2013

A Matter of Leadership: Connecting a Grantmaker's Investments in Collaborative Leadership Development to Community Results

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RESULTS

A Matter of Leadership: Connecting a Grantmaker's Investments in Collaborative Leadership Development to Community Results

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Key Points

· Foundations are increasingly supporting cross-sector collaboratives that focus on developing collaborative leadership skills, in addition to strengthening collaborative accountability. This article tests the Theory of Aligned Contributions change model, as implemented by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Leadership in Action Program.

· Path analysis results show that grantmakers can support cross-sector collaboratives by providing skilled implementation teams that promote public and individual accountability and build strong collaborative leadership skills. Through this support, collaboratives develop effective strategies that affect important social issues.

· This research sheds light on how grantmakers can fund and encourage a process for cross-sector community members to successfully collaborate and independently generate community results.

Why leadership? Leaders create forward movement through executing strategies for organizational and community change that results in sustained and positive outcomes. Collaborative leadership is especially important in cross-sector collaboratives; it is a specific type of leadership that promotes strategic relationship building, resource-sharing, honest and open dialogue, and a deeper understanding of the important social issues that collaboratives work to address. These skills are crucial when striving for significant results for communities that require collaborative efforts across agencies and sectors. Leadership can and must be developed to promote a focus on results, to create effective strategies to address major social challenges, and to align resources and actions that lead to the execution of strategies at a scope and scale high enough to make a difference.

As cross-sector collaboratives become the rule rather than the exception in addressing social change, growing attention has been paid to the specific components that lead to collaborative success (e.g., Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006). We build on recent discussions of "collective impact'" (Kania & Kramer, 2011) and argue that grantmakers can support self-sustaining and independent cross-sector collaboratives by building the leadership capacity of those individuals participating in collaboratives. A successful and pragmatic method to leadership development is to build the capacity of collaborative leaders while focusing them on their work. In this model of development, collaborative members are supported by neutral, but skillful, facilitators who work to develop participants' collaborative leadership skills and promote both public accountability for the group and individual accountability within the group. We also argue that although a skillful facilitator is critical, through strong collaborative leadership skills and improved accountability, it is the collaborative itself, rather than the facilitator, that influences positive community change. Using data collected from past participants of the Annie E.

Casey Foundation's Leadership in Action Program (LAP), we test a model of collaborative success put forth in the Theory of Aligned Contributions (TOAC) (Pillsbury, 2008).

This research makes significant contributions to the literature, as researchers have yet to demonstrate the direct impact of collaborative leadership skills on the success of the collaborative process and community-level change. Importantly, the findings presented here can be applied to grantmaking strategies, as we are testing a model that addresses the main challenges noted in the literature around collaboratives – namely, the issues related to accountability, relationship-building, and performance.

We first discuss the need for leadership development in collaborations, then discuss TOAC, which incorporates collaborative leadership development as a key component of collaborative success; and then describe how TOAC is implemented through LAP. We then summarize our research and findings and make specific recommendations based on those findings. We point to the most important aspects of collaborative implementation in relation to performance, and inform grantmakers on the most essential areas for investment. We provide examples from one LAP implemented in Marion County, Indiana, to illustrate how these components can be put into practice.

Collaborative Leadership Development: A Necessary Ingredient for Success

Collaboratives are created when two or more organizations join to share information and resources in an effort to create solutions to social problems that could not be achieved by organizations working independently (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). Collaboratives are often very loosely structured, without formal leaders and with members typically volunteering to work across sectors and represent their organizations. Because these groups are comprised of many different stakeholders who are motivated to work toward communitywide solutions, they have great potential to share resources and create social

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change. However, because they are voluntary and unstructured, these groups often face immense difficulty communicating, resolving conflict, and forming productive relationships among individual participants and organizations[1]. As a result, collaboratives are often unsuccessful (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006) and substantial public value is lost (Behn, 2001).

There are many obstacles to successful collaborative performance. For instance, collaboratives often experience a "free-rider" problem, where individual participants are not held accountable for their work (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; García-Canal, Valdéz-Llaneza, & Ariñio, 2003). Collaboratives are also prone to conflicting goals and missions, constrained resources, mistrust, differing or conflicting organizational norms and cultures, issues relating to power imbalances among agencies, and a lack of support or commitment to the partnership (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Acar, Guo & Yang, 2008).

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[1]For review, see Isett, Mergel, LeRoux, Mischen, & Rethemeyer, 2011.

Researchers and practitioners alike have worked to address these obstacles and propose models for collaborative success. Many scholars have noted that the process of collaboration occurs through compromise and coordination rather than a stepwise movement from one phase to another; it is often called messy, dynamic, and interactive (Thomson & Perry, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Roberts & Bradley, 1991). Agranoff (2006) argues that the key to sustained collaborative success is performance and the key to performance is to add public value by collaborating in their efforts. Bryson and colleagues (2006) discuss multiple specific components that are necessary for collaborative success, including conflict management and the development of relationships with public officials aimed at promoting public accountability.

Collaborative leadership skills are an especially important component of collaborative success, as these skills can help leaders focus on productive strategies for addressing social issues, communicate effectively across sectors, and build productive and useful relationships within a collaborative.

Recently, those working to design and evaluate cross-sector collaboratives have argued that they can achieve collective impact when they work within a structured environment in which leaders focus on shared or common goals (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Kania and Kramer argue that collaboratives are most successful when they have a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication among participants, and a backbone

support organization. Kania and Kramer also urge funders of collaboratives not to fund a specific strategy ahead of time. Rather, they argue that funders should fund the support of a collaborative and the leadership development of the group, which together allows the collaborative to function independently over a longer period of time to create social change.

While we agree with Kania and Kramer, we focus on the most important aspect of actually implementing collaboratives. Like others in the field (i.e., O'Leary, Bingham, & Choi, 2010), we believe that collaborative leadership skills are an especially important component of collaborative success, as these skills can help leaders focus on productive strategies for addressing social issues, communicate effectively across sectors, and build productive and useful relationships within a collaborative. It is our argument that many of the recommendations for improved collaboration can be accomplished through developing the collaborative leadership skills of collaborative participants. When implemented within a collaborative that is supported by an external partners and a neutral facilitator and when both public accountability and individual accountability are emphasized, collaborative leadership development enables leaders to focus on clear and specific strategies for change (such as a common agenda) in ways that individual efforts are aligned (or mutually reinforcing). The TOAC builds upon recent discussions of collective impact and specifies the necessary components of a successful cross-sector collaborative.

Theory of Aligned Contributions

Based on years of working to improve collaborative efforts, Pillsbury (2008) proposed TOAC as a formal model outlining the necessary and sufficient components of successful cross-sector collaboratives. The theory builds on the definition of cross-sector collaboration put forward by Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2006) as a "linking or sharing" of information, resources, and activities to achieve a desired outcome that could not be achieved by any one agency alone. Bryson and colleagues describe the leadership challenge in cross-sector collaboration as the difficulty in

"aligning initial conditions, processes, structures, governance, contingencies and constraints, outcomes, and accountabilities such that good things happen in a sustained way over time" (p. 52).

According to TOAC, successful collaboratives are those that not only create formal accountability structures, but also build collaborative leadership skills that foster competencies in using data to make decisions; address issues of disparate outcomes based on class, culture, and race or ethnicity; develop the ability to manage and resolve competing agendas across agencies to move work forward; and leverage relationships and resources to make and model practices or implement strategies in one's home agency. Through these skills, collaborative participants' individual efforts become aligned.

TOAC is based on the belief that community-level changes are most likely to occur if a core group of multisector, cross-agency leaders not only respond to a call to action but also take aligned actions at the appropriate scope and scale toward a community result. To develop the competency of collaboratives to do this work, Pillsbury (2008) articulates four specific components of collaboratives that promote accountability and collaborative leadership development skills such that participants can take aligned actions that will produce measurable changes in their communities. The four components are a strong accountability partner, a skilled implementation team, participant accountability, and collaborative leadership development.

A Strong Accountability Partner
According to the TOAC, to initiate membership in a collaborative, individuals should be invited by a credible source to join and be publicly accountable for making a measurable difference toward a specific result over a short period of time. Accountability partners are cross-sector groups of high-level leaders from the public, nonprofit, and private sectors who collectively commit to inviting a group of leaders to work to make a measurable difference in a specific population, for an identified result, within a specified period of time. Public-sector participants at the state

level may be the governor or key designees. At the local level, participants may include mayors and their designees, council members, school superintendents, or county or city managers. Nonprofit participants may include heads of large national or local foundations, the chief executive officer of the United Way, or heads of relevant public-private governance or planning bodies.

Accountability partners promote public engagement (as recommended by O'Leary, Bingham, & Choi, 2010), legitimize the collaborative through outside authority, and provide additional accountability to the collaborative work (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Page, 2008; Wohlstetter, Smith, & Malloy, 2005; Human & Provan, 2000). Although these individuals and groups are important in motivating the work of the collaborative, they are not actually involved in the work; that is, the collaborative remains independent from the accountability partners as it develops strategies to address the social issue and implements communitywide initiatives related to those strategies.

Skilled Implementation Team
TOAC specifies a skilled implementation team as a necessary support structure that creates a meeting environment conducive to working toward a common result. The implementation team includes several individuals who take on key roles, including neutral facilitators, a project manager, and a documenter. Collaboratives face various issues of power, with different actors occupying different roles and positions of authority (Agranoff, 2006). Facilitation is an important way for these groups to have a structured or intentional way to deal with these power imbalances and other areas of conflict (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006: Herranz, 2007). The neutral facilitators manage the tension in the room and allow leaders to tackle adaptive challenges, resolve differences, and address power differentials across sectors. They support the group as an entity while considering the experience and expectations of individual participants.

TOAC argues that a skillful implementation team creates a "container," which is similar to Heifetz's (1994) idea of a "holding environment,"

The implementation team has a neutral role and is not actively involved in the work of the collaborative; rather, it creates a productive environment and provides the necessary tools so all decisions and work can be conducted by the group.

where participants can make decisions while dealing with issues of conflict. Diverse groups in this nonhierarchical container can discuss the challenges they face, clarify assumptions, and go about the difficult work of implementing community-change efforts. The implementation team provides a safe environment where participants feel free to have frank conversations that would lead to fresh thinking and breakthroughs.

Facilitators provide a structure to meetings and coach collaborative participants on specific components of leadership competencies. The project manager and documenter ensure that the practical needs of the collaborative are met, and that all key decisions and commitments are recorded and publicly available to all collaborative participants. The implementation team helps the collaborative manage its relationship with the accountability partners. It also provides the tools to increase individual participant accountability and to develop strong collaborative leadership skills. Importantly, like the role of the accountability partners, the implementation team has a neutral role and is not actively involved in the work of the collaborative; rather, it creates a productive environment and provides the necessary tools so all decisions and work can be conducted by the group.

Participant Accountability
TOAC stipulates that participants must develop and use performance measures to track the ef-

fectiveness of their strategies and actions. The collaborative participants co-create their own performance management system using a set of tools, behaviors, and skills that allow for an emergent system of continuous assessment and improvement of efforts for management of the process.

This aspect of TOAC is consistent with the thinking of many experts who maintain that cross-sector collaborations are more likely to be successful when they have an accountability system that tracks data, processes, and results (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Bardach & Lesser, 1996; Page, 2004; Bardach, 1998; Linden, 2002; Babiak & Thibault, 2009). These specific tracking tools are designed to promote a shared commitment to completing work related to strategies. Furthermore, a core premise of TOAC is that although collaborative participants must have the support and tools to hold themselves accountable, there should not be a formal authority in the room to tell them what to do. However, when groups are able to hold themselves accountable, they should then be able to develop effective strategies and initiatives to address the relevant social problem.

Collaborative Leadership Development
Relationship building, norms established around trust and openness, and honest dialog are often cited as necessary ingredients for group cohesion and strong collaboratives (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Bardach, 1998; Chaskin, 2003; García-Canal, Valdéz-Llaneza, & Ariño, 2003; Chisholm, 1989; Wohlstetter, Smith, & Malloy, 2005). A basic tenet of TOAC is that it is essential for leaders to build these types of collaborative leadership skills as they embark on the work of addressing urgent community problems.

In successful collaboratives, facilitators should coach participants in developing important skills and competencies that support effective collaboration and make use of the different knowledge and resources brought by each member. Many authors have argued that a benefit of collaboratives is the potential for sharing knowledge (Weber & Khademian, 2008); however, if collaborative participants are engaged in conflicts or have dif-

ficulty communicating, then knowledge may not be transferred among collaborative participants. Instead, collaborative participants should work to understand the specific resources and knowledge that each collaborative member brings to the group. In line with O'Leary, Bingham and Choi's interpretation of collaborative leadership (2010), the TOAC proposes that collaborative participants should develop active listening skills, negotiation skills, and collaborative problem-solving skills so that they are able to make productive decisions as a group and include the perspectives of all collaborative participants.

In addition to the focus on sharing knowledge and making decisions, collaborative leadership skills lead to stronger relationship patterns that emphasize cooperation among collaborative participants (Kickert & Koppenjan, 1997). Collaboratives are successful when participants cooperate and coordinate their work (Thomson & Perry, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2005); thus training collaborative participants to build open and supportive relationships should enable them to be successful in these interdependent groups.

These skills have a long-term impact on the work that the collaborative participant does in the collaborative, and also after the collaborative has officially ended. Developing collaborative leadership skills is a process that can be taken back to home organizations and applied to long-term, systemwide change. Strong collaborative leadership skills should promote the establishment of effective strategies within the collaborative, but they should also enable collaborative participants to work more effectively in their parent organizations.

TOAC in Practice: The Leadership in Action Program

The Leadership in Action Program was launched by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2000, and was designed around the components that were formalized in Pillsbury's (2008) TOAC. Since 2000, the foundation has invested millions of dollars developing and implementing the program model and LAPs have been convened in 14 jurisdictions representing seven states or territories.

These LAPs have worked on a range of important community issues, such as school readiness, recidivism, and infant health. One particularly successful LAP took place in Marion County, Indiana, and worked to reduce recidivism rates in the county (Littlefield & O'Brien, 2012). Through the program, 36 members of the community responded to a call to action from state and local officials. Over 14 months, the participants of the group honed their collaborative leadership skills and developed and implemented data-driven strategies to improve ex-offender re-entry. We will use this LAP as an example to highlight the LAP model.[2]

> *Strong collaborative leadership skills should promote the establishment of effective strategies within the collaborative, but they should also enable collaborative participants to work more effectively in their parent organizations.*

LAP starts with a commitment to making a difference for low-income children and families in a state, county, city, or neighborhood. The accountability partner invites key leaders from public agencies, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, and community groups to work collaboratively in new ways. The local accountability partner for the Marion County LAP was the county's Criminal Justice Planning Council, chaired by Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard and the county prosecutor. The goal for the work of LAP was for all adult offenders in Marion County to be successfully reintegrated into their community. In providing feedback about the LAP process, one LAP participant commented on how having an accountability partner with connec-

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[2] Information gathered from program evaluation interviews and program records.

Among some of the important responsibilities of the program staff are keeping detailed records of key decisions reached during LAP sessions. These records are made accessible to all LAP participants, which promotes accountability within the group.

tions to the governor helped to create a sense of urgency around the problem that helped bring about specific policy changes.

The LAP includes funding for an implementation team for each site. The Marion County LAP implementation team included five individuals: two skilled neutral facilitators and three program-support staff. The facilitators provide a structure for the collaborative meetings and help to keep the groups on track. They also help the groups narrow in on specific strategies and consider what strategies would be most effective in creating a change toward the collaborative's desired result. Among some of the important responsibilities of the program staff are keeping detailed records of key decisions reached during LAP sessions. These records are made accessible to all LAP participants, which promotes accountability within the group. In response to a question regarding the biggest strengths of LAP, one member of the Marion County LAP commented, "the fact that so many key players are there, that it's open communication, that we all are passionate, and the skills of the facilitators … keep us on task and keep us focused."

One of the main purposes of LAP is to build participant accountability. LAPs are encouraged to adopt a formal accountability system whereby members agree to a set of standards to track progress and action. To promote participant

accountability, the Marion County LAP adopted a method of tracking commitments made by individual collaborative participants. During each meeting, participants were encouraged to write down specific actions that they could complete before the next group meeting. These actions were then documented by the implementation team and made available to all collaborative participants. With this public accountability system, collaborative participants felt compelled to think about how commitments were aligned with the group's strategies and goals, and were also more likely to complete the commitments (Littlefield & O'Brien, 2010).

Finally, the LAP program includes a leadership-development component that focuses on the development of four leadership competencies. The results-based accountability competency builds the ability to use a disciplined, seven-step process to take immediate action at a scope and scale that contributes to measurable improvement in a community result. The race, class, and culture competency builds the ability to engage in constructive dialogue about race, class and culture that enables leaders to take action to address issues of disparities. The leading from the middle competency builds the ability to use leadership skills to achieve consensus and resolve conflict and competing interests while enrolling managers (and above) as well as direct reports and peers to assist in implementing strategies that work. Finally, the collaborative leadership competency builds ability to make decisions and take action together in service of a goal.

Facilitators spend time focusing on these specific areas of collaborative leadership development by leading capacity-building exercises to strengthen these skills and by incorporating specific tools while members work to develop and implement strategies. These competencies are discussed and practiced regularly throughout the course of each LAP. For example, collaborative participants in Marion County were taught effective group decision-making strategies that led to group consensus and aligned actions by individual collaborative participants. One Marion county LAP member said, "The tools that I have learned – I've

been able to practice them and actually see the results. It's been remarkable." Another said, "I've grown tremendously in my own professional way of team-building and working with personality types."

With the support of external accountability partners, a strong accountability system, and capacity building on collaborative leadership skills, the Marion County LAP was able to focus on establishing specific strategies to reducing recidivism rates. For example, the group focused on reducing the technical rule violations that often send ex-offenders back to prison. Another strategy was targeted at helping ex-offenders obtain driver's licenses so that they are able to gain employment. These strategies were successful because the collaborative had the tools and environment that allowed them to agree on the strategies and work in aligned ways that produced a community-level change.

In addition, Marion County participants were able to develop strong working relationships across traditional boundaries. One service provider said,

> I never thought I could sit with a prosecutor …. You know, the deputy director of public safety and the director of public safety are people that I wouldn't have thought would ever consider my point of view and I'm realizing they're probably closer to me than the people I've been working with on this issue.

Research Approach: Predictions

The purpose of the present research was to test the effect of the four components of successful collaboratives outlined in TOAC on the establishment of effective strategies within a collaborative and subsequent community-level changes. We used data from an evaluation survey of LAP participants and examined the relationships among the TOAC components and the extent to which each component directly affected community-level changes. To examine these patterns, we used path analysis, which is well suited for testing our research predictions because it allows researchers to specify which causal relationships should exist between variables and then to test the extent to

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which the overall model containing these causal relationships is justified by the data.

In accordance with the components of successful collaboration outlined in TOAC, we have four general predictions about the causal relationships among the LAP program components, the work of the LAPs, and community-level changes.

Our first and second research predictions concern the causal relationships among the specific components of LAP outlined by TOAC.

Research Prediction 1: Skillful implementation teams increase:

- the use and positive influence of high-quality accountability partners,
- high levels of participant accountability, and
- the development of collaborative leadership skills.

Research Prediction 2: A high-quality accountability partner increases the accountability of individual LAP participants.

Our third and fourth research predictions concern the causal relationships between the specific LAP components and the specific work of LAP (defined by effective strategy development), as well as the relationship between successful LAP performance and subsequent community-level changes.

Research Prediction 3: High levels of collaborative leadership development increase effective strategy development and subsequent community-level changes.

Research Prediction 4: High levels of accountability by individual LAP participants increase the development of effective strategies within LAP.

Our fifth and sixth research predictions concern the relationships between the skill of the implementation team and the effective strategy development within LAP, and between the skill of implementation team and any community-level changes, as well as between the quality of the accountability partners and the effective strategy development within LAP, and between the quality of the accountability partners and any community-level changes. These prediction are based on the assumption that skillful implementation teams and accountability partners provide the tools a collaborative needs to perform well and be successful, but they are not actively involved in the work of the collaborative itself.

Research Prediction 5: A skillful implementation team does not directly increase effective strategy development or subsequent community-level changes.

Research Prediction 6: High-quality accountability partners do not directly increase effective strategy development or subsequent community-level changes.

To test our research predictions, we created two models of plausible relationships among the specific LAP components, the work of LAP, and the community-level outcomes. Model A includes only the relationships we predicted among the specific LAP components, the work of LAP, and community-level outcomes based on TOAC. Model B includes additional relationships and is an alternative model and was created as a comparison to Model A to specifically demonstrate support for Research Prediction 5 and Research Prediction 6. We expected that Model A would provide a better overall fit to our data than Model B.

In Model A and Model B we specified that there should be causal relationships between the skill of the implementation team and the quality of the accountability partners, between the skill of the implementation team and the accountability of individual LAP participants, and between the skill of the implementation team and the collaborative leadership development of the LAP participants (Research Prediction 1). We also specified that there should be a causal relationship between the quality of the accountability partners and the accountability of the LAP participants (Research Prediction 2).

Models A and B also specified that there should be causal relationships between the accountability of individual LAP participants and the effective strategy development within LAP, between the collaborative leadership development of LAP participants and the effective strategy development within LAP, and between the effective strategy development and the subsequent community-level changes (Research Predictions 3 and 4). We also specified a causal relationship between the collaborative leadership development of LAP participants and community-level outcomes (Research Prediction 4).

In order to find support for Research Predictions 5 and 6, we specified several causal relationships in Model B that we did not specify in Model A. In Research Prediction 5 we stated that the skill of the implementation team should not directly increase effective strategy development or community-level changes, and in Research Prediction 6 we stated that the quality of the accountability partners should not directly increase effective strategy development or community-level changes. Thus, in Model A, we did not specify causal relationships between the skill of the implementation team and effective strategy development, between the skill of the implementation team and community-level changes, between the quality of the accountability partners and effective strategy development, or between the quality of accountability partners and community-level changes. In the alternative Model B, these causal relationships were specified. Therefore, if Model A fits our data better than Model B, then we can demonstrate

TABLE 1 Variables and Survey Questions

Variables Included in Present Analysis, and Survey Questions Used to Create Each Variable	
Implementation-team skill	**Accountability-partner quality**
• Facilitators were skilled in helping make progress. • Facilitators acted neutral and unbiased. • Services by LAP staff improved effectiveness. • Presence of facilitator improved our effectiveness.	• LAP members felt responsible to perform well because of AP support. • APs were actively involved. • APs were influential. • APs had a positive influence.
Participant accountability	**Collaborative leadership development**
• LAP participants were expected to complete work in timely manner. • LAP participants enjoyed strong working relationships with one another.	As a result of LAP, participants • formed better relationships, • participated in new activities/initiatives, • made useful contacts, • gained new/useful skills, and • gained better understanding of issue and population.
Establishment of strategies	**Change in incidence of problem**
• LAP participants agreed on specific goals and strategies. • LAP participants developed a plan for implementing different strategies.	• LAP resulted in positive change with problem. • LAP resulted in increased sense from community that the problem is being addressed. • LAP resulted in a strong potential to impact the problem.

support for our fifth and sixth research predictions.

Data-Collection Approach

Participants. Participants were 119 former participants from eight LAPs from across the country who voluntarily completed the survey online. All former LAP participants were contacted by email and were invited to complete a survey aimed at evaluating the LAP process. In exchange for completing the survey, they were offered one chance to win a $100 Amazon gift certificate and six chances to win a $25 Amazon gift certificate. Two hundred sixty-eight participants were initially contacted: 146 participants began the survey and 119 completed it. Across the eight LAP groups, we obtained an average response rate of 45 percent.

Procedures and materials. A link to the survey was provided in the initial contact email. Once participants began the survey, they were informed that the survey was for program evaluation research purposes and that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous. They proceeded to respond to various questions regarding their impressions of LAP over time.

The survey was designed for general evaluation and contained 248 questions. Of those questions, 20 addressed the specific components of TOAC and the outcomes of interest. These questions asked LAP participants to evaluate the quality of the implementation team and the quality of the accountability partners in their LAP. Participants also evaluated the extent to which members of their LAP group were accountable to one another and for their work, and provided self-assessments of the skills they gained as a result of participating in the effort. Finally, participants rated the extent to which their LAP group was able to establish group strategies to address their specific problem, and reported on community-level changes in the incidence of the problem. For each question, par-

FIGURE 1 Predicted Model A in Support of TOAC.
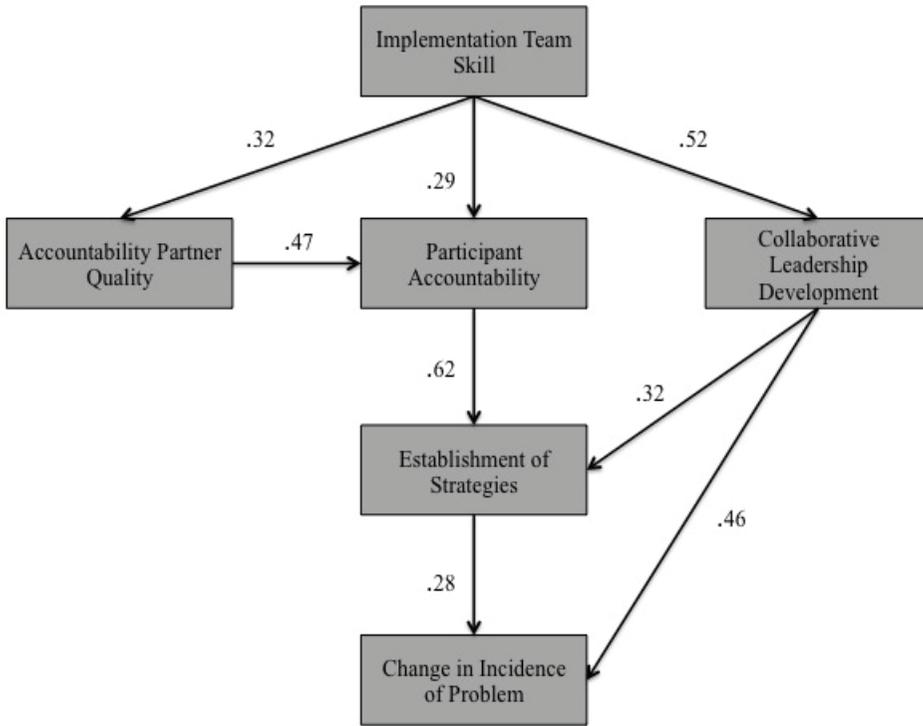
All paths are significant, ps < .01. Arrows indicate the direction of the relationship from one variable to another. Standardized beta weights show the direct effect of each variable. The skill of the implementation team has a medium effect on the quality of accountability partners and participant accountability, and has a large effect on collaborative leadership development. The skill of the implementation team has no direct effect on the establishment of strategies or the change in the incidence of the problem.

ticipants were asked to rate their agreement on a six-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." These 20 questions were combined to create our six variables. (See Table 1 for a description of each variable.)[3]

Summary of Findings

Our two path analyses of Model A and Model B demonstrate support for each research prediction. Specifically, our predicted Model A shows good support for TOAC and our first four research predictions. (See Figure 1.) A comparison of Model A and Model B demonstrates good support for our fifth and sixth Research Predictions. (See Figure 2.)[4]

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[3] Reliability analyses were computed for each variable, and all variables obtained good reliability (αs > .07).
[4] Consistent with the tenets of TOAC, our Model A

Research Predictions 1 and 2
In support of our first research prediction, the skill of the implementation team significantly

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showed good model fit, χ2(7, N = 119) = 10.30, df = 7, p = .17, χ2/df = 1.47, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06. (See Figure 1.) The alternative Model B, which included the additional direct paths from the skill of the implementation team and the quality of the accountability partners to the establishment of strategies and community-level changes, showed relatively worse fit, χ2(3, N = 119) = 6.50, df=3, p = .09, χ2/df= 2.17, CFI=.98, RMSEA=.10. (See Figure 2.) Although some researchers have argued that a χ2/df ration of less than 3 shows good fit (Kline, 1998), other researchers have argued that RMSEA values above .07 indicate mediocre or even poor model fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996; Steiger, 2007). Some researchers have even suggested an RMSEA cutoff of .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Furthermore, given that many of the paths in Model B were not significant, specifically the paths indicating direct relationships we predicted should not exist, one can conclude that in support of TOAC, Model A shows relatively better fit than the alternative Model B.

FIGURE 2 Alternative Model B
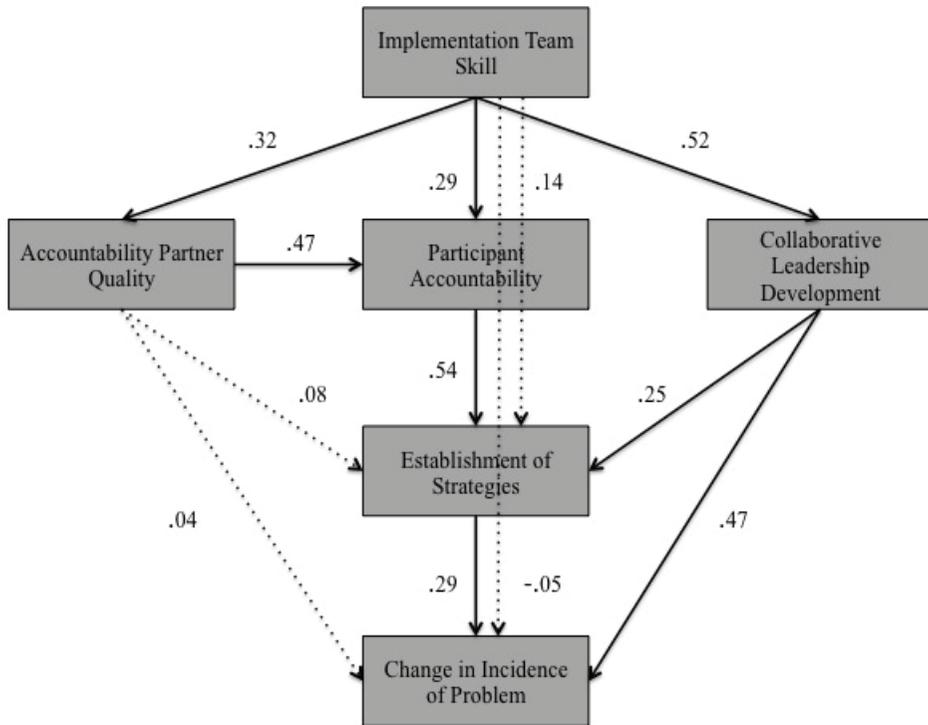
Including direct paths from the skill of the implementation team and accountability-partner quality to the establishment of strategies and change in incidence of the problem, as well as from collaborative leadership development to participant accountability. Solid lines are significant, ps < .01. Dotted lines are nonsignificant, ps > .05.

increased the use and positive influence of high-quality accountability partners, high levels of participant accountability, and the development of collaborative leadership skills. Of the three programs positively impacted, the implementation team had the largest effect on the collaborative leadership development of the LAP participants. This finding is important and suggests that it is quite possible to improve collaborative leadership skills. It also suggests that the skills related to relationship building and gaining a deeper understanding of the social problem being addressed are skills that can be learned within a collaborative. Therefore, making an investment in building these skills is likely to pay off.

In support of Research Prediction 2, the quality of the accountability partners significantly increased the accountability of individual LAP participants.

This was also a large effect, demonstrating that accountability partners have the potential to greatly increase the extent to which LAP participants are accountable to one another and for their work.

Research Predictions 3 and 4
In support of our third research prediction, we found that the development of strong collaborative leadership skills significantly increased the establishment of effective strategies within LAP. We also found that the development of strong collaborative leadership skills significantly – and directly – increased the community-level outcomes. This is an interesting and important finding. It demonstrates that collaborative leadership skills can influence the outcomes for communities in multiple ways. One way that collaborative leadership skills influence outcomes for communities is

by leading to better strategy development within collaboratives. That is, when LAP participants have stronger collaborative leadership skills, they are able to create more effective strategies within LAP to address the social problem of interest. The finding that collaborative leadership skill development also directly increases the community-level outcomes suggests that collaborative leadership skill development leads to other behaviors beyond the scope of LAP's strategies that also impact the social problem of interest. Our research does not examine what factors beyond the scope of LAP are affected by collaborative leadership skills, but our research does suggest that other factors may be positively impacted.

In support of our fourth research prediction, we found that high levels of individual accountability for LAP participants significantly increase the establishment of effective strategies aimed at addressing the social problem of interest within LAP. This finding demonstrates that creating an atmosphere where collaborative participants are accountable to one another and for their work enables the collaborative as a whole to work more effectively and develop strategies that are agreed upon by all participants.

Research Predictions 5 and 6

To test our fifth and sixth research predictions, we compared Model A to Model B. We predicted that the skill of the implementation team and the quality of the accountability partners would not directly increase the effective strategy development within LAP or the community-level outcomes because the function of implementation teams and accountability partners is to provide support to the LAP group, but not to actively do the work of the LAP. Therefore, in our predicted Model A, we did not specify causal relationships among the skill of the implementation team and the quality of the accountability partners, and the establishment of effective strategies or community-level outcomes. To test our prediction, we compared this Model A to Model B where these causal relationships were specified. In support of our fifth and sixth research predictions, Model A was a better fit to our data compared to Model B. (See Figure 2.)

In examining Model B, it is apparent that the skill of the implementation team does not significantly increase the development of effective strategies, nor does the skill of the implementation team significantly increase the community-level outcomes. This finding supports Research Prediction 5. It is also apparent that the quality of the accountability partners does not significantly increase the establishment of strategies or the community-level outcomes. This finding supports Research Prediction 6. Furthermore, because Model A was a better fit overall, we can conclude that a skilled implementation team and high-quality accountability partners are able to promote individual accountability within collaboratives, and to develop strong collaborative leadership skills. That is, they provide the support and tools needed by the collaborative. The collaborative itself is then involved in the work of developing effective strategies that lead to community-level changes, whereas the implementation team and accountability partners are not directly involved in this work.

Limitations of the Research Approach

Although results presented here provide support for the TOAC and demonstrate the benefit of training collaborative participants on collaborative leadership skills, it is important to note the limitations of our research approach. The research was conducted using self-report survey data, which, for some variables, is quite reasonable. For example, based on their direct experience with LAP, participants should provide an accurate assessment of the implementation-team quality and the accountability-partner quality.

However, more direct measures of some of the other variables included in this analysis might have been more reliable. These include accountability within the group (which could be better measured by counting the proportion of strategies completed) and LAP participants' collaborative leadership development (which could be better measured through scores on certain exams, the number of relationships formed, etc.).

Similarly, we are unable to verify participants' responses regarding the change in the incidence

of the problems that indicates a community-level outcome change. Our assumption is that participants' responses are based on actual awareness of what is occurring in their communities because they work closely with these issues and are unlikely to report that the incidence of a problem has changed when it actually has not. Given that there was a wide range in responses to these survey questions and that this variable was strongly predicted by other variables indicating a successful LAP, we are confident that this variable is a good indicator of actual community-level changes.

Recommendations for Grantmakers

While much of the research on multisector collaboratives has had a difficult time connecting the work of collaboratives to community-level results, we believe that TOAC and our analyses of LAP provide important best practices for foundations. Although this approach has its limitations, we have shown the causal relationships among specific components of the LAP model and their effects on community-level change. Our findings lead to three specific recommendations for grantmakers interesting in supporting cross-sector collaboratives.

Recommendation 1: Provide Support for an Implementation Team

Grantmakers interested in supporting self-sustaining cross-sector collaboratives should provide an implementation team for a predetermined period to work with the collaborative in a neutral but structured manner. The role of the implementation team should be neutral in that it should not direct the key decisions or strategies of the collaborative. However, it should be deeply involved in the functioning of the collaborative as a working group. The implementation team should include trained facilitators who provide a structure to the collaborative meetings so that groups can be more productive. These facilitators also take on a key role in promoting collaborative participants' development as active and engaged participants in the collaborative. Importantly, these facilitators should have the ability to provide structured training on skills necessary for successful collaboration, like collaborative leadership skills. Trained facilitators can help a group

> *In making funding decisions, grantmakers should support collaboratives that partner with high-level community leaders and public figures. These accountability partners maintain a level of public engagement that is often cited as necessary for collaboratives to stay on track.*

work through conflicts, focus on a single result, and share knowledge and resources in an open and accepting manner. As our research demonstrates, an implementation team has a large effect on the collaborative leadership skill development of collaborative participants.

A skilled implementation team should also provide experienced note-takers. These note-takers are able to document the key decisions of the collaborative and the specific commitments of the individual collaborative participants. Documenting the decisions can promote organization within a collaborative and maintain a focus on aligning actions and strategies. Providing documentation of the commitments made by individual collaborative participants can also promote individual accountability, as was shown through our research findings. More favorable evaluations of the implementation team's skills significantly increased the accountability of individual LAP participants.

Recommendation 2: Incorporate Accountability Partners

In making funding decisions, grantmakers should support collaboratives that partner with high-level community leaders and public figures. These accountability partners maintain a level of public engagement that is often cited as necessary for

collaboratives to stay on track (Human & Provan, 2001; Wohlstetter, Smith, & Malloy, 2005). Importantly, when the relationship with these groups is well managed by a skilled implementation team, accountability partners promote individual accountability within collaboratives. Cross-sector collaboratives are often unsuccessful because their participants do not complete work they commit to, or because they fail to provide one another with support and resources. Our research shows that when members of a collaborative have positive perceptions of their accountability partners, the members are more likely to be accountable for that work and to each other.

Recommendation 3: Build Collaborative Leadership Skills

As our title implies, we believe that collaborative leadership development is a critical component of successful cross-sector collaborations and one in which grantmakers should invest. Collaborative leadership skills enable collaborative participants to share knowledge and resources more freely, build important and successful relationships within a collaborative, gain a deeper understanding of the social problem being addressed, and learn knew skills related to decision-making and problem solving. Cross-sector collaboratives are needed to tackle social problems that require involvement from a diverse set of stakeholders; however, when individuals involved in collaboratives do not understand how to navigate the complex relationships and often competing priorities within cross-sector collaboratives, these collaboratives cannot reach their full potential.

Our research shows that cross-sector collaborative skills can be taught and learned. The skill of the implementation team had a large effect on the collaborative leadership skill development of the individual collaborative participants. This means that for collaboratives with weaker implementation teams, the collaborative leadership skills were also quite weak, whereas for collaboratives with stronger implementation teams, the collaborative skills were also stronger. Therefore, there is great potential for a grantmaker to support a strong implementation team and greatly improve the collaborative leadership skills of the collaborative participants involved.

Not only does our research demonstrate the potential to improve collaborative leadership skills of collaborative participants, it demonstrates the important outcomes resulting from these stronger collaborative leadership skills. In our research, developing stronger collaborative leadership skills led groups to establish strategies that were more effective, which then led to positive changes in the community-level outcome. This means that developing collaborative leadership skills promoted better strategy development, which then promoted a change in the incidence of the social problem of interest.

In addition to this indirect impact on community-level outcomes, our research shows that developing strong collaborative leadership skills also has a direct impact on improving community-level outcomes. This means that collaborative leadership skills provide a broad benefit for collaborative participants and lead to community changes in multiple ways. One way, as just discussed, is through the work of establishing effective strategies in the collaborative. However, they are also working to improve community outcomes beyond just the establishment of strategies. We did not measure the additional ways that collaborative leadership skills affect community-level outcomes, but it is likely that collaborative participants bring their skills back to their home organizations and are able to improve their work outside of the collaborative, which also results in a positive change at the community level. Therefore, investing in collaboratives that emphasize the development of strong collaborative leadership skills is likely to have a broad and long-lasting impact on important social problems.

Conclusion

Why is collaborative leadership development a good investment? Leadership motivates and catalyzes people by directing the focus and shaping practices, strategies, and actions to influence sustainable outcomes. The adaptive nature of work in social enterprises requires people to change long-standing habits and behaviors, and to examine their value. This is especially crucial when striving for significant and sustainable results for communities that require collaborative efforts across

agencies and disciplines. This work cannot be done effectively without skilled collaborative leadership.

The TOAC model provides a means for setting in motion a series of events and actions that can result in important changes on the ground. By supporting and creating the structure that allows local leaders to come together around a unified set of priorities, to develop accountability mechanisms and collaborative leadership skills, and to implement aligned strategies for change, grantmakers and their partners can help create the conditions for coordinated action on important issues they face when becoming involved in the actual work of devising those strategies. Grantmakers can support the completion of this work in the community where it belongs.

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