Advisory Council, FLP and Fels identified a number of organizations working with job seekers. Some of these organizations are direct service providers; others provide related but still critical services that help address barriers to employment, such as financial counseling and adult basic and ESL education. In addition to organizations that operate citywide, the list included as many community-based organizations that specifically serve PNL’s area of Southwest Philadelphia as could be identified.

Fels contacted each organization, informed its leadership of the project, and invited representatives to join the Advisory Council. Fels conducted in-person interviews with each invited organization and prepared “partner profiles” summarizing key information for each organization, including mission, targeted demographics, services offered to job seekers and at large, and resources that could be leveraged for collective impact. (See Appendix A for list of Advisory Council members.)

- **Phase 2: Kick-Off Retreat and Planning Meetings.** The Advisory Council first met in late February 2014 for a **kick-off retreat**. To establish a common understanding of the initiative and the community it will serve, Fels prepared and presented a geographic and demographic profile of the Southwest Philadelphia community based on PNL’s service area and guided the Advisory Council through an analysis of the area’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT). With a common understanding established, Fels led Advisory Council members through a series of brainstorming exercises to lay the foundation for a vision statement for the initiative. To stimulate creative thinking, vision statements from other collective impact initiatives and high-profile nonprofits were provided. After reviewing feedback from this brainstorming, Fels was able to draft both a vision statement and a mission statement, which were revisited and further refined in subsequent planning meetings.

After the kick-off retreat, three **planning meetings** were conducted in rapid succession (April, May, and June 2014), each featuring the first three components of the collective impact model: mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement systems, and continuous communications. For the fourth component, backbone organization, it was agreed that Fels would serve in this role during the planning process, and that as the initiative moved into actual implementation this role would gradually be transitioned to a designated partner (to be determined), ideally one of the community-based partner organizations.

At each of these meetings, Fels presented a “typology” of the component to help convey a better understanding of them and provided examples of how other collective impact initiatives across the country were implementing the component. For example, the component “mutually reinforcing activities” was broken down into: commingling of services, promotion of evidence-based best practices, outreach campaigns, joint fundraising and alignment, and advocacy for policy changes. Fels provided examples of other initiatives for each of these subcomponents. Fels then led Advisory Council members through various brainstorming exercises to stimulate thinking on how partners could engage collaboratively. As noted above, the planning structure was designed to be iterative, in that feedback from one meeting was summarized by Fels afterwards, played back to the Advisory Council in the next meeting, and then revisited through additional discussion and analysis to refine the ideas. In a few instances, Advisory Council members, both as a group and individually, were contacted in between meetings to obtain clarification as needed. This approach allowed the group to move toward a clearer understanding of what they could achieve and helped build greater consensus on a common agenda.

- **Phase 3: Common Agenda Development and Affirmation.** After the planning meetings, Fels reviewed all the input and developed a draft common agenda of collective impact. To support the common agenda, Fels also developed a program logic. (See Appendix B.) After consultation with FLP, Fels reviewed the draft with key members of the Advisory Council and incorporated their feedback. The revised draft was then sent to the full Advisory Council in early September for review; additional feedback from members was incorporated into a new draft. At the final retreat in late September, Fels presented the Common Agenda for Collective Impact to the Advisory Council. Members reviewed the final agenda, affirmed their commitment to the collective, and approved the document.

As a final step in the planning process, Fels administered an evaluation of the effectiveness of the process to Advisory Council members. In particular, the evaluation assessed whether members felt they had achieved true consensus on the common agenda and whether members believed that the plan is achievable. The following section constitutes the Common Agenda of Collective Impact.

## COMMON AGENDA OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

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**VISION STATEMENT:** Southwest Philadelphia: an engaged, employed, and prosperous community.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** To leverage the Paschalville Neighborhood Library as a hub for job seekers by bringing together a broad array of community partners in support of Southwest Philadelphia residents.

**CORE BELIEFS:** Following the model of collective impact, we affirm our commitment to a common agenda in the following ways:

- To engage in **mutually reinforcing activities**, we seek to bundle our services and infuse them with best practices.
- To have a common understanding of our progress and to learn from each other, we commit to implementing and utilizing **shared measurement systems** of our own activities and of the outputs and outcomes of job seekers.
- To ensure efficient and timely flow of information among partners and to tell our story, we pledge to establish channels of **continuous communication**, both internally among partners and externally to other stakeholders and audiences.

**OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, KEY PARTNERS, AND TIMELINE:** The following table summarizes the key components of our common agenda (objectives, activities and key partners) and a timeline for executing the agenda.

MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE Bridge Year: 2015 Implementation: 2016-2018
	1) Central location at Paschalville Neighborhood Library for co-located services	1A) Arrange for usage of space by partner organizations (e.g., MOU, contractual agreements)	PNL, with appropriate partner organizations	Bridge Year
		1B) Coordinate schedule of partner activities	PNL	Bridge Year
		1C) Implement bundled programming for residents at PNL:	Partners listed below:	Implementation
		>>Conduct COC training and resources for PNL staff	CareerLink, PNL (JRC)	
		>>Provide financial counseling	FEC	
		>>Provide housing counseling	PHA, Southwest CDC	
		>>Provide myPLACE registration and enrollment training and other trainings as appropriate	MCOL, PNL	
		>>Secure partner to provide employment counseling and related services for returning citizens	CityLights, Outley House, PhillyRising	
	>>Conduct workshops and events (i.e. resume boot camp) for jobseekers	CareerLink, PhillyRising		
>>Provide basic digital literacy training (KeySpots)	PNL			
2) In-fill programming at partner organizations	2A) Coordinate public access to computers:	PNL	Bridge Year	
	>>Review and update respective policies to expand coverage (i.e., nights and weekends)	Southwest CDC, PHA		
	>>Institute additional hours for computer access during library hours to accommodate overflow from library			
	2B) Form and facilitate lending circles with employment related themes	Southwest CDC	Bridge Year and Implementation	
2C) Develop, coordinate, and conduct job skills-related computer training	CareerLink, Outley House, PHA, Southwest CDC	Bridge Year and Implementation		
3) Common intake and referral (see Shared Measurement Systems for data gathering instructions)	3A) Develop streamlined intake and referral form and protocol; conduct personal referrals between partners to ensure “high-touch” contact with job seekers	Fels/backbone org/supporting consultant, with input from PNL, CareerLink, MCOL, FEC	Bridge Year	
	3B) Administer common intake/referral in all locations	All partner organizations, coordinated by PNL	Implementation	
4) Best practices repository and conduit	4A) Gather research into addressing employment barriers, including general best practices and best practices for returning citizens and immigrants	Fels/backbone org/supporting consultant	Bridge Year	
	4B) Develop highly customized training materials for partner organizations	Fels/backbone org/supporting consultant, with assistance from CityLights, Outley House, AFRICOM, OHCD	Implementation	

SHARED MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE Bridge Year: 2015 Implementation: 2016-2018
	1) Common intake and referral process	1A) Determine protocol for collecting and sending data to elected point person (key geo-identifier: zip code of residence)	Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant	Bridge Year
		1B) Regularly compile and send data from partner organization from common intake form (see MRA 3A – 3C)	TBD	Implementation
	2) Inputs and outputs tracking	2A) Assess most cost-effective system to track partner inputs and client outputs	Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant	Bridge Year
		2B) Track partner inputs to initiative and client outputs, on on-going basis, such as:	All partner organizations, coordinated by TBD	Implementation
		>>Staff hours		
		>>Dedicated space (square footage, time used)		
		>>Number/type/hours of workshops and events		
		>>Number of counseling sessions conducted		
	>>Number of training sessions conducted			
>>Hardware and software purchases				
3) Client outcomes tracking	3A) Assess most cost-effective system for tracking client outcomes, including assessing current partner systems (key geographic unit of analysis: 19142 + part of 10143)	Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant, in consultation with MCOL, FEC, PNL, CareerLink	Bridge Year	
	3B) Implement client outcomes tracking system; conduct partner training if needed. Outcomes to be tracked include:	All partner organizations, coordinated by TBD	Implementation	
	>>Milestones reached (i.e. job interview, job secured)			
>>Persistence (e.g., 6 months in job)				
>>Job satisfaction, salary/wages, ability to advance				
4) Community outcomes tracking	4A) Utilize Census data to track long-term progress related to initiative’s efforts to reduce unemployment in the Paschalville area, including:	Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant	Bridge Year and Implementation	
	>>Unemployment rate			
	>>Total employment, employment growth			
	>>Poverty rate			
4B) Track employer/employment trends (to lay groundwork for possible industry-led training initiative), including:	Philadelphia Works, Commerce Dept, JOIN	Bridge Year and Implementation		
>>Employers, employment in area (total, net new)				
>>City’s investment in SW’s economic development				



CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION2D

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE Bridge Year: 2015 Implementation: 2016-2018
1) Internal/partner communication	1A) Develop bi-monthly e-newsletter, to include: upcoming events, professional development opportunities, and general updates on initiative’s progress	PNL	Bridge Year and Implementation
	1B) Convene and facilitate quarterly partner meetings -->Report-out on inputs/outputs/outcomes gathered -->Professional development (see 1D)	Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant, with gradual transition to local partner	Bridge Year and Implementation
	1C) Use private LinkedIn group as a forum for discussion among Advisory Council members, and as a platform for posting relevant updates, news articles, best practices, etc.	All partner organizations	Bridge Year and Implementation
	1D) Integrate professional development into quarterly partner meetings. Initial topics include: -->Cross-cultural best practices (i.e., immigrant pops.) -->Assisting returning citizens -->Financial barriers to employment	Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant, with assistance from FEC, PHA, and other partners as identified	Bridge Year and Implementation
	2) External/stakeholder communication	2A) Develop and publicize shared calendar of services, programs, classes, etc. (for internal distribution as well)	PNL, with assistance from partner organizations
2B) Develop and maintain dedicated social media accounts, including Facebook page, Tumblr account, and Twitter handle		PNL	Bridge Year and Implementation
2C) Develop and cross-promote initiative’s progress by including common language and linking to partner websites		Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant, implemented by partner organizations	Bridge Year
2D) Proactive outreach to community leaders by attending local meetings and key populations, such interfacing with the prison release system		PNL, CityLights	
2D) Highlight success stories by publishing frequent articles and job seeker profiles in Southwest Globe Times and other local media outlets		Southwest CDC, PNL	Bridge Year and Implementation
2E) Develop and publish <i>The State of Southwest Philadelphia</i> , annual publication capturing Southwest Philadelphia’s prosperity and possibility, and communicating progress on initiative		Fels/backbone org/ supporting consultant, with support from partner organizations	Bridge Year and Implementation
2F) Create and present event tied to annual report		Partner organizations	Bridge Year and Implementation