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A Case Study on the Use of the SDGs With a Collective Impact Initiative in Southwest Florida

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Think Globally, Act Locally. How Do We Do That?

Achieving an audacious community-level goal is difficult because of the multidimensional complexity of social problems and relationships. But the experience of the FutureMakers Coalition (FMC), a regional collaborative network focused on systems change, suggests it is not impossible. Achieving such a goal requires thinking about the big picture and community systems; that's why the first step is to think globally and multi-dimensionally while acting locally, untangling systems through relationships. This article offers insights into one way to tackle such a goal.

The FMC's goal is increase the percentage of working-age adults in Southwest Florida who have the credentials needed to fill jobs from 39% in 2013 to 55% by 2025. The coalition combines the blueprint of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the collective impact model, and the CivicLab Stakeholder Engagement Process (SEP) to change relationships in order to achieve local outcomes that are aligned with global goals. This approach helped the region earn a competitive Talent Hub designation from the Lumina and Kresge foundations, acknowledging the way the coalition's partners work together as one of 25 national exemplars (Lumina Foundation, 2020).

In this case study, participants came to understand that community-level social, economic, and environmental problems cannot be solved by a single entity, and that the collective impact model is one important collaborative

Key Points

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals can be a useful framework on which to design, evaluate, and communicate collective impact initiatives. Using as a case study the FutureMakers Coalition, a collective impact initiative launched by the Southwest Florida Community Foundation to transform its region's workforce, the field can gain insights into how the goals can strengthen collective impact work locally and nationally.
- This article will discuss how the foundation facilitated the setting of a common agenda and the use of the Sustainable Development Goals to help build consensus among 251 active partners on how to measure progress toward the coalition's shared goal. By aligning program design and evaluation with the goals and agreeing to key indicators, each coalition member understood which data needed to be collected and when to establish baselines and measure outcomes and impact. Annual assessments were shared with the coalition and the public. This approach, using the Sustainable Development Goals as a framework, helped build teamwork, trust, and presence, allowing cross-sector community partners to spend significantly less time aligning separate agendas and metrics.

(continued on next page)

tool. In efforts to create systems-level change, philanthropic organizations — community foundations in particular — are finding in this

model a process by which community goals can be reached. As a result, foundations are playing a variety of roles in collective impact initiatives across the United States.

Communities often miss opportunities to both improve local collective impact work and build capacity for meaningful and sustainable change across the globe. This may be because philanthropy has not fully understood the value and power of aligning its work with the SDGs, adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a framework and time-sensitive call to action for a more sustainable future by addressing all interconnected global challenges (United Nations, 2021a). Local foundations are uniquely positioned to facilitate effective collective impact initiatives that produce outcomes with global goals in mind but with a meaningful local match — a demonstration of a collaborative’s skill in establishing itself as the “go to” group in a community and a symbol of the broader community’s willingness to embrace a collaborative and its mission (Frusciante & Siberon, 2010). The work of collaboration and facilitation is positioned within networks and by way of collective impact to address social problems, achieve economies of scale, and inspire innovation. Making local connections and enhancing regional visibility provides better solutions and cultivates a peer network (Millesen, 2015).

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation provides backbone support to the FMC and used the SDGs to design a now seven-year-old collective impact initiative. This article shares a programmatic process that has demonstrated that the SDGs and the five conditions of collective impact are complementary and, together, can advance both global and local action for positive change. It also illustrates the important role community foundations can play in guiding and facilitating community collaborations to achieve systems change.

Integrating Sustainability and Collaboration

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, “provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for

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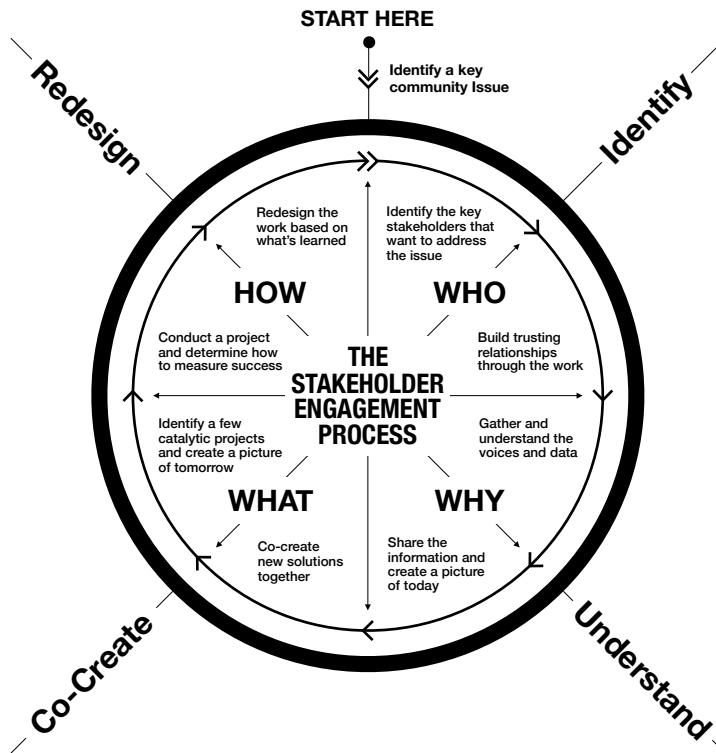
Key Points (continued)

- Design and assessment centered on the Sustainable Development Goals can expedite organizing and reporting for collective impact and provide foundations with an important formative role in program design and evaluation. This article illustrates the need for cross-sector collaboration to solve complex problems, and how setting a common goal is just one step in keeping a diverse group of stakeholders moving in the same direction and making data-driven decisions.

people and the planet, now and into the future” (United Nations, 2021a, p. 1) through 17 SDGs and 169 targets that represent a global common agenda. The goals’ scale and interconnectivity makes collaboration among local, national, and global stakeholders essential to the SDGs’ achievement. While there is growing attention to the goals, the framework is too often overlooked as a tool for solving community problems.

Drawing on a handful of initiatives that were using highly collaborative structures to address large-scale social problems, Kania and Kramer (2011) posited the Five Conditions of Collective Success: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities,

FIGURE 1 CivicLab's Stakeholder Engagement Process



continuous communication, and the presence of an organization providing backbone support. These conditions set collective impact apart from simple collaboration. As Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer stated, “More and more people ... have come to believe that collective impact is not just a fancy name for collaboration, but represents a fundamentally different, more disciplined, and higher performing approach to achieving large-scale social impact” (2012, p. 3). As such, collective impact has become more commonplace in the realm of lasting, systems-level change.

The Stakeholder Engagement Process

Implementing the SDGs and setting the conditions for collective impact can present ambiguities and other, sometimes overwhelming, challenges, leaving communities unsure about how to proceed (Frusciante & Siberon, 2010). At the same time, both are built on

collaboration aimed at solving our world’s most pressing problems. They become most powerful when used together, but to do so requires a structured process. As Nichols, Schwan, Gaetz, and Redman (2021) found, success in collective impact is about multisectoral partnerships, strategic information sharing, and ongoing attentiveness to the relational dimensions of systems-change efforts.

CivicLab, a nonprofit institute dedicated to advancing the practice of civic collaboration, discovered the Stakeholder Engagement Process (SEP), a rigorous and transparent methodology for multisector collaboration. A relationship-based, systems-building approach to addressing complex social challenges and opportunities by redesigning the way people work together, the SEP was identified by examining a 70-year community transformation effort in Columbus, Indiana. (See Figure 1.)

FIGURE 2 CivicLab's Guiding Team Roles and Responsibilities



The process begins by identifying a key community issue or opportunity that brings people together to accomplish something that can only be achieved together. Communities as small as a few neighborhood blocks and as large as multistate regions, and with partners that include public agencies, private companies, private-public partnerships, and multisector collaborations, have used the SEP effectively over the past decade to address a variety of complex social challenges: strengthening the education and workforce pipeline; reforming the juvenile justice system; improving access to mental health resources; pursuing private philanthropic resources for multiple organizations; reducing homelessness to functional zero; coordinating

pandemic response resources; designing the built environment in public spaces; and creating plans to use federal and state stimulus and recovery dollars.

Once the challenge or opportunity is identified, the focus turns to identifying relationships among the stakeholders and organizations that constitute the system. Then, a question is asked: "Who wants to come together to address a common challenge?" By making these often-invisible relationships visible through the SEP, a guiding team comprising members most adjacent to and able to address the common issue can work on the system, as opposed to working in it. (See Figure 2.)

[P]artnerships explore ways to carry out their collective plans, including restructuring existing organizations, sharing previously siloed resources, and reshaping relationships among stakeholders. The core principle of the SEP directs partnerships to co-design and implement with people, rather than doing things to or for people.

The “why” phase of the SEP allows partnerships to investigate and understand what they know and don’t know about a given issue. Primary and secondary data are employed throughout this phase as the partnership continues to make the system visible by attaching data to the sets of relationships that are adjacent to the common issue. The partnerships then proceed to the third quadrant, the “what” phase, where approaches to redesigning the system are co-created. Here, stakeholders focus on this question: “What can we do together that we cannot do alone?” Importantly, the pilots and processes that emerge in this co-creation phase focus on the system (i.e., the set of relationships) rather than on providing a direct service or response to the challenge.

Finally, partnerships enter the “how” stage of the SEP, where the focus is on redesigning the relationships among people and organizations. Here, partnerships explore ways to carry out their collective plans, including restructuring existing organizations, sharing previously siloed resources, and reshaping relationships among stakeholders. The core principle of the SEP directs partnerships to co-design and implement with people, rather than doing things to or for people.

Implementing the Ambiguous: A Case from Southwest Florida

Southwest Florida is a five-county region that includes the rural Hendry and Glades counties and the suburban, coastal Charlotte, Lee, and Collier counties, where sprawling postwar development created a landscape heavily reliant on personal automobiles. The economy of the coastal communities, which draw retirees and see an influx of transient populations during the winter months, is subject to extreme fluctuations, vulnerable to various social and environmental conditions and events, and relies heavily on construction, tourism, and health care. The agriculture-based communities face a number of these same problems, but on a magnified scale. Hendry County has had one of the highest unemployment rates among Florida’s 67 counties for years. Those who live there face steep educational barriers, and many of the area’s well-paying jobs are held by commuters. Glades County has about 12,000 residents and even less access to local services, training, and jobs because in Glades, they simply don’t exist.

Seven years ago, Southwest Florida had fewer than 1 million permanent residents, making it difficult to attract the opportunities and investment necessary to address regional challenges. The region also faced overwhelming competition from Tampa and Miami, the nearest major metropolitan areas. Individuals seeking services and resources were confronted with a maze of competition and duplication: The region is home to nearly 2,000 nonprofits; multiple municipalities and corresponding economic development councils; at least 16 Chambers of Commerce; five school districts, and a variety of postsecondary institutions. Nearly 90% of the region’s businesses were small operations with 25 FTEs or less (more likely, 10 FTEs or less). Meanwhile, data emerged from the Florida College Access Network (2020) showing that by 2025 at least 60% of the jobs in the state would require a credential beyond a high school diploma, prompting recognition of the immediate need for and context of a significant shift in thinking about, and working together to ensure, the region’s sustainable future.

A New Approach to Impact

Given this landscape in 2014, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation made a renewed commitment to a regional focus and began to assess where it might make an impact. The foundation identified two key areas, education and economic development, as the region's biggest challenges, and seized the opportunity to test a hypothesis that moving the needle in these areas would happen only through a collaborative, five-county effort.

Coincidentally, the foundation had recently partnered in a local government effort to assess sustainability and ultimately added a professional in that field to its grantmaking and programs team. This created a parallel opportunity to test how the SDGs could play a role in the foundation's work, and put the findings of the community assessment into a new light — education and economic development became more than just Southwest Florida's challenges. The work ahead would also be aligned with the corresponding SDGs: Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10).

In response to national trends in financial aid gaps (Kofoed, 2014), the foundation launched the FMC with a collaboration-dependent project designed to increase completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The project, which was time-limited and whose outcomes were easy to measure, spanned five counties and high schools and was a quick win in demonstrating that working together could change outcomes.

That collaborative effort drew technical assistance and financial support to the region from the Lumina Foundation, which also named Southwest Florida one of 75 communities across the country, and one of four in Florida, to the Community Partnership for Attainment. Built on the pillars of partnership, health, equity, and attainment, Lumina's Community Partnership for Attainment aimed "to deepen the impact of cross-sector, place-based efforts to increase higher education attainment in communities and cities across the country" (Lumina

Using a sustainability lens to see the region's problems and their interdependencies enabled the coalition to identify those most directly relevant to achieving a shared goal. Viewing the region as a social and economic ecosystem helped ensure a comprehensive agenda and avoid unintended consequences, as all problems and solutions are synergistic.

Foundation, 2015). This partnership became a catalyst for a new way of working together in the region.

Some of the region's leaders took notice and came together to develop a charter that would take the FMC from a project to a systems-focused, regional initiative aimed at transforming the area's workforce by increasing to 55% the number of residents age 25 to 64 holding credentials needed to fill in-demand jobs by 2025. With this shared goal, the foundation entered uncharted territory, becoming the backbone organization for the region's first collective impact initiative.

A Bold Goal: Moving to Action

The FutureMakers Coalition had a bold goal and a growing number of partners in education, workforce, and economic development, but needed to further define the common agenda and identify shared measurements in order to begin to understand the systems. Using a sustainability lens to see the region's problems and their interdependencies enabled the coalition to identify those most directly relevant to

FIGURE 3 FMC's Translation of Global Goals to Local Outcomes



achieving a shared goal. Viewing the region as a social and economic ecosystem helped ensure a comprehensive agenda and avoid unintended consequences, as all problems and solutions are synergistic.

It is valuable to point out that the foundation had already established a local language for the SDGs, which consisted of locally measurable indicators that aligned with the global goals. The Board of County Commissioners in Lee County had used the STAR Community Rating System (now known as LEED for Cities and Communities) to create a baseline assessment of the community’s sustainability and developed a plan that prioritized 14 indicators, including education and workforce readiness (Lee County, 2012). Although the plan was developed by more than 88 partners and established a local language for sustainability, the effort lost political support and was shelved. Around the same time as FMC’s development, the foundation agreed to take on the sustainability plan as a convener and for use in advancing outcomes regionally. The Foundation further distinguished the local language by aligning the STAR goals with philanthropic areas of focus. (See Figure 3.)

Having a local language and indicators to translate the SDGs to align with community needs proved extremely helpful in developing a common agenda and shared measurements. For the FMC, the local language for the attainment goals were Education; Economy & Jobs; and Equity & Empowerment. The foundation utilized this local language to identify stakeholders who were missing from the table and to begin mapping out our shared measurements. Stakeholders were also better able to self-identify as partners in the initiative because they could see where their work aligned with the high-level goals and systems within which we were working.

Developing a Common Agenda

The FutureMakers Coalition is working toward a common agenda that is focused on three SDGs: Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). It was by analyzing the local-level outcomes provided by the STAR Community Rating System and examining the aligned SDGs that it became clear that systems change would require defining the talent pipeline from early childhood education

through under- and unemployed working-age adults. Furthermore, the coalition would need to intervene to change policies and practices so that those already in the pipeline would have improved outcomes, and to examine what was needed to improve outcomes for all yet to enter the pipeline. This is because of the interconnected nature of the outcomes.

For example, kindergarten readiness is a key indicator for grade-level reading proficiency. By the end of third grade, students not reading at or above proficiency standards are four times less likely to graduate high school on time; students from low-income families who fall short of those standards are six times less likely (Hernandez, 2011). According to the Florida College Access Network (2020), Floridians with a bachelor's degree earn more each year on average than those with only a high school diploma. With that in mind, the parents or guardians in lower-income families are less likely to hold a credential beyond a high school diploma and may not even have a high school diploma. These outcomes contribute to a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break without changing the systems perpetuating it.

This sustainability analysis helped solidify the common agenda needed to ensure early childhood education was at the table. The FutureMakers Coalition also needed to develop opportunities to change the system for adults with some college but no degree and for those without postsecondary experience. Furthermore, the SDGs' focus on equality in outcomes drove the FMC to disaggregate data and prioritize equity in changing systems to reach a shared attainment goal. The SEP was employed during this period and has been utilized throughout the evolution of the FMC's work. Both the "who" and the "why" phases of the SEP process are important in convening the necessary stakeholders and facilitating a conversation about how the system is producing the current results. (See Figure 1.)

The overarching approach of using the SEP with the SDGs to understand a problem and determine a focus has had two significant effects on

the FMC collective impact initiative. First, the ranks of the coalition's actively engaged partners has grown to over 250 regional, multisector stakeholders, bringing a variety of perspectives and more opportunity for novel ideas about the work. Second, the stakeholders more clearly understand the focus on systems and the need to change the way we work together. They can see where a common agenda and collaboration can help them achieve their missions and attain their goals. They can visualize where they fit in and how systems-change and collaboration are required to increase impact.

Establishing Shared Measurements

The FutureMakers Coalition's shared measurements were developed through a participatory process that included the development of the Lumina Foundation Charter for Southwest Florida and meeting with FMC partners that work all along the talent pipeline (Banyai, 2016). Many of the shared measurements selected through this process came from the previous STAR rating system as well as the partners and others identified in communities doing similar work.

The process of using local indicators for the SDGs proved invaluable. The five counties in the region have varying levels of access and capacity to track data, so using accepted data points generally allowed us to align our measures with information that the FMC's data and reporting team, in partnership with WorkforceNow (a collaborative research team from Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida Southwestern State College, and Hodges University), could access without burdening partner organizations with tracking new information or requiring data-sharing agreements prior to having fully established trusting relationships.

More than 65 partners participated in this process. With that much input early on, the FMC established indicators much more quickly than if it had not explored possible shared measures through the lens of sustainability, and the work remained aligned with the SDGs. Since then, the coalition, which established 2013 as its baseline

year for reporting change, has completed an annual report each year.

Over time, the “what” component of the SEP helped partners focus on co-creating the path to improving the community conditions, creating a regional approach to achieving the outcomes of the aligned SDGs, and fostering a level of engagement beyond the typical volunteer model that changes the way we work as a region. By envisioning what we could accomplish in terms of outcomes, our ability to establish shared measures was accelerated and enhanced.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities; Continuous Communication

Setting the conditions for mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication takes time, practice, and feedback. The FMC strives to use our local language for the global goals in aligning work with the SDGs, with an eye on avoiding duplication and sharing best practices. As Kania and Kramer observe:

The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts, but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Each stakeholder’s efforts must fit into an overarching plan if their combined efforts are to succeed. (2011, p. 40)

The move toward these conditions was supported in the “how” phase of the SEP. Partners started small and piloted projects together, crossing organizational and jurisdictional boundaries and using existing shared assets to achieve co-created solutions. If a solution proved successful based on data, the project was shared with the rest of the FMC and became the catalyst for policy change. The coalition communicated these efforts in a variety of ways, including its website, a newsletter, social media, and at systems-focused quarterly meetings.

After nearly seven years, partners own this work, leadership is distributed, and testing new ideas is significantly easier. One tool that was developed to create the conditions for mutually reinforcing activities and continuous

communication is the FMC’s Collaborative Structure (FMC, 2021a). (See Figure 4.) Constantly updated, which keeps the system visible to stakeholders, the tool also allows new partners to plug in easily and new solutions to be piloted without duplication. It also empowers partners to help others engage and bring aligned ideas to the collective work, rather than start something new with fewer resources and a without a full understanding of what the network has already learned.

Backbone Support

The FMC’s progress is due in large part to the foundation’s backbone support. Its use of the blueprint of SDGs and setting the conditions for collective impact have been critical to engaging partners and creating the context for collaboration. The incorporation of CivicLab’s SEP over the years, including its application to build the capacity of guiding team members and leaders from partner organizations, has played a significant role. Achieving the five conditions for collective impact requires a highly structured process that leads to effective decision-making (Kania & Kramer, 2011), and, at the same time, the unique capacity of the FMC’s backbone organization to understand and simultaneously seize the opportunity to incorporate the SDGs into this work was crucial.

The foundation faced a number of challenges in this role. Initially, its responsibility as the backbone organization went far beyond the role of a supporting partner. For the first several years, the foundation had not mastered the process for distributing leadership and ownership of the collective work, which may explain why organizations that are well positioned to provide backbone support are reluctant to step into or remain in this role. This shortcoming created several significant challenges, including a lack of collective ownership of the work and conditions that spread the staff far too thin to be effective. Addressing these challenges required changing the relationships within the FMC. Fuller implementation and network capacity building around the SEP was the key to resolving these problems and distributing leadership. Also, aligning the work with the SDGs was and is

FIGURE 4 EMC's Collaborative Structure

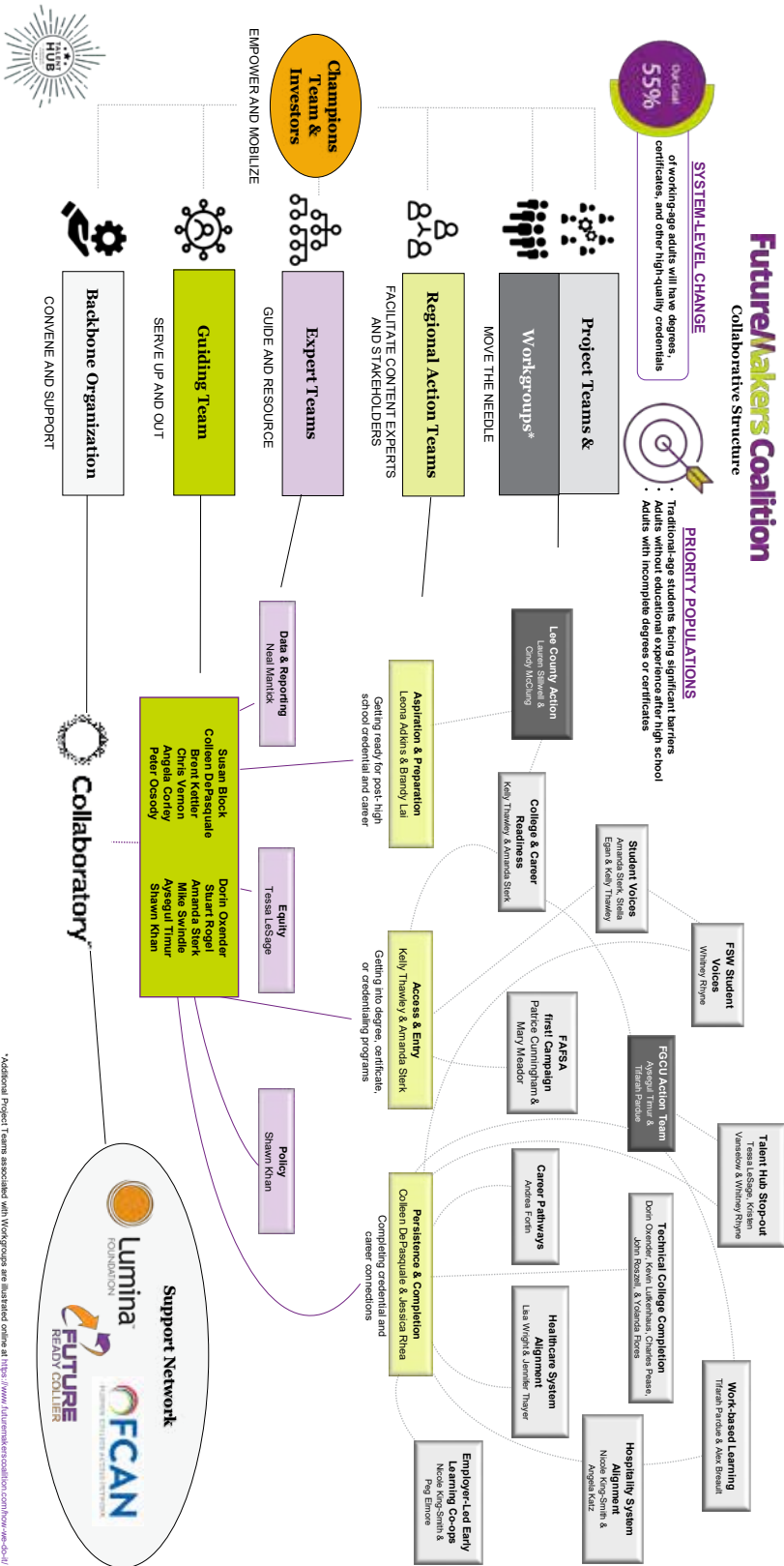


TABLE 1 STAR Communities/LEED Scores: 2014 and 2019

STAR Communities/ LEED for Cities and Communities Goal Area	2014 Final Score Lead Agency: Lee County	2019 Final Score Lead Agency: Southwest Florida Community Foundation	Percentage Change
Built Environment	50.7%	59.8%	18%
Climate & Energy	51.1%	17.3%	-66%
Economy & Jobs	30.8%	58.6%	90%
Education, Arts, & Community	43.6%	72.6%	67%
Equity & Empowerment	29.5%	62.4%	112%
Health & Safety	43.2%	62.2%	44%
Natural Systems	61.7%	52.4%	-15%
Innovation & Process	38.0%	36.0%	-5%
TOTALS	44.0%	53.8%	22%

Source: Wallace, Stauring, Ryals, LeSage, & Leone (2021, p. 245)

critical to creating the sense of shared ownership throughout the network.

In addition to the regional indicators established as shared measures, the FMC assesses partnership health as a measure of partner satisfaction, engagement, and impact on partner organizations, as well as a mechanism to gather feedback. This most recent effort assessed partnership health among 250 active partners representing more than 140 organizations. The *FMC Partnership Health Report (2021b)* conveys the partners’ perspective on the coalition’s shared work and describes the network’s makeup, illustrating the strong cross-sector representation within the five-county region. The report contains other significant findings:

- 97% of partners feel their relationship with the FMC has the potential to make a significant impact on the region’s educational and economic well-being.
- 60% indicate they have changed their work since establishing a relationship with the coalition.

- 41% reported that they have changed policies and practices — most commonly those concerning efforts toward equity and diversity and better serving students — since partnering with the coalition (FMC, 2021b).

Changing the way we relate to and work together appears to be a key strength for the coalition and has proven central to its efforts to achieve SDGs and collective impact goals.

Is the FMC Moving the Sustainability Needle?

After seven years of changing the way we work together and designing our shared work around the connections between local solutions and global goals, it’s important to assess the FMC’s impact on our community’s sustainability.

The STAR Community Rating System provided our local language for the SDGs. (See Figure 3.) Using that system, Lee County was certified as a 3 Star Community in 2014, aligning with the year work began to establish FMC; in 2019, the foundation recertified the county under the updated LEED for Cities and Communities

rating system. (See Table 1.) With a focus on where the community set the conditions for collective impact to progress toward greater sustainability through the FMC's framework, it is noteworthy that the areas that showed some of the greatest improvement were those whose outcomes were aligned with the coalition's: Equity & Empowerment, Economy & Jobs, and Education (Wallace, Stauring, Ryals, LeSage, & Leone, 2021). These outcome areas are aligned with Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Quality Education (SDG 4), respectively.

Lessons Learned

Achieving global goals happens at the local level, but requires community-level coordination, communication, and competence. The example of the FutureMakers Coalition illustrates that combining the SDGs with the conditions for collaboration and using a structured process can help achieve goals in a community and across jurisdictional boundaries. The SDGs are a blueprint and design framework. The collective impact model supports the conditions for collaboration to solve complex problems. These can be ambiguous on their own, but when used together along with a structured process like the SEP, they become powerful tools for efficient and effective progress toward audacious community goals. The SDGs reflect the interconnectedness of the world's challenges, creating opportunities to support additional collective impact initiatives as communities increase capacity to work together to solve problems. As more communities incorporate SDGs into collaborative initiatives, the collective progress toward global goals will grow.

- *Lesson 1: The SDGs are a call to action and valuable assets in the design, assessment, and implementation of collective impact partnerships.* For new collaboratives, the SDGs should be viewed as an asset in designing, setting the conditions for, and continuously improving collective impact initiatives, and as an opportunity to effect change on a larger scale. As seen in the case of the FMC, the goals were used as a design framework to establish common metrics, set a common

The example of the FutureMakers Coalition illustrates that combining the SDGs with the conditions for collaboration and using a structured process can help achieve goals in a community and across jurisdictional boundaries.

agenda, and gather stakeholders from several sectors and counties. Established collaboratives can use the SDGs during reassessment and evaluation, especially during redesign and strategic updating phases. For foundations, the SDGs provide a framework for impact, grantmaking, and capacity building. There is value in foundations increasing their comfort with using the SDGs to experiment, support goals, and scale impact both for the sake of those served and as a response to a global call to action aligned with philanthropy.

- *Lesson 2: The SDGs contribute to establishing the conditions required for collective impact.* As demonstrated by the FMC, the goals provide a framework to establish a common agenda, share measurements, and identify mutually reinforcing activities. They also provide a platform for continuous communication — especially in communicating the need, goals, and progress of the partnership. New and existing partnerships should consider adopting the goals as a framework to better align and communicate their work with a broader set of stakeholders. The SDGs provide a framework for community foundations to embrace leadership and step into roles as trusted partners and conveners. The SDGs can serve as a North Star, drawing partners together to solve a common goal.

The SDGs provide a framework for community foundations to embrace leadership and step into roles as trusted partners and conveners.

- *Lesson 3: Systems change requires changing relationships among people and organizations, and can only be achieved by changing the way these relationships work.* The coalition brought visibility to the need for a collective impact approach by establishing a common agenda focused on three SDGs: Quality Education, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Reduced Inequalities. Using these goals, individuals and organizations in the region were able to see how their work fit into the existing system, how they would need to change to make greater progress toward shared goals, and how it would be necessary to align with or create new relationships to change the system itself. The case of the FMC demonstrates how, rather than creating new programs to address common challenges, focusing on relationships builds sustainable collective impact structures that produce long-term positive change. Furthermore, in this case, the role of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation as the backbone organization was enhanced by the time spent building trusting relationships. While improving outcomes is important, changing the way we work together proved an essential first step to this work and addressing the challenges ahead.
- *Lesson 4: Like most global goals and frameworks, the SDGs must be translated for local relevance.* The goals intentionally require action across the spectrum, from individuals to global organizations. Such a wide-ranging framework can present challenges as local stakeholders attempt to align their work to a common agenda. Backbone organizations and guiding teams are advised to translate these global goals for local stakeholders and

may be best served by using other tools and frameworks alongside the SDGs. Leaders should consider exploring options for translation with the goal of efficiency and adding the most value for the community based on local conditions. Furthermore, by incorporating the SDGs and translating them to respond to local conditions, community foundations can better integrate collective efforts into their more traditional work. Along those lines, understanding the SDGs at the local level can make a clear case for foundations as backbone organizations in the collective impact model.

- *Lesson 5: Additional capacity building for backbone organizations and foundations is required.* As the fifth condition for collective impact, backbone organizations play an integral part in pursuing systems change. Foundations, particularly community foundations, are well positioned to convene stakeholders and provide backbone supports. As seen in the case of the FMC, capacity building among staff and guiding team members is necessary during both the design and implementation phases. Capacity building should focus on using and translating the SDGs to their local context and on the use of the SEP. Given the primacy of continuous improvement in both the SDGs and the SEP, continual capacity building is required as the partnership evolves and grows.

Conclusion

Progress on global goals requires local action, and can only happen when individuals and organizations across sectors work collectively toward common goals. As seen with the FutureMakers Coalition, the adoption of model-agnostic frameworks like the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals and the Stakeholder Engagement Process hasten and improve systems-change efforts. Only by making visible the system of relationships that define our economic, education, and environment structures, and by aligning the work of local organizations with mutually reinforcing activities that further common goals, will we make the change needed to improve the human condition.

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