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# Evolving New Approaches to Community Change: Social Change & Technology

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IP3
INSTITUTE FOR
PEOPLE, PLACE, & POSSIBILITY

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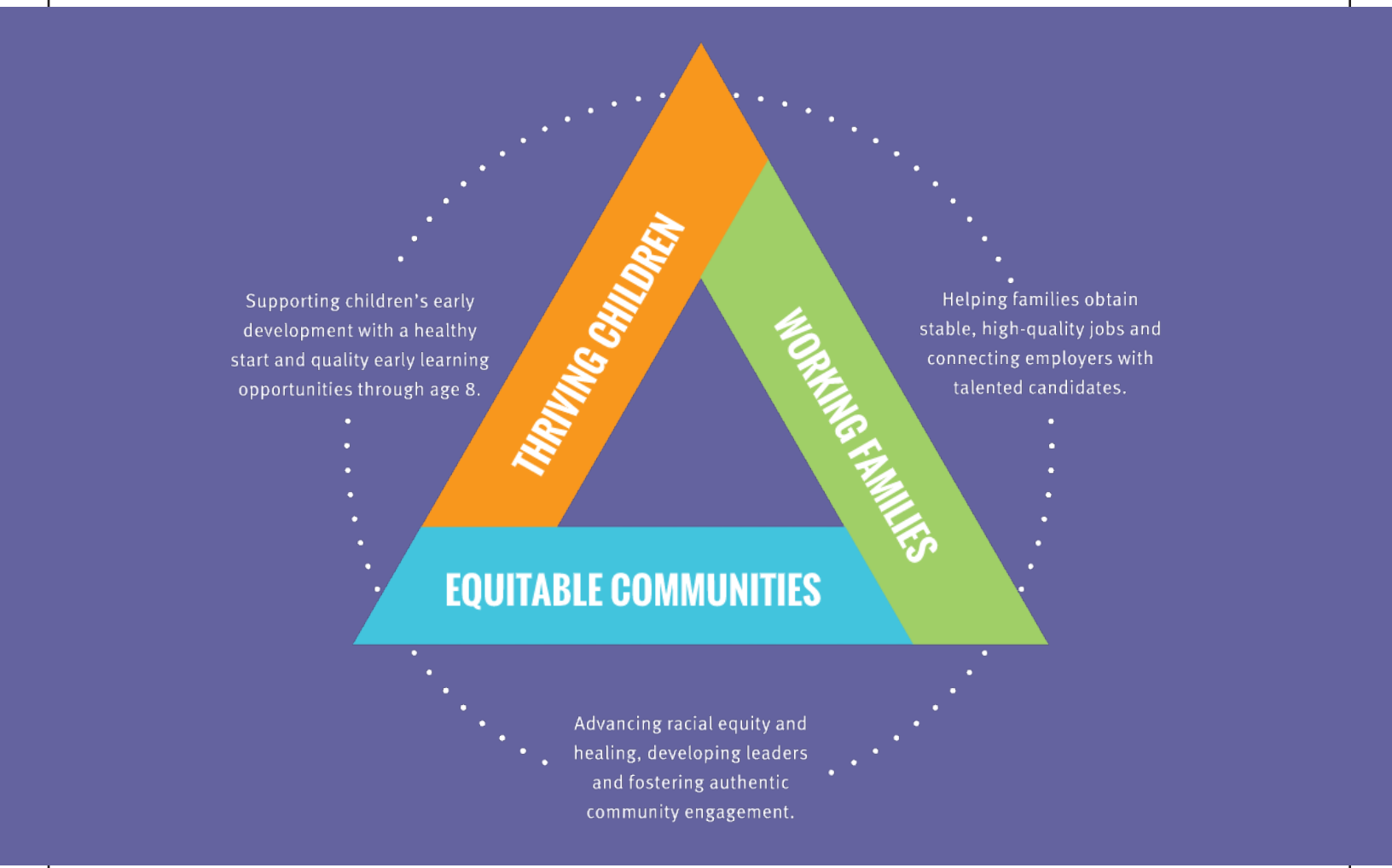
# introduction

Throughout its history, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) has endeavored to embrace fresh and practical strategies for accomplishing its primary purpose. A review of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation: The First Eleven Years, provides a striking reminder of its enduring core values and focus: improving the health, happiness and well-being of children of this and future generations. From the beginning, WKKF has been committed to cooperatively solving community-identified problems. WKKF has always seen community as the critical unit of change and recognized early on the importance of building the leadership capacity of professionals, formal and informal leaders, as well as the citizenry as a whole. New technologies, a growing evidence-base of proven community improvement strategies, and an interest in discovering improved forms of collective problem solving are fueling the Foundation's current exploration of fresh approaches to its core mission.



# purpose

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is now embarking on new approaches to achieve its strategic priorities and has engaged the IP3 team as a thought partner. More specifically, IP3 has been asked to offer insights, experience, key questions and recommendations on the following two strategic opportunities: (a) an Integrated Approach to achieving greater impact with WKKF place-based and topically focused investments; and (b) an Ecosystem Approach to achieving impact for and through the multi-faceted community improvement movement. While this paper will not use language that is unique or specific to WKKF (e.g. terms such as Collaboration Labs), the general terms and concepts that describe these archetypal approaches are applicable.

**At a high level:**

(a) WKKF is pursuing a more Integrated Approach to advance its strategic priorities, engage communities and ultimately leading to measurable improvements in community health, well-being, and equity. This entails effective integration of collective action tools, technical assistance (on and off site) and related programmatic and technology supports for the geographic communities and topical/action networks in which it invests.

**Key Premise:** Cross-sector community collaborations can achieve significantly greater impact with better access to:

- Effective Technical Assistance (TA)
- The Right Mix of Information
- Compelling Web-Based Collaboration Space(s)
- Community Data & Collective Action Tools

Delivering these elements coherently, in a manner that community collaborations can efficiently and effectively use them, is where the unique opportunity/challenge rests.

(b) WKKF is interested in leveraging its partnerships and influence with leading foundations, technology providers and other key stakeholders to forge an **Ecosystem Approach:** sharing technology, content, data, and digital tools based on mutual interests in community health, well-being and equity.

**Key Premise:** Deeper coordination and collaboration across funders, key technology providers, thought leaders, and leading community coalitions could create an Ecosystem where:

- Community collaborations have public access to data, and digital tools once out of their reach (due to limited resources or awareness)
- Community change agents are designing, implementing and adapting data technologies with leading technology providers (i.e. to suit their unique purposes)
- The lessons, research, data and stories that are that are typically siloed within the various sectors and facets of the communities' movement are now widely available - stimulating and facilitating a broad learning community
- Funders are looking to leverage open source, open data standards and shared and/or connected platform(s) to benefit the broader movement (rather than duplicating)
- Investments can be shared, built up and sustained over time

In order to better understand the current community improvement landscape, the next section will explore its opportunities and challenges and its experience with technology. This will help lay the foundation for subsequent sections - the Integrated Approach and Ecosystem Approach.

# I. Understanding Current Community Improvement Efforts

## A. Roots of the Movement

Many of today's cross-sector community collaborations have their roots in the Healthier Communities Movement. The movement got its start in the United States in the mid 1980s, inspired by the European-based Healthy Cities initiative spearheaded by the World Health Organization (WHO). At the time this long-term, vision-driven, holistic, collaborative, asset-oriented, and upstream approach to community health improvement was a radical departure from the status quo.

Key institutional leaders, such as the National Civic League (NCL), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Colorado Trust, invested essential resources and provided thought leadership. These early efforts embraced traditions of local democracy and citizen governance—perhaps rooted in what Alexis Tocqueville observed as the unique ways in which Americans (used to) join together to affect change.

In fact, the early healthier community initiatives were quite intentional about participative planning and community engagement. Planning processes spanning up to eighteen months were not unusual, and they often engaged hundreds of stakeholders in substantive ways. Implementation would be distributed among a variety of action teams—often composed of community organizations and citizens. Initiators early efforts actually saw the overall process itself as a means to foster a greater sense of community; it was a prime motivation, as important as the achievement of other more tangible outcomes.

While some have been careful to distinguish between "healthy" communities and terms such as "sustainable," "livable," "resilient" and other terms, these distinctions were less clear and less relevant in practice. Some collaboratives focused on the intersections of physical design/public health/economic development; some on the intersections of education achievement/poverty alleviation/neighborhood revitalization; and others on natural environment/childhood obesity/equity. The specific focus areas are unique to each community change effort, with each discovering its own formula. This multifaceted, broadly defined movement of a 1,000+ community collaboratives generally embrace upstream, cross-sector, and holistic approaches to change. In short, the relationships, structures, successes and practices of today's community improvement efforts are a direct reflection or result of the earlier Healthier Communities Movement.

## B. Recent Trends & Their Opportunity/Challenge

***Technological & Social Changes:***

Technological and social changes of the last 25 years have profoundly influenced the ways communities now approach the work of community improvement. Few communities today would be willing and/or able to pull off a highly participative, eighteen month planning process. In the not-too-distant past, community leaders used "snail mail" and the telephone as the primary mode of communication. Today, recruiting for and conducting meetings where stakeholders possess smartphones — allowing access to unimaginable amounts of information and distractions—poses new opportunities and challenges. Many community leaders have observed that people simply have less time to devote to community improvement efforts.

Civic technology is technology that enables engagement or participation of the public for stronger development, enhancing citizen communications, improving government infrastructure, and generally improving the public good and is growing and gaining traction. Now more than ever, the technical interoperability made possible by APIs and the cloud are bringing the social sector into the data and technology space.

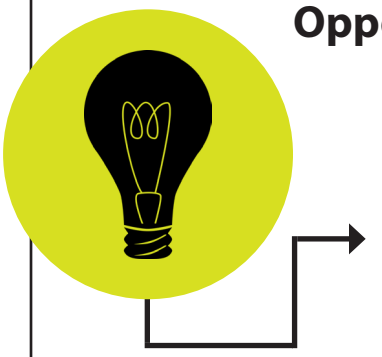
In keeping with Mr. Kellogg's commitment to co-operatively solving with the communities and drawing on the work of Laurenellen McCann, it is important to focus on "civic" in "civic technology": the actual people and communities we claim to serve when we set out to create tools for public good.

In studying this arena, Ms. McCann's discovered a real contrast between civic technologies that were community-driven in their approach and those that weren't. Community-driven civic technologies are built at the speed of inclusion--the pace necessary not just to create a tool but to do so with in-depth communal input and stewardship, responding to the needs, ideas, and wants of those they're intended to benefit.

To help guide this "build with, not for" approach, Ms. McCann developed the "Criteria for People First Civic Tech".

"To prioritize people and build with them is to:

1. Start with people: Work with the real people and real communities you are part of, represent, and/or are trying to serve
2. Cater to context: Leverage and operate with an informed understanding of the existing social infrastructure and socio-political contexts that affect your work
3. Respond to need: Let expressed community ideas, needs, wants, and opportunities drive problem-identification and problem-solving
4. Build for best: Develop solutions and tools that are the most useful to the community and most effectively support outcomes and meet needs
5. Prove it: Demonstrate and document that community needs, ideas, skills, and other contributions are substantially integrated into -- and drive -- the lifecycle of the project."



## Opportunity/Challenge - Technological & Social Changes

How do we ensure there are still places for meaningful face-to-face engagements (essential for trust building and meaningful discourse)?

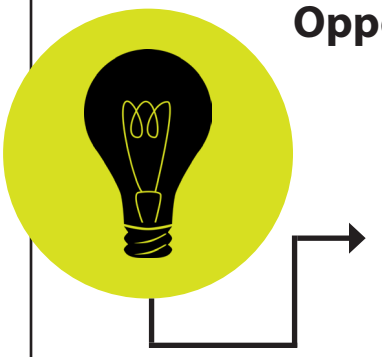
How do we augment planning, community engagement with streamlined planning and digital tools?

How do we ensure we are building technologies and approaches "with, not for" the communities?

***Place-Based Change:***

Obesity and lifestyle-induced chronic diseases were barely on the radar screen of the earlier healthy community initiatives. Few could have predicted that these two related epidemics would eventually be a dominant focus of a vast number of community improvement efforts, forcing the public health community and leading foundations to invest in community-based collaboratives to thwart these trends. Many of these investments focused on two primary drivers: physical inactivity and poor nutrition. These investments were built upon the growing recognition of the power of "place": where people spend most of their time, living, working, learning and playing has great influence on individual and population-wide health outcomes. This offshoot of the healthy communities movement adopted new mantras: "Place Matters"; "It's Your Zip Code, Not Genetic Code"; "Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice". A remarkable alignment in funding research and "place-based" community collaboratives emerged—with a focus on implementing evidence-based strategies to change social, physical and economic environments to "help make the healthy choice" the cultural norm. The focus on place naturally led to an understanding of, and focus on, policy, system and environmental change strategies described below.

## Opportunity/Challenge - Place-Based Change



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How do we bolster cross sector, community-driven action at the level of place or settings where people spend most of their time? | How do we provide data, tools and resources to better understand our unique places? | What are other communities doing and learning? |

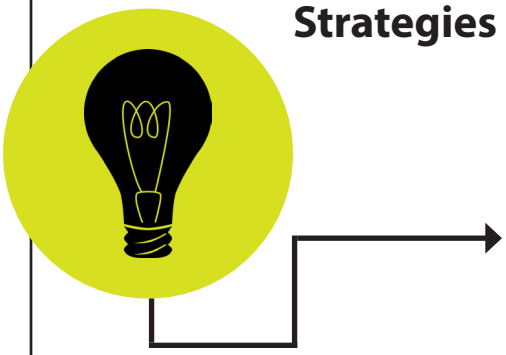
***Policy, System & Environmental (PSE) Strategies:***

The growing evidence based strategies were aimed largely at shaping community context--the physical and social environments that greatly influence our behaviors. Until recently, many community health improvement initiatives focused primarily on programs and promotional strategies. Experience and evidence has continued to show that programs and promotional activities, on their own, rarely achieve sustained impact.

The emphasis—and financial incentives from funders and the federal government— is now on implementing evidence-based Policy, System and Environmental (PSE) change strategies. For example, changes in healthy eating require more access to healthy, affordable and food, not just education about healthy eating. Research and experience show that a combination of PSE strategies can tip behavior change: school and government procurement policies (for healthy locally sourced food); more farmers markets, school gardens and CSAs; healthy vending and menu labeling and access to full service grocery stores. PSE strategies are more leveraged, influencing population versus just individual behaviors. And because they tend to address upstream causes, they contain the possibility of solving multiple problems. For example, safer, more walkable street design can increase physical activity, lower crime, bolster neighbor relationships and incentivize economic activity.

PSE is not bound by a narrow range of issues, even though the science and practice has advanced significantly as a result of the obesity epidemic. PSE strategies also require a fresh approach to organizing coalitions and a totally new set of skills.

## Opportunity/Challenge - Policy, Systems, and Environmental Strategies



How do we build the capacity of multi-sector collaboratives to effectively implement PSE strategies?

How do we provide tools to engage and educate the broader public and/or advocate for PSE changes with decision makers?

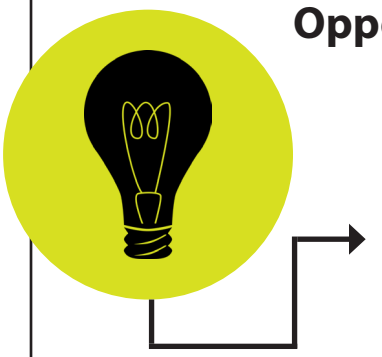
What types decision support and improvement tools will help with effective implementation?

How can we learn from other collaborative's experience?

***Disparities and Health Equity:***

The unwelcome obesity and chronic disease trends also shed light and awareness about the growing gaps in health status based on race, ethnicity and income. The need to address health equity has become a moral and financial imperative. Health inequities point to differences in health status that are entirely avoidable, and therefore unjust. Of course inequities are not bound by differences in health outcomes, they are apparent in growing economic and educational achievement gaps. Leaders in the community improvement movement, including foundations such as WKKF, are bringing attention to the issues related to structural racism which are firmly rooted in so many of our community and national institutions. The application of proven, place-based strategies (using PSE) offer community collaboratives powerful tools for helping individuals and families in our most vulnerable neighborhoods to live healthier and more prosperous lives. Addressing and advancing equity has become a primary goal in virtually all community improvement efforts, regardless to their topical focus.

## Opportunity/Challenge - Disparities & Health Equity



How do we engage our community/ neighborhood/ organization/ network in productive conversations about race and equity?

What tools, such as data visualization, help us discover and communicate insights about inequities?

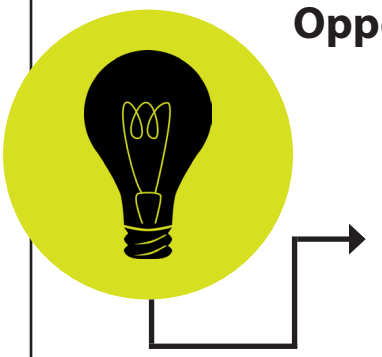
How do we build the capacity of our most vulnerable neighborhoods to successfully implement solutions?

***Collective Action:***

Discovering better and more efficient ways of achieving greater impact through collective action has been a longtime and ongoing source of inquiry for practitioners and academics. However, in 2011, FSG, a consulting firm focused on large scale social change promoted their Collective Impact Model which was quickly embraced as a new and better way to collaborate. The model, and its five conditions to support collective impact, offers a common language, and fresh concepts to talk about how to work together to achieve social change on complex issues. The model has been useful to many new and existing collaborations. It is also likely that its quick acceptance is reflective of the frustration with collaborations that have not achieved nor sustained meaningful results.

While collective impact is an important contribution to the field, it is not the panacea for overcoming classic collaboration challenges. It's worth noting many of the more well-known collective impact efforts did not start with the language or model--these were merely added to describe what was working. As it relates to place-based change, several thought leaders in the field have noted limitations to this approach that is often organizationally centric and consultant heavy (see Tom Wolfe paper). To the FSG team's credit, the model has more recently adopted principles that are more consistent with community-driven improvement. Foundations across the country were especially interested in the promise of measurable impact, something collective impact has helped emphasize.

## Opportunity/Challenge - Collective Action



| How do we start or bolster community collaboratives to take effective collective actions? | How do we provide access to meaningful community metrics and improvement tools to understand impact? | How do we coordinate and collaborate around shared data and goals? |
|---|---|---|

These recent trends, opportunities and challenges require that cross-sector community collaboratives build new skills and adopt new ways of working to create desired change. It means addressing growing racial, social and economic inequalities by transforming the systems that produce and maintain inequities is imperative to improvement efforts. It means combining the best of the "science of improvement" with community organizing and community development practices. It means organizing to be innovative, nimble and inclusive—to operate more like a movement than a hierarchical, slow moving coalition. Finally, it means engaging or re-engaging the hearts, minds and assets of community members for the sake of the common good.

To successfully evolve new approaches to help cross-sector community collaboratives and their respective networks achieve greater impact, we must consider these emerging trends and challenges/opportunities and avoid building more tools that reflect outdated approaches for meeting today's challenges and needs.

# II. Evolving an "Integrated Approach"

The emerging opportunities and challenges for collaboratives focused on community improvement will require a blend of support elements. These same support elements are applicable to networks working on common, topically or issue- focused improvements.

**Key Premise:** Cross-sector community collaborations can achieve significantly greater impact with better access to:

- Effective Technical Assistance (TA)
- The Right Mix of Information
- Compelling Web-Based Collaboration Space(s)
- Community Data & Collective Action Tools

## A. Effective Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) is a general term referring to processes for transferring knowledge and/or building skills (or capacity). TA might be delivered around a specific strategy area, such as improving third grade reading levels. TA might also be delivered around skills: developing an advocacy campaign, employing improvement methods or how to effectively use a web-based collaboration space. There are a number of different modes for delivering TA: consulting, coaching, workshops, trainings or learning/action summits. TA can be delivered through onsite and offsite methods.

**Strategic Objective:**

Employ the most effective TA mode(s) to build the capacity of cross-sector collaboratives to effectively adopt and sustain a new way of thinking and acting.

| From (Current State) | To (Desired State) |
|---|---|
| Feeling overwhelmed by the amount and poor organization of content | » Curated content organized around the unique context, needs and aspirations of end-users (e.g. Change makers in multi-sector collaboratives) |
| Delivering content that is exclusively from outside experts | » Peer-generated content (e.g. stories, questions, insights) reflective of the real-time nature and needs of collaboratives<br>» Easy and incentivized ways to add content<br>» Outside experts responding to questions/ content needs as they arise |
| Receiving content that is not easily consumed and/or actionable (e.g. too long or out of context) | » Content that is easy to digest and is relevant to the knowledge or practice needs at hand |

## B. Compelling Web-Based Collaboration Space

A web-based collaborative space is broadly defined as any web enabled areas that support collaborative actions—exchanging ideas, sharing goals and strategies, and coordinating collective actions. This has taken the form of a simple Facebook or LinkedIn group or a space that includes features that support collaboration. For example, a group of stakeholders working to reduce the number of homeless children might utilize a space that helps coordinate communication, shared and complementary strategies, and action planning across coalition members. Communities Linked is obviously designed to fill the need for a deeper form of digital collaboration that is missing for many networks and community partnerships.

**Strategic Objective:**

Maintain a web-based space(s) that supports effective and efficient collective learning and action.

| From (Current State) | To (Desired State) |
|---|---|
| Static space that lacks participation from key collaborators | » A dynamic space that is well used by key stakeholders within a discrete community of users (geographic community collaborative or topical network) |
| Generic off-the-shelf features that have not been tailored to meet the needs of a specific community | » A space that signals it is designed to support specific users—a collaborative or network<br>» A space that has unique tools, data and content that cannot be easily accessed through other digital spaces<br>» The right features for the specific group of end users (and not too many) |
| No real functional space to support collective action | » Spaces that support cross-sector collaboration: dashboards for displaying progress around shared goals; common improvement tools; community asset mapping |

## C. Community Data & Collective Action Tools

Community Data & Collective Action Tools

The emphasis and interest in collective action requires access to community scale data in order to understand their current reality and to demonstrate progress overtime. These data must include secondary data, collected largely by national and state agencies, as well as locally sourced or collected data. Collective action tools support coordinated planning and action across a range of sectors and community stakeholders. Improvement tools put data into context—enhancing "sense making" and supporting innovation through small scale pilots.

**Strategic Objective:**

Evolve and maintain access to meaningful community-scale indicators that support collective planning, coordinated action, innovation and the capacity to demonstrate impact.

| From (Current State) | To (Desired State) |
|---|---|
| Little-to-no community scale data to support place-based change | » Easy access to community-scale (sub-county) data that is relevant to respective collaboratives/networks<br>» Consumable secondary data—through reporting, assessment and mapping formats |
| Few-to-no improvement and/or decision support tools | » Tools that place data into a common lifecycle for planning and action: assessment, predictive models, measurement (e.g. annotated run charts), and impact tools (e.g. collective dashboards) |
| Little-to-no access to locally sourced data | » Tools that support local data collection, including qualitative and quantitative data<br>» Easy data integration with existing secondary data bases<br>» Use of APIs and open data standards to maximize strengths of different data sets |
| Minimal guidance on the use of data to assess and measure impact | » Web-based guidance (derived by community data experts) on best secondary data options and/or suggested indicators to collect for various improvement areas<br>» Expert phone or in-person coaching regarding how to leverage data for change |

If truly integrated, these combined support elements can evolve with real synergy, adding increasing benefit to community collaboratives and issue-focused networks, including:

- **Extending the reach and effectiveness of TA:** TA providers would be able to leverage curated web-based tools and content, allowing targeted users to access the content they need when they want it—saving face-to-face TA for when it is optimal. Well-used collaboration spaces and data-oriented improvement tools offer TA providers a better view into the needs and interests of the respective communities—which is critical to delivering useful TA.

- **Improving the chances and rate of community-level change:** Access to relevant community-scale data and intuitive improvement tools will help community collaboratives pilot, test and scale solutions. The ability to actually leverage secondary along with primary data collection is a missing ingredient to measuring progress. Augment this capacity with compelling web-based collaboration spaces— for data sharing, goal setting, dashboards to display progress—and the chance of greater collective impact is substantially boosted.

- **Advancing learning and action across networks**: Providing access to effective and intuitive collaboration spaces, curated content and data/improvement tools, will help encourage network-wide sharing and learning. Effective integration holds the promise of a virtuous snowball effect: increasing use of common tools, data and information repositories will exponentially grow more knowledge, stories, community data and the overall utility value of the integrated approach. (This same premise can be applied at a much larger scale to the Ecosystem Opportunity.)

# III. Evolving an "Ecosystem Approach"

Ecosystem is a term that up until recently was used mostly in the natural sciences: the complex of a community of organisms and its environment functioning as an ecological unit (Merriam- Webster). It is now commonly used to describe a system or network of interconnecting parts that have inter-related and shared interests. In an ecosystem, the success or failure of an enterprise or endeavor does not primarily lie with a single, autonomous organization but with a wide range of stakeholders and stakeholder dynamics. A more intentional ecosystem approach to developing and applying data technology to the field(s) of community improvement holds tremendous promise.

**Key Premise:** Deeper coordination and collaboration across funders, key technology providers, field thought leaders, and leading community coalitions could create an Ecosystem where:

- Community collaborations have public access to data and digital tools that were once out of their reach (due to limited resources or awareness)
- Community change agents are designing, implementing and adapting data technologies with leading technology providers (i.e. to suit their unique purposes)
- The lessons, research, data and stories that are siloed within the various sectors and facets of the communities' movement are widely available—generating a broad learning community
- Funders are looking to leverage open source, open data standards and shared and/or connected platform(s) to benefit the broader movement (avoid duplication)
- Investments can be shared, built up and sustained over time

WKKF's early exploration into developing such an ecosystem with a wide array of foundations and several leading technology providers has yielded significant interest. The Community Commons efforts have also surfaced the need and interest in a much broader ecosystem approach. While there are several mature models for governing and managing an ecosystem (e.g. industries, opens source networks, and natural resource management efforts), this is relatively new territory at the intersection of community improvement and the fast changing data technology environment.

The following offers the essential elements for evolving a successful ecosystem approach: sharing technology, content, data, and digital tools based on mutual interests in community health, well-being and equity.

## A. Essential Elements of a Successful Ecosystem Approach

**Shared Vision Based on Mutual Interests:**

While this may seem obvious, it is also absolutely foundational to a successful ecosystem approach. This proposed ecosystem would be built around the community improvement movement, described early in this paper. Those involved in this ecosystem would need to have a substantial interest in advancing place-based, multi-sector collaborations focused on advancing strategies that lead to greater health, equity and sustainability. And while the exact language and precise benefits would need to be co-created over time, these ecosystem stakeholders would share some variation of the benefits included in the "key premise" above.

Community collaboratives, data providers, programmers, technology firms, foundations and other stakeholders will undoubtedly have different interests and priorities. However, their diverse interest will be met through convergent strategies: providing access to leading technology, community-scale data and the right mix of information that helps grow healthier people and places. Some stakeholders may have an interest in a particular social cause or issue, others an interest in the process of social innovation. Solving vexing or "wicked problems" such as obesity, climate change, or mass incarceration are complex, shifting challenges that have no one right answer—they require unprecedented collaboration. As Deloitte points out, "What we're seeing today is that many kinds of "wicked problems" are now being reframed and tackled with renewed vigor through solution ecosystems. Unprecedented networks of NGOs, social entrepreneurs, governments—and yes, big businesses—are coalescing around them and recasting them as "wicked opportunities." Turning our most pressing community challenges into opportunities will be a strong incentive for many stakeholders. Simply selling product or solutions cannot or should not be a driver of participation in the ecosystem.

**Shared Governance:**

Ecosystems are dynamic and have self organizing characteristics. Successful ecosystem approaches need governance mechanisms to help guide, regulate and maximize ecosystem activities. The crux governance questions are: what results, for whom and at what relative cost or priority?

Effective governance groups are of manageable size, credibly represent the range of ecosystem stakeholder perspectives and have the tools and time to fulfill their role. Having a centralized governance body to act on behalf of the ecosystems' common purpose can help support the more organic and self organizing qualities of the broader ecosystem. Identifying a spectrum of opportunities for ecosystem stakeholders to provide input on direction (e.g. priorities, improvements) and/or to contribute (e.g. content, code, financial resources, stories) will help ensure that decision making doesn't become too centralized. Three areas that will likely require more in-depth shared governance are around data, technology and content. (This paper is not concerned with the precise structure but these could be handled through subcommittees or advisory groups to the overarching governance or stewardship team.)

**Data Coordination:**

Better coordination and planning between data providers, data intermediaries, foundations and data sharing networks will help meet the needs and aspirations of local community improvement efforts. Federal agencies, such as USDA, HUD, CDC, EPA, HHS, and Census prioritizing their collection and production around community needs/usability is a critical step. New mechanisms are needed to formally and informally work across agencies and sectors to help data intermediaries—such as Community Commons, Policy Map, various academic institutions, state and local data warehouses—to make data available in increasingly intuitive and usable forms. Mechanisms for data coordination can also help meet the challenge of data granularity and interpretation. With a better understanding of cross sector collaboration—the art and science of community improvement—data providers and scientists can help improve small area estimates, and offer meaningful guidance on correlations and causality between diverse data sets.

A shared approach will need to include helping local collaboratives gain greater access to tools for collecting their own data—filling a critical gap in demonstrating impact. What undergirds this ecosystem approach to data is a commitment to common data standards, data models (and definitions), and the effective and prolific use of APIs. The ability to consume and share data across platforms with increased efficiency and at a substantially reduced cost will accelerate collaboration among data providers and users. Evolving clear, agreed upon policies and practices for data sharing, generation and use will need a credible governance mechanism/entity.

**Technology & Code Coordination:**

A community including data providers, community end users, and foundation leaders will make it possible for technology providers and programmer networks to co-create tools and apps that serve the field of community improvement. Leveraging open source code within the context of a widely shared vision and priorities, sets the stage for real innovation. Like the data component, it will be essential to develop governance mechanisms and policies to support sharing code and the resultant solutions. To be successful the ecosystem will need to find meaningful roles and incentives for technology providers who are already widely used in the field of community improvement, such as ESRI and Tableau. Opportunities for deep learning, meaningful contributions to community and enhanced brand recognition will help. The real potential for large numbers of end users on common platform(s) serve as both a channel and as well a marketplace for user rated tools. Foundations and other community improvement investors would be able to make build decision based on ecosystem intelligence and needs, not in a vacuum—which has led to lots of unsustainable platforms and duplicated efforts. Foundations and other investors in place-based technologies will increasingly see tangible benefits to building and sharing new tools with an ecosystem mindset. Spread and scale throughout the many facets of the communities' movement can and will likely happen organically and exponentially.

**Content Coordination:**

As identified earlier, the communities movement has endless containers (e.g. websites and publications) of content in the form of strategies, proven policies, stories, relevant research, and practice-based insights. Discovering ways to improve the efficacy and depth of learning across the multitude of containers and stakeholders is critical for the movement—translating content into collective wisdom that is actionable. Like data, it is important to define/classify content and share it through APIs and well-coordinated curation. The communities movement already has credible thought leaders and discrete learning communities that could be tapped to support learning within a larger ecosystem framework. Tying different forms of content—strategies, stories, research—to data and digital tools is already showing real promise on the Community Commons platform. As Deloitte suggests: "Platform businesses can be classified into different types. Some, like eBay and Etsy, are aggregation platforms. Others are social platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. Mobilization platforms, such as the Ushahidi network, have also grown in impact. The platform type that could have the greatest potential, however, may just now be unfolding: platforms explicitly designed to accelerate and scale the potential for learning by their participants." Creating platform(s) that explicitly accelerate the potential for learning across the siloed communities movement is the big opportunity. Well designed platform(s) provide a means for diverse ecosystem stakeholders to create and capture value for themselves while adding value to the larger community.

**Convener Organization(s):**

Supporting all of the above elements will require substantial organizational support. More specifically, it will require backbone support functions, such as convening governance and work groups, coordinating and providing staffing for the evolution of data, code and content sharing capability and agreements, generating partners and champions, and securing and managing resources. There are a number of ways that these core functions might be accomplished, and with an ecosystem model, it will likely be distributed among multiple organizations. Nonetheless, there will be a need for a credible/neutral organization at the center of orchestration. An effective, diverse and independent governance group would ideally shape and provide guidance and oversight for the convening organization(s).

## B. Process Considerations

The processes used to evolve a more intentional ecosystem will matter a great deal. This is an extraordinarily ambitious endeavor and success will hinge on a process that ensures the following:

1. Begins with a thoughtful and diverse mix of key stakeholder groups to cast a long term vision with tangible desired outcomes. This needs to be something that a credible, critical mass of stakeholders feel ownership of and responsibility toward creating. The group should include stakeholders who have the power and resources to take action, while keeping the focus on the broader good vs. organizational self interest.
2. Leads to clarity on what an optimal ecosystem accomplishes for diverse stakeholders, as well as high level strategies for fulfilling the essential elements, before getting too deep on the structure of the convening organization(s).
3. Incorporates design thinking methods to help uncover opportunities for multiple platforms, technologies, databases and user communities to work and learn together. (Avoid thinking this is a single platform "play", which will inevitably undermine interests in working together.)
4. Encourages learning journeys, connecting with prospective end users, key stakeholder groups, as well as digital learning/collaboration communities.
5. Identifies an area where all aspects of the ecosystem could operate in concert—and use it as a laboratory for collective learning. Start with a spirit of inquiry and experimentation!

# IV. Recommendations

## A. Integrated Approach Recommendations

***Evolving a An Integrated Approach:***

As WKKF has suggested, a more active and direct approach to supporting desired change is relatively new territory for the foundation. In other words, WKKF will be trying out new programmatic approach, including how it delivers TA and how to best deploy a new technology. This provides an excellent opportunity to use this next phase to experiment, test, observe, and eventually scale what works.

We recommend using an intentional cross-team design and learning process for building this integrated approach, perhaps with one place-based community grantee and with one network-based initiative. There are trade-offs for doing this on an established project. No doubt WKKF has experience rolling out new programs; the IP3/CI team would welcome an opportunity to exchange ideas about effective learning/design processes to support the evolution of WKKF's integrated approach.

***Evolving An Ecosystem Approach:***

Evolving an ecosystem approach is an ambitious endeavor. WKKF and Kaiser Permanente's work with Network Impact was an important first step toward highlighting the need for wider collaboration around technology and data to serve the community improvement field(s). This, coupled with Kellogg's recent explorations with other leading foundations, technology firms, Nethope, and IP3 lay

the groundwork for a more intentional ecosystem design process. Per the five process considerations in the previous section, a possible next step is to support manageably sized group of diverse stakeholders to flesh out a vision and what the desired outcomes of an ecosystem collaboration would look like in practice. The sooner an ecosystem collaborative can begin to pilot concepts, the better.

As the Kellogg team has indicated, the larger ecosystem is not as pressing a priority compared to building out WKKF's integrated approach. There is, however, quite a bit of overlap between aspects of the integrated approach with the larger ecosystem concept. The WKKF team could join in on some of the ecosystem design and demonstration work that the IP3 is embarking on now. IP3 is actively engaged in early ecosystem design work with Community Commons 3.0. In fact, our underlying data infrastructure, leveraging open source and open data standards and data and content APIs, sets the stage for some of the described attributes of a desired ecosystem. Perhaps there are near-term opportunities to explore how Communities Linked interfaces with new CC technologies within an ecosystem framework. No doubt Kellogg's experience, capability would deepen and advance current ecosystem conversations and pilots that are in process now.

*Note: Community Commons 3.0 is evolving as one critical area for all of the above stakeholders to realize their diverse and collective interest in supporting multi-sector collaboratives to achieve measurable improvement. IP3, the steward of the CC, is beginning to pull together a stewardship team, as well as a data/metrics team to serve the needs of the broader, multi-faceted field. There is already a history of collaboration across data providers, key funders and diverse networks of community collaboratives; collaboration with other technology providers is relatively new territory for CC. The Commons team is excited about the opportunity to leverage its experience with the experience and strengths of WKKF to begin piloting and evolving this ecosystem approach.*

*Note: One example of a mechanism for deeper coordination and planning is the National Committee on Health and Vital Statistics (NCVHS). NCVHS has been convening many different federal agencies, foundations, academics and data technology providers to generate more community-scale data. This is very early stage. They have identified 100 Million Healthier Lives (anchored by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement) to convene a public-private effort to advance many of the aspirations described above. The Community Commons Team has helped facilitate and coach these efforts to date and will help 100 MHL in its convening role. Community Commons and 100 MHL have a "Metrics Team" that is developing a menu of community scale metrics which will evolve with the various fields of community development/ health improvement, along with the actual experience of community collaboratives using various metrics. The Metrics team represents some of the leading thinkers regarding community-level metrics and process improvement.*

# appendix

## ABOUT IP3

The Institute for People, Place & Possibility (IP3) is a 501(c)(3) founded in 2010, whose mission is to provide next generation tools and skills to help groups translate data, maps and stories into new possibilities, wise decision-making and collective action. The Institute is unique in its capacity to blend proven community development and public engagement approaches with a dynamic database, leading-edge visualization, decision support and peer learning tools.

IP3 "powers" Community Commons by providing strategic direction, project management, training and user support and assessment and evaluation support.

## ABOUT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Community Initiatives (CI) was founded in 1997 as a network of professionals and partner organizations dedicated to building healthy and whole communities. The CI team's combined experience includes work with leaders from over 300 communities to improve the health of their social, economic and physical environments. Serving as expert coaches, consultants, trainers and facilitators, CI advises and helps a wide range of organizations, multi-sector partnerships and national initiatives to shape collaborative approaches focused on measurable change.

CI's work is frequently supported through funding from, and in partnership with, organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), YMCA of the USA (YUSA), Kaiser Permanente (KP) and the Audubon Society.

CI offers a uniquely effective blend of content and policy expertise, along with extensive experience in designing and supporting collaborative change processes. Team members bring expertise in the areas of: coalition development and governance; strategic planning; results and performance measurement; leadership development; and community and organizational development.

CI co-founded the Community Commons, a web-based platform that provides free public access to thousands of data layers and powerful mapping tools providing access to key strategic indicators to support measurement, evaluation, community engagement, and collective action.

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