

Dimensions of Change: A Model for Community Change Efforts

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Key Points

- The Dimension of Change Model (DOCM), developed by the authors, is offered as a potentially useful tool for foundations, government, bodies, consultants, coalitions, and even individual organizations that are initiating or engaged in substantive efforts to bring about community change.
- The dimensions contained in the model - structure, parameters, intention, approach, and people - offer a frame for addressing key aspects that emerge from the literature as fundamental to all change efforts. The model is offered as a way to design, implement, adapt, and evaluate change initiatives.
- The work of First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission in Marin County is used as an example to stimulate reflection and discussion about such initiatives.
- Lessons learned through First 5 Marin's experience as a change agent are offered and augmented by the literature on change initiatives.

Change, in the broadest and deepest sense, is required to bring about a more just and equitable world. One response from philanthropy to the need for such change is initiatives that analyze and then holistically focus on an issue or location. Such efforts, referred to here as community change initiatives (CCIs), are called by a host of other names: place-based initiatives, systems-change efforts, and community-development projects. The definition from the Aspen Institute

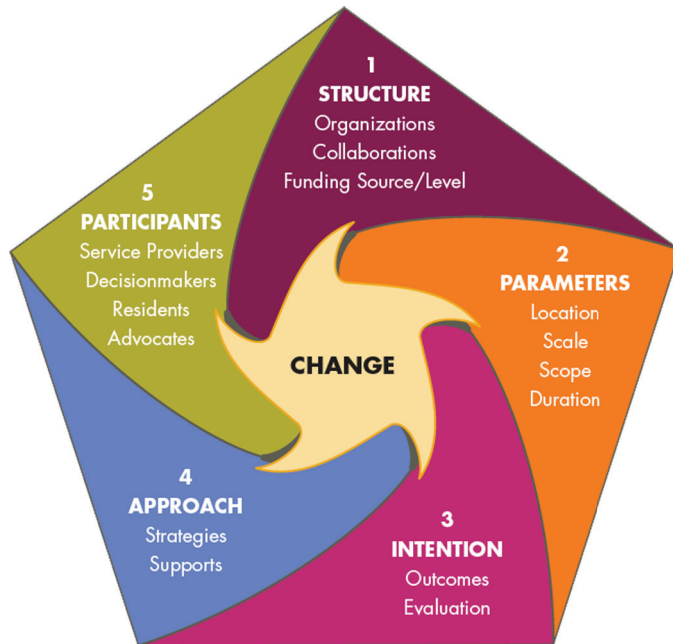
in its most recent monograph on CCIs offers a good starting place:

Although CCIs varied enormously depending on location, sponsor, and community capacity, the "classic" CCIs had similar design features. They analyzed neighborhood problems and assets holistically, created a plan to respond in a comprehensive way, engaged community actors, and developed a structure for implementing the plan. Each sought to achieve multiple results with a combination of inputs centered on some conception of "community." Their goals included individual and family change, neighborhood change, and systems change. They operated according to community and capacity building principles. A wide variety of programmatic activities were open to them, from human services to economic development to social capital building strategies. (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010, p. 9)

Community change initiatives in the United States span more than 30 years of experimentation, success, challenges, and failures. Over the years there has been an increasing body of literature that speaks to what works, what does not, and where there is more to be learned. These include papers from Connell and Kubisch (1998), Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, and Dewar (2002), Kubisch et al. (2010), and Brown and Fiester (2007).

The purpose of this article is not to provide a history of CCIs as others have already done,

FIGURE 1 Dimensions of Change Model



but rather to introduce a framework that can be used to think about, design, and evaluate change initiatives. The Dimensions of Change Model (see Figure 1) developed in 2011 by jdcPartnerships,¹ a national consulting firm located in the San Francisco Bay Area, evolved as a way to make sense of the change literature being reviewed for its client, the First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission in Marin County, Calif.

The Dimensions of Change Model is offered as a tool for foundations, government bodies, consultants, and organizations involved in substantive efforts to bring about community change. The dimensions contained in the model offer a frame for addressing key aspects that emerge from the literature as fundamental to all change efforts.

This article presents the model, and then uses the work of the First 5 Marin commission as an example to stimulate reflection and discussion about such initiatives. Lessons learned about change initiatives, culled from the literature and

augmented by the experience and reflection of First 5 Marin, are offered and aligned with each dimension of the model.

The Dimensions of Change Model

The Dimensions of Change Model has five discrete but interconnected dimensions – structure, parameters, intention, approach, and people – with core considerations provided in relation to each. As with all models, there are limitations to this one. The reality of planning for any change initiative will not neatly conform to a model regardless of the efforts made to develop a visual representation of such a nonlinear process. Designing and implementing such change is not linear; it is iterative, dynamic, and even messy.

Structure

The first dimension of change speaks to the structure of the organization. Initial decisions here (ideally prior to the start of an initiative) include who will lead and be involved and how the funding will work. Clarity in this area can be vital; change initiatives are lengthy endeavors and

¹ www.jdcpartnerships.com

individuals involved often shift. Documenting such understandings from the beginning can support a steadier course over time.

Questions for consideration include:

- What organization or body is managing and coordinating the effort?
- How is the effort being funded? At what level?
- Who else is involved? What roles do they play?
- How is collaboration being supported?
- What policies and procedures frame the effort and associated decisions?

The literature reveals that initiatives are implemented by a range of stakeholders and often through a process of collaboration. Initiators can be local or neighborhood associations and organizations or established institutions such as government bodies, foundations, and universities. Foundations, often national in scope, tend to be the most frequent initiators of the change initiatives reported in the literature, and strive in their own ways to involve local stakeholders. Increasingly, local or regional philanthropic organizations are engaged in this work (Kubisch et al., 2010). Often they have longer relationships with local stakeholders and tend to be deeply rooted in the community. Institutions of higher education are often involved, tend to be funded by foundations, and often provide technical assistance and training. Municipal governments also initiate initiatives, typically by working with existing resident groups or forming groups that support resident involvement.

In theory, residents are perceived as the best originators of change initiatives because they are experts on the community's needs and most connected to community resources (Ahsan, 2008). However, it was difficult to identify specific examples in the literature where residents initiated the process. Rather, it seems that in the best

of circumstances residents are involved early on in the process, but typically after foundations or government bodies launch an effort.

Building relationships and trust is vitally important, but should not be a substitute for or diversion from establishing policies and procedures for interactions. Giving thought to expectations, procedures, and details are equally important to a successful initiative and are most effective when established early. Such considerations include decision-making, the timing and process of meetings, communication methods, distribution of resources, and the roles and responsibilities of participants. Such procedures can also document decisions about the role of different institutions and the means of collaboration that will guide their work.

Parameters

The second dimension of the model speaks to the parameters of an initiative. Decisions about the location, or where an effort will focus; scale – how large or small a population will be targeted; scope, or the areas toward which change will be worked; and the duration of an initiative have significant implications for any change effort. Specific decisions in these areas provide important framing for all the work to be done. Considerations include:

- Where is the initiative being implemented?
- How many does it serve?
- What is the target population of the initiative?
- How long will the effort last?

The majority of change initiatives reviewed in the literature define location and scale by drawing a geographic boundary. They tackle a wide range of targets: small neighborhoods, large cities and specific identity groups within a geographic area (Parzen, 2002). The most common way of referring to location, scale, and scope in the literature is by the term “place based,” used as far back as the 1980s. “Place,” however, seems not to have been strictly defined, existing more as a loose

term that allows it to be applied as deemed appropriate to a range of geographic areas (a neighborhood, region, etc.).

In contrast to more conventional “place based” approaches to change initiatives, the literature discussed crosscutting or issue-based approaches, which identify an issue that affects many locales and work to generate change in multiple locations on that issue. In their 2008 article, Kubisch, Topolsky, Gray, Pennekamp, and Gutierrez argue for a new approach to development that focuses on crosscutting issues instead of geographic distinction – an approach that unites urban and rural communities in efforts to improve education, the environment, and job opportunities. With a focus on issues instead of location, Kubisch et al. postulate that sufficient critical mass can be developed to foster the systemic change necessary to affect change in multiple locales.

Particularly in relation to sustaining funding, the broader the parameters, the greater the challenges. In writing about the Urban Health Initiative, Metz (2005) indicates that scale-focused initiatives (which she defines as citywide) are outside the sphere of foundation investment and consequently require unique, long-term, and typically more politically rooted funding approaches, though private funds play an important role in supporting efforts to leverage financial resources. The location and scale of specific initiatives was not well defined in most of the articles reviewed; nor were published toolkits or guides typically specific about the size or characteristics of the populations for which they were designed. When stated, the duration of efforts in the literature reviewed largely ranged from five to 10 years. A common thread among projects was a long-term commitment to the process of fostering change.

Intention

The third dimension of the change model concerns how to determine the success of an initiative. Clarity at the onset about intended outcomes makes it easier to assess progress. And though outcomes may change as the work evolves, flexible frameworks that support clarity at each step can be invaluable. Questions to consider in this area include:

- What is the initiative trying to accomplish?
- What will a successful initiative look like?
- What metrics are being used to evaluate these efforts?

Desired outcomes of CCIs are wide-ranging; areas specifically touched on in the literature included education, housing, economic development, health, community safety, civic involvement, environmental stewardship, and utilization of public space.

The complexity of documenting the progress and impact of these initiatives is well known and cannot be overstated (Connell et al., 1995; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 1998). In general, CCIs have made progress as summarized by Kubisch et al. (2010):

Most can show improvements in the well-being of individual residents who participated in programs in their target neighborhoods. Some produced physical change in their neighborhoods through housing production and rehabilitation, some reduced crime, and a few also sparked commercial development. Most can demonstrate increased neighborhood capacity in the form of stronger leadership, networks, or organizations, or in improved connections between the neighborhood and external entities in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. A few can point to accomplishments in policy and systems reform. (p. 16)

Admittedly these are all positive, yet they did not quite meet the expectations of the initiators. An early and surprisingly honest declaration of how CCIs may not meet expectations comes from the Hewlett Foundation:

From 1996 to 2006, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation committed over \$20 million to a Neighborhood Improvement Initiative (NII) an initiative desired to improve the lives of residents in three Bay Area communities – West Oakland, East Palo Alto and the Mayfair area of East San Jose. ... The NII was intended both to achieve tangible improvements for residents and to strengthen long-term capacity of the community foundations and neighborhood organizations to sustain change.

While the West Oakland project self-destructed early on, the NII left Mayfair and East Palo Alto better than it had found them and helped create organizations that continue to serve residents in youth development, education, public safety and other areas. Despite the huge investment of financial and human resources, however, the NII fell far short of achieving the hoped-for tangible improvements in residents' lives. While some stakeholders view characterizing the NII as a failure as too harsh, it certainly was a great disappointment (Brown & Fiester, 2007, introductory letter).

The story of this initiative may not be unusual, but the candor of the acknowledgement is. Discussing what did not work, learning lessons from the experience, and offering alternative frames for conceptualizing community change work are indicators of important progress for practice.

Evaluating such complex efforts is no small task. Schweigert (2006) summarizes the problem:

Community initiatives are ambitious and expensive, representing major commitments on the part of government or private funders that can extend for several years and involve multiple organizations, sectors, strategies, and outcomes The potential benefit to society is great if such initiatives succeed, in part because clearly demonstrated successes would attract more investments; yet at the same time, the breadth and complexity of the initiatives make evaluation difficult (p. 417).

There has been a broad debate about the most appropriate methods and tools to evaluate community change initiatives (Brown & Fiester, 2007; Connell & Kubisch, 1998; Auspos & Kubisch, 2004). Evaluation frameworks, tools, and methods have not kept pace with the complex and complicated contexts in which CCIs are implemented. Approaches more frequently referenced include responsive evaluation, empowerment evaluation, and impact evaluation (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Baker & Sabo, 2004; Patton, 2011; Schwandt, 2001). Additionally, the typical emphasis on causality as opposed to contribution is an evaluation construct that limits the ability of

an evaluation to demonstrate if an initiative has accomplished what its originators hoped.

Discussion has also persisted about the difference between and value of "tangible" outcomes (houses built, people trained) and "intangible" outcomes (leadership developed, political power galvanized). The Aspen Institute's *Measuring Community Capacity Building* workbook is a helpful reference for understanding the range of feasible measures (Topolsky, 1996).

More recently, the conversation about evaluating CCIs has shifted from prescriptive tools to conceptual frameworks or guidelines that suggest considerations necessary to support change efforts. Annie E. Casey Foundation Evaluation Director Tom Kelly (2010) argues that CCI evaluations:

- are not experiments, but part of the community change process;
- need a strong focus on the processes of community change;
- need to measure ongoing progress toward achieving outcomes and results in order to help a community guide its change process and hold itself accountable;
- need to understand, document, and explain the multiple theories of change at work over time; and
- need to prioritize real-time learning and the community's capacity to understand and use data from evaluations.

These tips are consistent with earlier reflection by the foundation that guidelines should also be flexible enough to permit individual tailoring and to maintain rigor:

CCIs are constantly changing, unpredictable, deeply interrelated and interdependent, transformative, and organic. The keys to working successfully in this seemingly chaotic environment are to implement the

framework flexibly, moving fluidly between “tilling the soil” and “harvesting the results;” to keep the focus on achieving results; and to put community residents at the center of the work (Bailey, Jordan, & Fiester, 2006, p. 10).

In 2004, the Aspen Round Table for Community Change published a report suggesting what was then a new paradigm for evaluating change initiatives (Auspos & Kubisch, 2004). The report considers the complex and ever-shifting nature of change initiatives and the related high cost of evaluations, and it questions the utility of evaluating change initiatives by focusing on outcomes within the community itself. Rather, the report argues, evaluation can be most beneficial if it focuses not on specific outcomes within a given community but instead is used as a way to identify knowledge that can advance the field.

In short, there is no concise answer to the question of how change initiatives are or should be evaluated. However, there are some emerging trends worth noting:

- shared evaluation frameworks,
- more realistic expectations for measuring impact (Kramer, Graves, Hirschhorn, & Fiske, 2007),
- more attention to real-time learning,
- greater use of geo-coded data, and
- new approaches to evaluating policy and systems change.

Approach

The fourth dimension of the model addresses the approach being used to bring about the desired change – the means as opposed to the ends. Related questions include:

- What is the initiative design? On what theory or evidence is it based?
- Who will drive the change?

- What supports will be provided to the individuals driving the change?

Identifying who ultimately holds responsibility for driving the change has far-reaching implications for design. The literature identifies a range of “change agents,” including foundation staff, officials from many levels of government, community residents and leaders, and staff at nonprofit organizations.

In the past 30 years, it appears that the structure and organization of CCIs have been around three types of work: programmatic (human development, housing and physical development, and economic development); community building; and engaging with external institutions and systems (Kubisch et al., 2010). There have been differing degrees of success in each of these, with parties varying and sometimes overlapping depending on the intended changes.

Identifying who ultimately holds responsibility for driving the change has far-reaching implications for design. The literature identifies a range of “change agents,” including foundation staff, officials from many levels of government, community residents and leaders, and staff at nonprofit organizations. Once who will drive the change is determined, the literature offers a variety of strategies for developing and supporting these individuals. Among those frequently referenced strategies are leadership development, capacity building, coaching, collective leadership, community organizing and mobilization, and advocacy. Change leaders can be organized into

local teams and can span cohorts that are supported collectively and working simultaneously to apply similar approaches to foster change in different locations. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation went so far as to identify a core body of “community change skills” essential for those involved in implementing community change: “Learning and using strategic-planning, sharing decision-making practices, learning policy and political assessment processes, employing participatory evaluation methods, and using effective facilitation and community organizing strategies” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2007).

In the literature, collective leadership development was raised as a powerful approach to fostering change by emphasizing leadership that is relational, fluid, and transformational (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2007). Coaching also received attention as a means of providing customized support to teams working to implement change processes. Hubbell and Emery (2009) offer varied uses for and benefits of coaching, as well as practical resources for both initiatives seeking coaches and coaches themselves.

Finally, with larger initiatives that span multiple sites there can be local flexibility in determining the specifics of a given program. Change leaders or teams can be given the autonomy to strategically leverage and mobilize resources toward a predetermined end in a way that makes sense locally (Metz, 2005).

Participants

A final and pivotal aspect of the model is the people involved in bringing about the desired change, and particularly the role of residents² in the process. As practitioners have experienced repeatedly, the role of the priority population in an initiative, be they residents of a particular geographic area or members of a certain community (e. g., older adults), has significant implications for the rest of the initiative. Do residents function as advisors, decision makers, providers, change agents, or recipients of services? Questions for

this final domain of the Dimensions of Change Model include:

- What role do residents or members of the priority group play in planning, implementation, and service delivery during an effort?
- What are the skills and capacities needed to involve and empower residents?
- If “outsiders” are needed, what process will support them in building the trust in the community necessary to be effective?
- How might the transience of the resident population (if relevant) affect the design of the initiative or its potential for success?

There is consistent acknowledgement in the literature that residents must be involved in change processes, though the specific nature of their ideal participation is debated. Ahsan (2008) echoes the attitudes of many toward involving community residents, and builds a case for the fundamental importance of resident involvement at all levels for any change initiative to succeed. Supportive resident practices repeatedly mentioned include increasing resident capacity and leadership and allowing time for implementers to develop trust with residents.

The literature pays considerable attention to the importance of supporting residents with the skills – including leadership, community mobilization, decision making, and data collection – needed for their meaningful participation in change efforts. However, the literature also shows that the role of residents in implementing change initiatives is complex, challenging, and controversial. Walker, Watson, and Jucovy (1999) offer a nuanced discussion of resident involvement based on their in-depth study of the means used to involve community members. They discuss the challenges of using resident skill and work as the basis of change initiatives and conclude that it is easier to involve them meaningfully during the planning stages than during implementation.

A report by Coulton, Theodos, and Turner (2009) with the Annie E. Casey Foundation discusses

² “Residents” is used as a general term for the priority group of participants and can be either self defined or identified by the conveners of the community change initiative.

the role of resident mobility as a less obvious but pervasive challenge for most community change efforts, noting that there is high resident turnover in most communities where change initiatives occurred. Such turnover has implications for designing and evaluating an initiative, determining its success, and working toward sustainability. The report urges the field to acknowledge that not all mobility is bad, consider housing instability as core to community change initiatives, and, in doing so, develop interventions that focus on the characteristics and needs of households moving through a neighborhood as well as those of longer-term residents.

It is important to note that although there is a fair amount of attention paid to the capacity of residents and communities to participate in change initiatives, there is very little noted about the capacity building needed for foundations, government, and others to work effectively with residents. Trust seems to be the primary ingredient for a productive working relationship and is addressed in several papers (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002; Hughes, 2005; W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2007). Little is offered, however, about specific strategies to build trust.

Dimensions of Change Manifested in Marin

The Dimensions of Change Model moves from the theoretical to the applied with a discussion of how each dimension of change took shape through the work of First 5 Marin. This case study offers insight for other funders and organizations working collaboratively with communities to bring about change. First 5 Marin serves as a good example because it has been able to establish deep roots in the community and develop funding strategies to support the organic growth of innovative movements and systems to better address the needs of Marin County children up to the age of 5.³

Marin County is the 20th wealthiest county in the nation, with a median household income of

³ For further information about the results of First 5 Marin's efforts, evaluation reports can be reviewed at <http://first5marin.org/evaluation.html>.

almost \$88,000. However, using federal poverty guidelines as reference,⁴ nearly 16,000 Marin households – more than 23 percent – cannot afford the basics (food, housing, transportation, child care). Of these households, almost 90 percent have at least one worker; only 1.1 percent receive public assistance and just 5.2 percent receive food stamps.

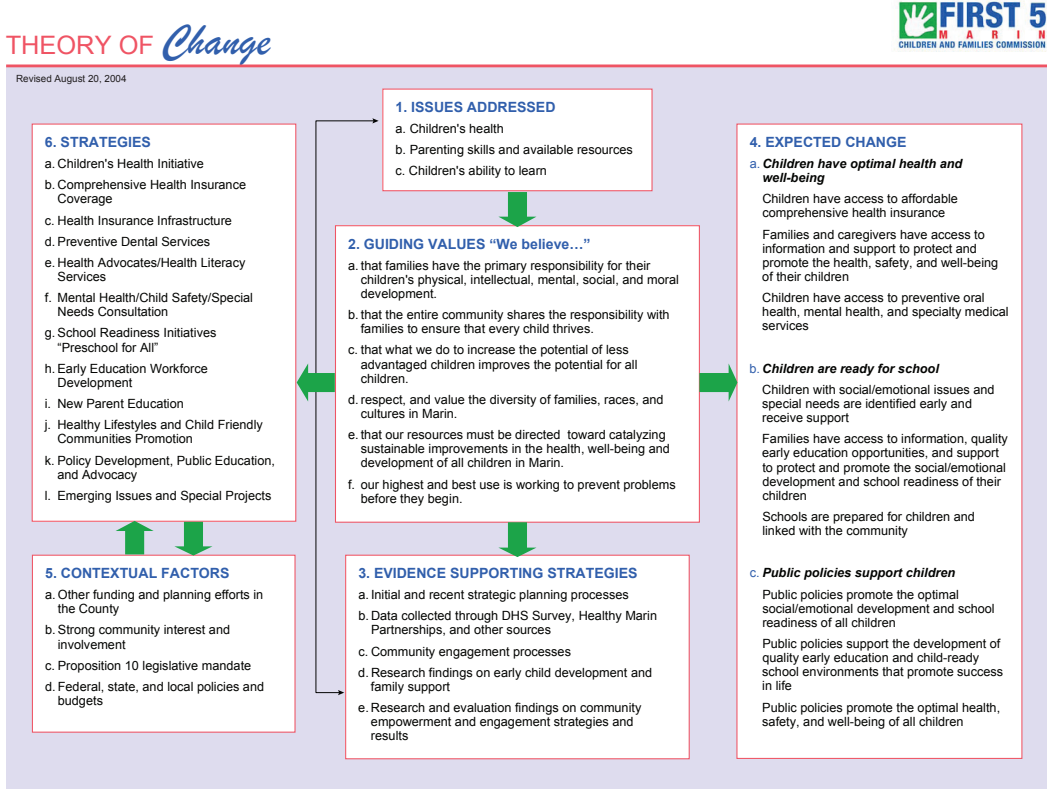
The First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission came in to being in 1999 as a result of a statewide ballot initiative to improve the health and well-being of children from prenatal development to age 5. The social-justice orientation of the commission's members, paired with an anticipated 20-year time frame for the First 5 Marin initiative,⁵ led the commissioners to target their grantmaking at long-term investments beyond direct services. They also agreed that the community – especially local service providers and advocates – would have to be substantively involved in defining its own success and designing and executing the strategies required for sustained change. First 5 Marin has used a variety of strategies to that end, including grantmaking, convenings, trainings, and developing and maintaining strategic partnerships.

First 5 Marin's long-term goal has been for its investments to change the way individuals and institutions in Marin County think about and care for children. In 2002, a theory of change was completed that documents this understanding and, with revisions along the way, continues to guide the commission's work. (See Figure 2.) In 2003-2004, the commission reduced the number of outcomes it was trying to achieve, opted to develop initiatives rather than use a request-for-proposals model, and identified five communities in which to concentrate its efforts. This focused, place-based approach provided a platform for the deliberate integration of all of its initiatives: health-, education-, and policy-related. In 2008-2009,

⁴ Federal guidelines set the poverty level for a family of four at \$21,200 annual gross income.

⁵ The cigarette-tax revenue funding California's Proposition 10 was projected to diminish over time. Members of the First 5 Marin commission believed 20 years would be an appropriate time frame for the change they sought and managed finances accordingly.

FIGURE 2 First 5 Marin Theory of Change



fund allocation was restructured to devote more staff and funding toward policy change, capacity building at the grassroots and organizational levels in the community, and the communications and public education activities necessary for long-term change. In recent years, First 5 Marin has been viewing itself more as a community change initiative, enabling it to intentionally learn from and contribute to the literature in the field.

Dimension 1: First 5 Marin's Core Structure

This dimension of the change model surfaces in two distinct ways for First 5 Marin: governance and accountability, and strategic planning and implementation.

Governance

The legislative roots of the First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission required an appointed body of nine commissioners who would set policy and guide resource allocation. A hired staff of

four – an executive director and three managers – manage and coordinate First 5 Marin activities.

Collaborators have been involved on many levels and in varying degrees, and have included grantee partners, county agencies, and community health workers and service providers. These parties have direct contact with the Marin families, providing the services, education, and opportunities for connection outlined by the commission. Collaboration among these bodies is supported through the efforts of the First 5 Marin staff, and funding that supports collaborative interactions, and is framed through such structures as initiative-design teams, grant agreements, evaluation reporting guidelines, and data-collection processes.

Strategic Planning and Implementation

In general, the approach to strategic planning has remained consistent over the years, with community involvement and a clear set of outcomes and

values framing the discussion. What has evolved is the implementation of the strategic plan – the ways in which the commission has designed resources and released them into the community.

1999 to 2000. During its inaugural strategic planning effort, the commission sought broad-based community input on resident concerns about young children in Marin and their families. A postcard asking for suggestions was sent to every household in the county; more than 30 community forums were held, videotaped, and transcribed; and key informants were interviewed. The resulting wealth of information, however, did not actually help the commissioners prioritize their desired outcomes. The result, instead, was a plan that identified priority strategies and a long list of desired outcomes. After two years using a traditional request-for-proposals model for funding and with no real implementation framework, the commission saw the need for a more narrowly focused plan that identified long-term and near-term outcomes and the most important systems-change work.

2000 to 2004. The second strategic planning process solidified guiding principles, a theory of change, and an implementation framework. Following considerable community input, the commission honed its outcomes, tying them to long-term goals, and became more explicit about the change work it saw as its legacy.

2004 to 2009. Based on the community engagement efforts in 2000, three strategic priorities emerged under which initiatives would be developed. Activities related to actualizing these priorities included the Every Family Thrives Summit⁶ conducted in 2002, subsequent ongoing community involvement and feedback, and a two-day retreat. The commission also drafted a vision, operating principles, and program-selection criteria on which to ground decisionmaking.

The next step of the strategic-planning process involved framing the strategic priorities in terms

⁶ <http://www.futuresearch.net/method/whatis/index.cfm>

of critical issues and priority outcomes. The commission identified strategies and initiatives to drive the strategic priorities and prioritized them based on selection criteria developed at the retreat and a long-term financial plan.

2009 to 2014. In late 2008 and early 2009, First 5 Marin began to develop a revised strategic plan for 2009-2014. The commission was clear about the need for long-term commitment and its intent was to revise the existing plan, not to replace it. The process involved three steps:

FIRST 5 MARIN STRATEGIC PLAN INVESTMENT CRITERIA

- Evidence of potential: for intended impact on most vulnerable population or systems and policies
- Opportunity for leveraging required resources or partners to address issues
- Evidence of linkage with commission initiatives and other community efforts
- Evidence of ongoing need for commission involvement to facilitate change
- Community engagement and commitment to sustainability
- Supports commission's transition to increased role in public policy and community leadership for children 0-5

a review of initiatives in three priority areas; assessment of the current and projected financial and community context and establishment of specific guidelines to revise the existing plan; and a review of a revised plan proposed by staff, based on information obtained during the first two steps. With changing resource circumstances and a commitment to lasting results, the commission developed a set of criteria to hone its investments and select strategic initiatives.

To develop the new strategic plan, the commission formed three work groups to review initiatives from the commission's 2004-2009

strategic plan period. Each work group discussed key environmental factors that might affect the initiatives and the resources available to achieve the desired outcomes. Chief among these were:

- the escalating impact of poor economic conditions on the ability of community infrastructure to address basic needs;
- the impact of immigration and immigration policy on community stability and needs;
- widening disparities in Marin County driven by a rising cost of living;
- the priorities of the Marin Community Foundation and its participation in addressing community issues;
- wider understanding of the importance of influences and interventions in early childhood; and

- an increase in collaborative approaches to advance change.

Dimension 2: Parameters Bounding First 5 Marin's Work

Proposition 10 set clear boundaries for the work of the commission: within Marin County and in service of children ages 0-5. These parameters left room for the commission to determine where best to focus.

Early on, it made a point of defining the target group as all the children of Marin. Based on the 2002-2003 strategic plan, the commissioners decided to use three data sources to identify specific geographic communities that might best benefit: census data, Academic Performance Index scores,⁷ and National School Lunch Program eligibility.⁸ Five communities became the focus of First 5 Marin's place-based efforts: San Geronimo Valley/Nicasio, Novato, Marin City/Sausalito, West Marin, and Central San Rafael/Canal. Although distinct in terms of demographics and cultural norms, these communities shared a number of characteristics, including limited access to appropriate and accessible services and supports, lower socio-economic status within Marin County, and a commitment by providers and families to support the optimal development of their children. Out of about 55,000 children up to age 18 in the county, 22,553 clients were served in fiscal year 2009-2010; roughly 57 percent were caregivers and 43 percent were children age 5 and younger.⁹

Dimension 3: The Intention of the Commission

Attribution versus contribution is an issue of concern for most grantmakers. Where one places

Attribution versus contribution is an issue of concern for most grantmakers. Where one places oneself on this evaluation continuum has implications for parameters, approach, and more. First 5 Marin placed itself at contribution. This, combined with its system-change orientation, led to an initial evaluation framework that focused on the ways in which funded partners acted differently, thought about and executed their work, and interacted with one another.

⁷ The base API summarizes a local education agency's performance on the spring STAR Program and California High School Exit Examination. It serves as the baseline score of performance. The API is on a scale of 200 to 1000 and is calculated from the performance of individual students on seven standardized tests administered at different points beginning at second grade.

⁸ National School Lunch Program eligibility is based on 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Whether a student participates in NSLP or if the school serves lunches is irrelevant; the issue is whether a student's family falls within income eligibility guidelines.

⁹ 2009-2010 First 5 Marin Evaluation Report.

oneself on this evaluation continuum has implications for parameters, approach, and more. First 5 Marin placed itself at contribution. This, combined with its system-change orientation, led to an initial evaluation framework¹⁰ that focused on the ways in which funded partners acted differently, thought about and executed their work, and interacted with one another. Data related to the types and number of services as well as outcomes were collected, reported, and used to hold funded partners accountable. However, the commission held itself accountable to the ways in which it was influencing individual providers, the systems in which they worked, and the ways in which those systems were interacting with one another.

The development of a theory of change in 2002 provided First 5 Marin, its partners, and the community with a clear articulation of what it believed, what it strove to accomplish, and the core strategies by which it would do so. Additionally, the set of guiding values reflected the spirit in which it would undertake its work and what it looked for in relationships with others.

In spite of this clarity, the evaluation journey has been challenging. To honor its own guiding values, First 5 Marin had to gauge funded partners' internal capacity and then meaningfully support them to build their evaluation capacity. This meant investing in Excel training and technical-assistance sessions on data entry, collection, and analysis. These efforts were rooted in supporting partners' ability to report to First 5 Marin, but even more important, they were aimed at enabling them to speak about their own projects, organizations, and ability to demonstrate impact. It also meant backing into the notion of initiative evaluation and having shared outcomes and common measures across projects.

To start, logic models were developed in partnership with grantees that made explicit the types and numbers of activities to be delivered as well as the ways in which these efforts met objectives

related to the overall commission outcomes. Additionally, performance measures – what changed as a result of program activities – were required of each funded partner. The separation of these two frames was intentional: First 5 Marin believed that adherence to one's scope of work was more a matter of contract compliance, whereas performance measures spoke to the evaluation framework. The commission invested in Persimmony, a web-based data system,¹¹ and pushed the developer to move beyond counting to being able to collect, analyze, and export reports that spoke to collective efforts across funded partners within their initiative groupings.

Not surprisingly, there was initial pushback from a number of funded partners (quarterly reports felt onerous; people wanted to submit hard copy data, etc.). Over time, however, partners' perspectives shifted in two ways. First, after the first annual evaluation report (AER), partners began to understand the impact of the data and their potential usefulness.

Second, as funded partners grew to understand the initiative structure and see how their individual efforts worked in relationship to others, they increasingly trusted First 5 Marin. This allowed the evaluation framework to evolve, which meant refining the types of evaluation questions most meaningful to the evolving work as well as revising related data collection tools, methods, and analysis frames. To this end, First 5 Marin convened small work groups to partner with jdcPartnerships to design, revise, and pilot data-collection tools.

The evolving nature of the evaluation framework and related tools informing strategy can be seen in Table 1. It provides an overview of the tools developed and their intended uses and audience, and is organized by strategic-planning period. Tools, frameworks, and documents were revised (and are repeated in the table) as movement toward outcomes progressed and different questions emerged.

Ultimately, the clearest illustration of how the

¹⁰ Evaluation structures can be found at: <http://first5marin.org/pdfs/evaluation/ImplementationFramework.pdf> and http://first5marin.org/pdfs/evaluation/Evaluation_Levels_May_2006.pdf

¹¹ www.persimmony.com

TABLE 1 Overview of First Marin Evolving Portfolio of Tools Supporting Strategy and Evaluation

Strategic Planning Period	Tool	Intended Use
1999-2002 (develop)	Theory of Change	Inform funding decisions to achieve priority goals over time.
	Implementation Framework	Guide development of new initiatives and assessment of progress toward outcomes.
2000-2004 (implement)	Quarterly reporting forms	Capture quantitative outputs of the work of funded partners.
	Midyear and yearend reporting forms	Capture qualitative data related to program implementation and evidence of impact.
2004-2009 (develop and implement)	Persimmony	Enable funded partners to maintain data on both outputs and performance measures; allow First 5 Marin to meet reporting obligations to the state commission.
	Summer Bridge points of entry	Explain the integrative nature of the School Readiness Initiative and how Summer Bridge reflects these efforts.
	Funded partner survey	Provide a sense of the impact of First 5 Marin Commission on how funded partners do business with each other and with others; provide the commission with sense of how it is perceived and potential systems-change impact.
	Midyear and yearend reports	Capture qualitative data about program implementation and evidence of impact.
	Annual evaluation report	Highlight what is and what is not working, within the context of the Theory of Change, and to assist funded partners and Commissioners in improving program/initiative design
	Annual report	Highlight community impact of commission funding and support work in the community.
2009-2012 (develop)	All of the above continued, and add:	
2012-2016 (implement)	Structural change framework	Represent the move toward a more explicit role for the commission as advocate, policy influencer, organizer, convener, and capacity builder.

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evaluative framework has evolved lies in the differences between the AERs from 2004 and 2009. The very different structure and content of the AERs, driven by the data collected to answer key evaluation questions, represent the changing ways in which funded partners and the commission have held themselves and each other accountable to the theory of change.¹²

Dimension 4: The Evolution of First 5 Marin's Approach

First 5 Marin's approach grew out of an extensive community-needs assessment and has been grounded in a series of strategic plans and a theory of change. (See Figure 2.) The approach has evolved over time, with consistent threads carried throughout as it circled closer to its true intent. Collaboration, capacity building, technical assistance, and grant funding have been ongoing strategies, though the application of each has been refined over the years.

Initially, First 5 Marin pursued desired change through a funding model focused on service-delivery grantmaking. It then shifted to an initiative model, with core outcomes identified around which all funding for services was aligned. Most recently there has been a shift to funding advocacy and policy efforts with decreases to direct funding for services.

Commission staff has consistently worked with other sectors aligned with their desired outcomes and values. Funded partners and their constituents implement the strategies agreed upon to achieve initiative outcomes.

Dimension 5: Participant Involvement in First 5 Marin

First 5 Marin commission meetings were and remain open to the public; in the first months they were well attended by those working in early education, children's health, and childcare. But they were poorly attended by parents, and in response the commissioners actively sought direct input from those who would be served by the First 5 Marin. They initiated a major mul-

tilingual outreach effort and led 20 community focus groups throughout the county. Postcards were mailed to every home in Marin County announcing evening meetings that were catered and provided childcare.

Despite grantmaking delays and ever-increasing pressure from service providers, there was consensus that the initial investment of time (almost two years) and money (more than \$100,000¹³) was worthwhile. The findings, laid out in the initial strategic plan, set a course for the commission that continues to be refined, but remains relevant.

The commission's decision to engage potential partners in determining the direction and to delay any funding until agreement and clarity were reached has resulted in long-term, trusted, and fruitful partnerships.

Community input has been sustained through a commitment to:

- an advisory structure;
- frequent community convenings;
- culturally appropriate communication and high-quality translation of materials;
- a view broader than that found through the staff's professional lens;
- clarity, transparency, and an openness to feedback;
- a strength-based approach to frame engagements with the community; and
- the time necessary to create safe spaces, build trust in the process and players, and encourage community engagement.

Many organizations and community members, funded by First 5 Marin or not, continue to see it

¹² For further information, see the First 5 Marin evaluation reports at <http://first5marin.org/evaluation.html>.

¹³ Expenses included food and child care provided at community meetings, publicity, video recording of the meetings and transcript production, and associated administrative costs.

as a trusted partner in their efforts to transform systems in Marin. As the commission takes on an increasingly policy-focused role, partnerships developed over the years are forming the basis for several communitywide advocacy efforts. In addition to providers, funders, and policymakers, these efforts now involve professional associations, grassroots neighborhood groups, and businesses.

There are significant implications for the flow of funding and the ability to evaluate return on investment in systems-change work. Being honest about this frame from the outset can lead to very different choices and messaging.

Lessons Learned Through First 5 Marin's Work

This final section presents 12 lessons culled from First 5 Marin's reflective practice. These lessons speak to the Dimensions of Change Model, but are offered mainly with hopes that understanding the successes and struggles of First 5 Marin over its 13-year history will support other change efforts.

Lesson 1: Starting with a systems/structural change frame leads to different thinking, acting, and results.

From the beginning, the First 5 Marin commission determined direct service was not the appropriate focus for its work. Instead, it concentrated on funding that addressed core issues as well as broader, systemic change. At times this meant tradeoffs between direct-service needs and broader issues, but the consensus among commissioners is that funding systemic

change has been the most effective and enduring use of resources.

There is often tension between funding direct service and systems/structural-change efforts; add to this a culture of accountability that pervades the philanthropic and nonprofit fields and people naturally gravitate toward funding patterns that seem conducive to attribution. Historically, foundations have tended to launch change initiatives with a primarily service-provision model only to realize later they were doing, or were interested in doing, systems (and sometimes structural) change. There are significant implications for the flow of funding and the ability to evaluate return on investment in systems-change work. Being honest about this frame from the outset can lead to very different choices and messaging.

Lesson 2: Collaboration is time and human intensive, but lays a foundation for sustainability.

Collaboration is fundamental to systems and structural-change work. Without many voices working to realize change from many perspectives, policies and practices that support or perpetuate inequities endure. The time and the human and financial resources required for such collaboration are substantial. The initial community-input process in Marin set the expectation that the commission would meaningfully involve residents in its self-defining efforts, and over the years this expectation has been upheld.

Throughout, First 5 Marin has intentionally built alliances and partnerships, acted as a convener, and fostered collaboration on many levels. It recognizes that the work and voices of others aligned with its own are critical to any sustained success. The multiple perspectives afforded by collaboration have been invaluable to all aspects of First 5 Marin's work along the continuum, from defining the problem to determining strategies to address it and implementing those strategies as widely as possible.

The commissioners themselves, all from different backgrounds, have had differences in opin-

ion yet maintained a commitment to the cause and willingness to support the direction of the whole. Generally, commissioners say they believe this diversity of perspectives sometimes slowed decision-making, but say they are confident that the resulting decisions have endured.

Lesson 3: The end should drive the means.

Clarity around a change effort's outcomes is the essential starting point for initiative design. Without such clarity it is all too easy to fall into a trap of providing programming for the sake of the programming, without connecting it to a higher purpose.

First 5 Marin's decision to focus on five geographic areas resulted from critical analysis of community needs and resources available from the commission (financial, human, time, and political will and influence) framed by desired outcomes that were clearly articulated. In other words, the initiatives – health, readiness for school, and special needs – were developed because they were determined to be the best way forward, given the available resources and broader hope of creating systems change. Once these priorities were established, First 5 Marin engaged priority communities and experts to develop comprehensive approaches to moving toward the outcomes identified in each area. Ultimately, First 5 Marin's defining parameters resulted from clear articulation of its goals.

Lesson 4: Holding multiple frames is possible, difficult, and necessary.

First 5 Marin adopted a hybrid approach to drawing place-based versus issue-based parameters. It simultaneously designed and supported initiatives with a countywide, issue-based frame (special needs mental health, children's health initiative, oral health) and with a place-based frame (school readiness). This duality was necessary because change had to happen simultaneously on multiple levels, and each level had different contexts and cultural factors requiring different strategies and engaging different stakeholders.

Simultaneously holding issue- and place-based frames has been confusing at times, but has been

made possible by consistent messaging, regular and thorough communication, and a commitment to transparency embodied by a willingness to state what was known and unknown and what had changed. Partners and the broader community have come to understand the commitment of First 5 Marin to its outcomes and accept that there can be multiple and interconnected ways of tackling an issue.

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Lesson 5: Initiate evaluation early and refine it.

The First 5 Marin commission made an early commitment to meaningful evaluation and to best practices about evaluating such initiatives (Auspos & Kubisch, 2004; Brown & Fiester, 2007; Schweigert, 2006). Despite their commitment, the commissioners describe challenging periods when they were not even sure what they were evaluating. But they persisted, and the initial evaluation efforts gave them something to refine as the picture became clearer and their skill developed. Their willingness to stumble and fall in the beginning was invaluable.

The cyclical and developmental (Patton, 2011) approach to the evaluation process since the onset has not only led to a growing body of information

about program effectiveness, but has served as a reminder to leadership about the essential focus of the commission. Every year when the time comes to discuss evaluation, the articulated focus of the commission is reinforced for new parties and serves as a reminder for those who have been involved longer. Repetition is key to solidifying message, and the evaluation process itself played a role in building institutional memory as well as organizational and community cohesiveness.

Building evaluative capacity among partners began with Excel training, and over the years expanded to changing data-collection methods, co-creating data-collection tools, and discussing findings to inform their work as individuals and initiative members and as contributors to First 5 Marin as it refined its overall strategy.

Lesson 6: Build evaluative capacity.

Integral to First 5 Marin's approach was a commitment to being evaluative which goes beyond that of being a learning organization (Senge, 1990) The core of this is captured in Martz' definition of an evaluative organization as "one that reaches beyond performance measurement and monitoring to embrace the relentless pursuit of quality and value by thinking and acting evaluatively to improve organizational performance."¹⁴ The Bruner Foundation defines being evaluative as able to identify key questions of substance, determine what data are needed to answer the questions, gather appropriate data in a systematic way, analyze the data and share results, develop strate-

gies to act on the findings, and integrate findings into the everyday work of an organization.¹⁵

First 5 Marin partnered with its evaluation consultant, jdcPartnerships, to build the evaluative capacity of its funded partners. That capacity not only helped First 5 Marin better evaluate its efforts, but also supported the evolution of the evaluation design. As understanding about evaluation grew and interest in and relevance of evaluation questions changed, evaluation results increasingly informed strategy and documented progress. Focus on evaluation capacity had implications for the commission's allocation of resources to train its funded partners. First 5 Marin staff and commissioners also had to learn about different types of evaluation and create frameworks that supported integration of strategy and evaluation. Building evaluative capacity among partners began with Excel training, and over the years expanded to changing data-collection methods, co-creating data-collection tools, and discussing findings to inform their work as individuals and initiative members and as contributors to First 5 Marin as it refined its overall strategy.

Building evaluation capacity has not been easy, and there was initial resistance from funded partners. However, some of the most vocal resisters now practice evaluative thinking within their own organizations and are proponents of an outcome-based and developmental approach to evaluation throughout the county.

Lesson 7: Investment in theory of change and ongoing strategic planning is worthwhile.

Early on, First 5 Marin made significant financial investment in developing a theory of change and evaluation framework. Throughout it has done formal strategic planning. These investments have grounded and sustained the work of First 5 Marin for more than 13 years despite changes in commission membership and the leadership of key partners. Furthermore, these processes have allowed the work's evolution while sustaining a consistent direction. The processes themselves (and resulting documents and products) have

¹⁴ See <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~wmartz/thoughts.htm>

¹⁵ http://www.evaluativethinking.org/sub_page.php?page=eti

been used for an array of purposes, including decision making and aligning new stakeholders.

The literature underscores the need to invest the time necessary to clearly articulate the initiative's intended change. The importance of doing so through the collective efforts of all involved cannot be overstated. Most recently, widespread interest in a collective impact framework reinforced First 5 Marin's approach (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Anecdotes illustrate how easy it is for parties to disagree over details about how things "should" work, making it possible to lose sight of how things are working or leading to the intended change. Reinforcing the big picture through graphic models, clear and consistent communications, evaluation frameworks, and planning processes are strategies that can keep things moving forward when adjustments are needed.

The relationship among values, trust, and vision and clarity about "to what end" is an intense and iterative process. It may be difficult to keep stakeholders committed to the theory of change if time is not taken to understand shared values, establish trust, and build a relationship based on a deeper understanding of principles and capacities.

Lesson 8: Support results and sustainability through realistic expectations, attention to pacing, and defined policies and procedures.

First 5 Marin began with a commitment to hold itself and its partners accountable. To do so, a structure was needed that provided realistic expectations and appropriate supports. In terms of accountability with funded partners, the focus was not so much on "contract compliance" as it was on consistently evaluating progress.

In addition to using grant agreements to provide clear expectations and procedures for programmatic and financial reporting, the commission wanted to ensure that its funded partners understood and embraced its evaluation framework. As a result, the commission spent considerable time and resources working with its partners to develop the tools they would use to measure progress toward their programmatic outcomes. Training was provided to help community partners under-

stand the concepts behind outcome evaluation, how it can provide information and data to help improve programs, and how it enables them to tell the story of change and differences their efforts make.

The relationship among values, trust, and vision and clarity about "to what end" is an intense and iterative process. It may be difficult to keep stakeholders committed to the theory of change if time is not taken to understand shared values, establish trust, and build a relationship based on a deeper understanding of principles and capacities.

Having consistent and reasonable expectations, utilizing tools vetted and developed by the intended users, being flexible and willing to modify based on lessons learned, and providing necessary technical assistance, training, and support for community partners have been critical to sustaining true partnerships and demonstrating results. Attention to timing and pacing has been important to keep people engaged and to sustain momentum. It is useful to build in opportunities along the way to celebrate events that demonstrate action and progress.

Lesson 9: Encouraging evolution and change while maintaining core direction and values leads to increased impact.

Change is constant. Contexts change and resources fluctuate. Navigating this reality while moving steadily toward a desired end is difficult but possible.

FIRST 5 MARIN GUIDING VALUES

- We believe that families have the primary responsibility for their children's physical, intellectual, mental, social, and moral development.
- We believe that the entire community shares responsibility with families to ensure that every child thrives.
- We believe that what we do to increase the potential of less-advantaged children improves the potential for all children.
- We respect and value the diversity of families, races, and cultures in Marin.
- We believe that our resources must be directed toward catalyzing sustainable improvements in the health, well-being, and development of all children in Marin.
- We believe our highest and best use is working to prevent problems before they begin.

Specifically, initiative structures that allow individuals to enter, exit, and vary their involvement support the natural ebb and flow of group process (Hughes, 2005). This degree of flexibility is particularly important for initiatives that target neighborhoods where residents have high levels of mobility. Considering changes in population throughout an initiative's life is crucial from both planning and evaluation perspectives.

First 5 Marin has been able to develop structures that make room for evolution and change while remaining grounded in its original intention and values. In short, the end is more important than the means. As long as a means is reflective of the community, is true to outcomes, and leads toward progress, it has been welcomed. Most concretely, this is reflected in First 5 Marin's recent strategic plan, which dramatically shifted its funding strategy to align with community mobilization and advocacy instead of direct service.

Leadership in this regard has been invaluable. The executive director's leadership has been both

stable and dynamically responsive; her practices have adapted to this ever-changing context. She has led cyclical and systematic reviews of frameworks and supported necessary refinements while staying true to the core messaging.

Practices that reinforce core values and strategies include annual policy breakfasts, placing staff on other committees or coalitions throughout the county and region, and involving funded partners in evaluation-framework refinements, reporting and tool development, and the ways in which the mandatory strategic planning processes have been designed and led.

The structure of the commission itself also embodies dynamic stability and contributes to the consistency of message and powerful institutional memory. The commissioners implemented a structure that enabled both continuity and change such as rotating leadership and term limits, underscored by a framework that is regularly reinforced, revisited, and refined. First 5 Marin's framework is part of the orientation for new commissioners, which gives the full body the opportunity to revisit, revise, and reinforce through fresh eyes. The result is a governing body that is grounded in an explicit articulation of values, outcomes, and strategies.

Lesson 10: Allowing time for relationships and trust to develop bears on initiative success.

To work with and for the community and to create meaningful systems change, First 5 Marin understood that it had to develop trust and partnerships with those in the community and in county government. Several practices guided this process:

- time and opportunity to build trust,
- emphasis on identifying shared values and aligned vision,
- a wide diversity of stakeholders,
- discussions framed to challenge existing systems and methodologies, and

- high standards.

Specifically when engaging with the community, two practices of note enhanced authentic engagement and supported the building of trust over time: language accessibility (bilingual staff and culturally competent translations) and support and technical assistance.

Lesson 11: Meaningful resident involvement is vital.

First 5 Marin's initial community-input process involved a significant investment of time and resources. At the time, this was an "out of the box" approach and resulted in a lot of pressure because it took so long. Nevertheless, through the community's direct participation, issues were identified that reflected its perspectives and experiences. Service providers validated and framed many of the issues raised by parents and provided additional context. Subsequent strategic planning has led to programmatic and strategy changes and refinements, but the core values and goals identified at the outset persist and continue to drive the work for First 5 Marin.

Efforts have been made to sustain resident involvement. First 5 Marin has found that it helps to pay attention to culture and language, listen to residents' concerns regardless of whether they were on its "list," and make an effort to address those concerns whenever possible. It is, however, challenging. Shifting populations and changing political and economic climates complicate efforts to follow through on promises and jointly developed plans. This can discourage community members and undermine trust in the process. The best antidote First 5 Marin has found to these challenges is to name issues as they arise, acknowledge any failures, and ask the community for its best thinking on how to "fix" the problems.

Lesson 12: Communicate frequently and transparently.

Frequent and transparent communication is critical to a change effort. Such communication in Marin has been directed at community partners, the broader community, the commissioners them-

Shifting populations and changing political and economic climates complicate efforts to follow through on promises and jointly developed plans. This can discourage community members and undermine trust in the process. The best antidote First 5 Marin has found to these challenges is to name issues as they arise, acknowledge any failures, and ask the community for its best thinking on how to "fix" the problems.

selves, and colleagues outside the county via written materials, emails, presentations, convenings, op-ed pieces, and participation in countywide efforts beyond First 5 Marin's charge. Regardless of the means, the message has been consistent, the goals clear, and in each case been framed by the overarching values. First 5 Marin has found that in this way, even when funding is threatened or grant size reduced, the community feels it is being appraised of the commission's decision-making processes and respected as part of the process.

Conclusion

Although the application of the Dimensions of Change to the experience of First 5 Marin was retrospective, it was clear to the authors that it provided both a theoretical and visual way to understand how its work related to the larger field of community change initiatives. It provided a model for assuring that important elements are considered and support progress toward the commission's priority results.

FIGURE 3 Structural Change Framework

		STAGES OF CHANGE					
		Maintenance of Institution-Oriented Systems	Awareness	Exploration	Transition	Emerging New Fundamentals	Predominance of New Community-Based Systems
LEVELS OF CHANGE	SHARED PRINCIPLES AND NORMS	Assumption: Activity oriented Norm: Competition; top-down style	Become conscious of dysfunctional norms	New norms consciously used in designing projects or programs	Spotty applications used in designing projects or programs	Leaders attend to congruence of actions with new norms and assumptions	Assumption: Results oriented Norm: Flexible, adaptive, inclusive
	VISION AND GOALS	Focus on short-term successes and strategies	Recognition of need for a vision & goals within organizations	Continued shared vision development seen as a major force of change	Continued shared vision development seen as a major force of change	Continued shared vision development seen as a major force of change	Continual attention to public involvement in dynamic systems
	STAKEHOLDER ROLES	Leaders, professional staff primarily involved in decision making	Beginning recognition of the diversity of stakeholder involvement	Structured efforts to gather citizen and other stakeholder input	Community residents becoming very vocal & involved in shaping vision	Emerging comfort with each other as equal partners	Continual attention to public involvement in dynamic systems
	PROJECTS, PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES	Built on narrowly focused organizational norms	Discussion of cross-agency projects with similar visions	Projects begin connecting short-term results with long-term vision	Projects comfortably link short-term and long-term results	Projects become a way to change standard operating mode of agencies	Assumption-based initiatives develop from projects
	HUMAN CAPACITY BUILDING	Job training programs narrowly focused and/or outdated Limited or unfocused volunteerism philanthropy	Discussion of cross-agency projects with similar visions	Networking within/across current systems and groups encourages as a way to build capacity	More community-based ways to learning & doing becoming evident	Human resources increasingly utilized on a regular basis Committed corps of volunteers emerges	Volunteerism and philanthropy are leveraged to keep formal and informal systems flexible and dynamic
	GOVERNANCE/ LEADERSHIP	Individual community members expected to implement but not make key policy decisions	Collaborative initiatives discussed; issues of their governance explored	More people from community invited to participate in key policy meetings and give input	New stakeholders invited to give input and make decisions Decisions made about new roles & responsibilities	Decisions made about how to hold each other accountable Emerging comfort with new roles & responsibilities	Decisions made about how to hold each other accountable Emerging comfort with new roles & responsibilities
	COMMUNICATION/ NETWORKING	Inform public after decisions are made and/or effort is moving forward One-way communication	Recognize that early communication with holders is critical	Monitor successes and problems in new communications, networking methods	Communication patterns begin to develop that broaden dialogue and support community-based ideas	Two-way communication strategy is in place with active participation from diverse stakeholders	Developing internal capacity for generating assets and external supporting collaborations
	FINANCIAL RESOURCES	Emphasis on bringing in outside resources Resources used to support what has been done in the past	Recognize that early communication with stakeholders is critical	Looking at social assets of community for resources (traditional assets & funding groups)	Special funds strategically used to solidify new ways of operating	Developing internal capacity for generating assets and external supporting collaborations	Developing internal capacity for generating assets and external supporting collaborations

Based on "Using a Systems Change Approach to Building Communities" by Beverly Parsons, InSites, Boulder Co.

With regard to the larger field of those working for community change, be they in the social, philanthropic, or public sector, the Dimensions of Change model and the lessons learned from the experience of First 5 Marin as well as the literature provide:

1. a reference for thinking through the various components of a community change initiative,
2. an initial set of questions within each dimension offered as considerations (see Figure 3),
3. structure for a discussion of and making decisions within each dimension, and
4. a means to greater clarity within and increased alignment across the dimensions in service of the goals of the CCI.

We invite others to reflect on the Dimensions of Change model, anecdotes, and lessons offered here as they embark upon their own community change efforts. In doing so, we hope it will support more informed considerations, stronger and intentional design, focused yet adaptive implementation, and a road map for evaluation that supports documenting progress and, more importantly, informs decisions that can increase the likelihood of attaining desired ends.

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