# "Overcoming the Often Unseen Obstacles to Collective Impact"

## Part 2 in the Achieving Collective Impact Series (February, 2013)

*By Bill Barberg, President, Insightformation, Inc.* www.insightformation.com

## TOPIC #2: UPGRADING FROM LOGIC MODELS TO STRATEGY MAPS

This paper is the second in a series focusing on improving the success of achieving Collective Impact. Well-intended use of currently accepted practices can unintentionally undermine efforts to achieve the five conditions of Collective Impact. This paper exposes the disadvantages of using Logic Models at the community level, a practice that is counterproductive in situations where there is the desire to improve results by shifting from an Isolated Impact to a Collective Impact.

### The Unintended Consequences of Using Logic Models

Bringing a diverse coalition together to establish a "Common Agenda" is an essential first step in achieving Collective Impact. Unfortunately, the common tool of the Logic Model, which is frequently thought of as a best practice, typically hinders the development and execution of a common strategy to support alignment and effective teamwork.

The Logic Model was a significant improvement in program evaluation twenty years ago when the common approach to program evaluation looked almost exclusively at budgets and activities. It was the clear step forward to require grantees to "connect the dots" between their activities, the outputs, and the outcomes they were attempting to impact. However, the Logic Model tool is based on the *isolated impact* mindset that focuses on judging the effectiveness of *individual* organizations and programs. When many organizations within a community each develop their own Logic Models, the result is entrenched fragmentation. Each organization may use different logic and different techniques to develop their Logic Model. It is common for a funder to request that grant applicants submit a Logic Model with their application. This inevitably creates isolated and inconsistent Logic Models. Creating separate Logic Models does not help align their efforts. As each organization implements its own Logic Model, it becomes increasingly difficult to develop a common agenda. Collectively these organizations lack a shared strategy to address challenges that they cannot individually solve on their own. The result is systemic fragmentation and an intractable "execution gap" with regard to accomplishing the priority community outcomes.

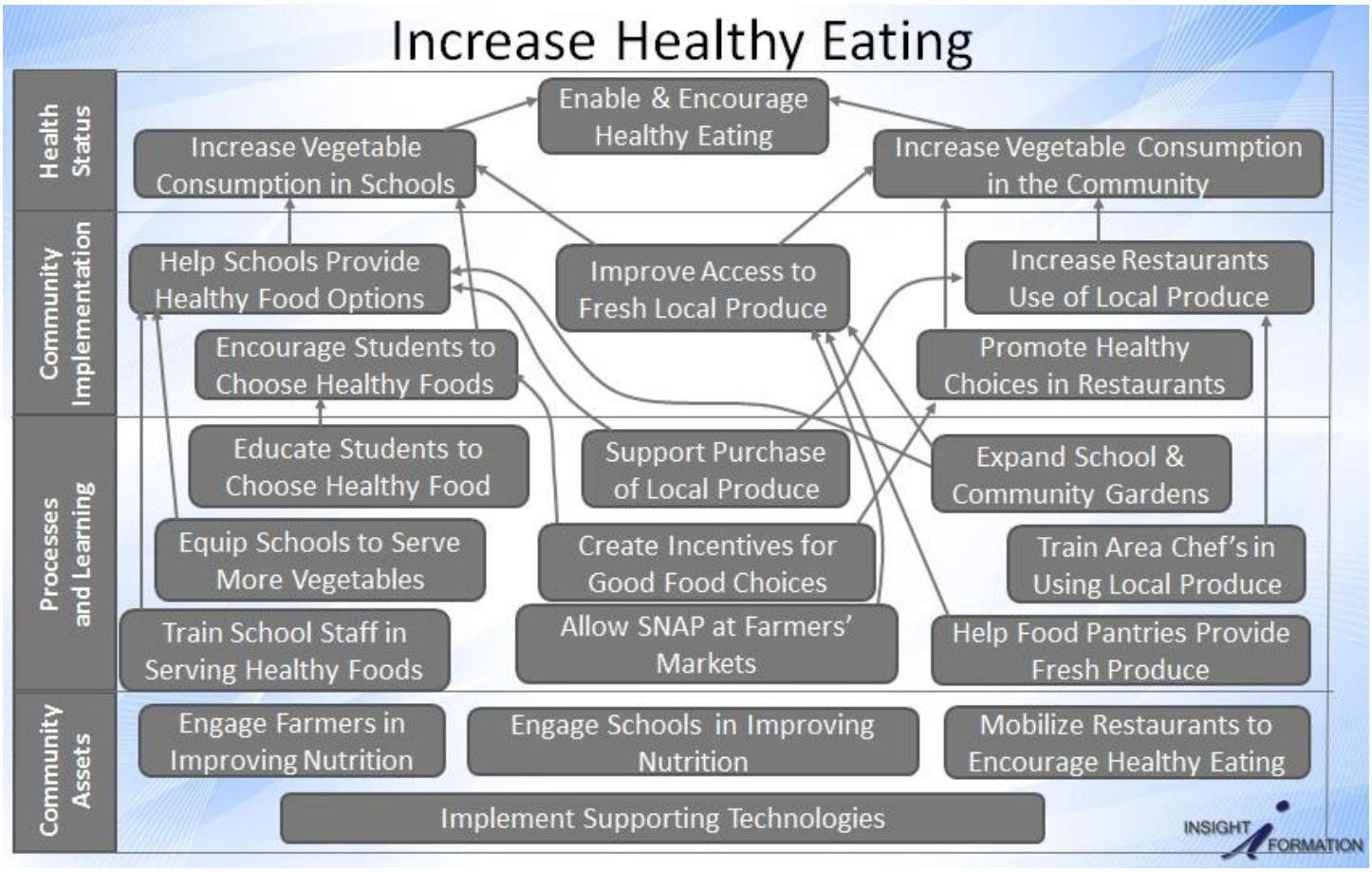
When communities attempt to develop a community-centric Logic Model to address a large issue, they find themselves using a tool that is a poor fit for the task. Logic Models were designed for individual program evaluation, not for forging community collaboration around a shared strategy. It is like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. There have been attempts to *enhance* Logic Models to work at a community level, but since the fundamental design is not well-suited for community collaboration, those efforts have been of very limited success.

## Collaboratively-Developed Strategy Maps: A Much Better Alternative

A superior tool for creating and managing a Common Agenda (and a shared strategy) among many community organizations is a collaboratively-developed Strategy Map. Strategy Maps have emerged as the single most important tool of the Balanced Scorecard methodology—a well-established framework for strategy execution that has been researched, validated and enhanced for over 20 years. The specific details and techniques for collaboratively developing Community Strategy Maps are significantly different from developing business or organizational Strategy Maps, though the underlying concepts remain intact.

The concept of a Community Strategy Map has been validated as a "best practice" in books like the "Public Health Quality Improvement Handbook" (jointly published by the Public Health Foundation and the American Society for Quality) and "More with Less: Maximizing Value in the Public Sector." Community Strategy Maps have been featured in many training sessions by ACHI, NACCHO, ASTHO, NNPHI and have been central to projects funded by the CDC, HRSA, RWJF, and others.

The following is an example of a community strategy map for increasing healthy eating. It focuses on increasing vegetable consumption in schools and in the community.



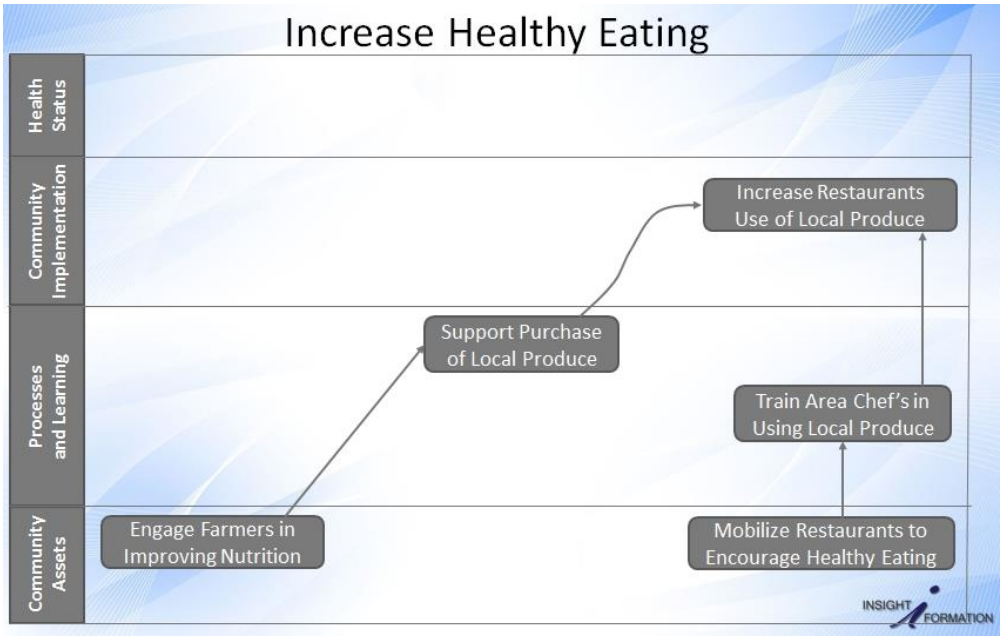
While Strategy Maps may have some superficial resemblance to Logic Models, they are fundamentally different in several key ways. In a Logic Model, each of the "layers" contains a different type of element, such as inputs, outputs, short-term outcomes, long-term outcomes. This nature of these elements makes it almost impossible to scale beyond an individual program. Looking at the inputs or outputs of dozens or hundreds of programs is not practical, and attempts to aggregate inputs or outputs to a community level have proved to be both painful and of little value.

In contrast, with a Strategy Map, each layer looks at different "perspectives" of the strategy, but in each of the perspectives, the building block is the same: *a strategic objective*. Those objectives may deal with outcomes (such as reducing heart disease or reducing the number of adults who smoke), or they may deal with various causal drivers (such as increasing the number of smoke-free areas or expanding advocacy for smoke free environments), or they may deal with mobilizing and engaging community partners or funders. The objectives can be very high level (for a state or community) or more detailed (for individual issues, organizations, neighborhoods or programs). But, the building block is always the same—an objective that clearly defines a desired change. This is very important because it allows the strategy map to be "zoomable" in a way that is conceptually similar to how Google Maps® allows a user to zoom in or zoom out to see whatever level of detail that he or she cares about without being overwhelmed by other details. (*More on zoomability will be covered later in this paper.)*

## A Process to Break Down Silos and Establish Shared Ownership

The process for creating Community Strategy Maps is also very different from that of creating organizational or program Logic Models. While the details of the recommended process is beyond the scope of this paper, each step of the recommended process for creating Strategy Maps is designed to bring together the collective wisdom of a diverse group of stakeholders and to build a shared buy-in for the community strategy. This process creates a "Copernican Shift" from organization-centered thinking to community-centered thinking and results in a strategic framework that greatly enhances the ability of many different organizations to align and cooperate to achieve Collective Impact. A collaboratively developed Strategy Map framework is also ideal for delegating work on various sub-sets of the strategy to different multi-organizational teams. Once

developed, it is a best practice to assign an owner or advocate to each objective. In addition, each objective may be assigned to an "advisory team" that will work with a cluster of objectives that are linked in a logical way, such as the objectives below that relate to restaurants serving more locally-grown produce.




When organizational or program objectives are defined, they can be clearly aligned with the larger strategy—whether that is the strategy for something specific like Complete Streets or a higher-level strategy to reduce obesity, or an even higher-level strategy to reduce chronic disease.

The following hyperlink is a 12-minute video on creating collaborative strategy maps that clarifies the many advantages of Strategy Maps versus Logic Models. The recording uses an sample strategy map for Complete Streets)
http://vimeo.com/insightformation/review/55638847/710ed6220e

## The Importance of "Zoomability" for Strategy Management

One of the keys to strategy management in a complex community setting is the ability to "zoom in" or "zoom out" to different levels of detail. This is achieved by having related strategic objectives at different levels of detail that have different assignments of responsibility, different measures, and different activities. In the Balanced Scorecard model, this is referred to as "cascading," and it is one of important concepts that has contributed to the long-term success of the Balanced Scorecard methodology. When objectives are cascaded, they should provide greater specificity how to carry out the strategy, but they are still not the specific projects or activities that will be done to implement the strategy. (Those may be called initiatives, projects or activities, not objectives.) A thoughtfully-cascaded strategy allows for much-improved prioritization and alignment of the projects that are ultimately selected and implemented.

The objectives in a zoomable strategy map are linked together based on either cause & effect logic or zooming into more detail on an objective (such as a sub-set of geography or the sub-sets of an issue—like different types of substance abuse).

There is no single "correct" way to cascade a strategy, but with a strategy management platform, there should be great flexibility for how objectives can relate to one another. In some cases, it may be appropriate to look at more detailed objectives that clarify the choices of how something can be achieved. A high-level objective to "Increase Active Recreation for Youth" may be cascaded to three to five more specific objectives that establish priorities for how the community will create opportunities that had not previously existed. One objective may be to "Increase Informal Recreation Leagues" and another may be to "Promote Biking for Recreation and Transport." These more detailed objectives help a community understand how to make better use of its assets to accomplish those objectives. That could lead to another level of cascading which may include objectives for specific organizations or types of organizations. For example, the school district could have an objective to "Increase After School use of Facilities" and the Parks & Rec department could have an objective to "Engage Civic Groups & Non-profit Organizations in Bike Trail Improvements."

The following example is a Strategy Map from the St. Clair County, Illinois "Get Up & Go!" campaign for improving community health. At the higher level, the strategy includes two objectives for how this campaign will lead to improved fitness.


While these are valuable and provide a general direction for making progress, the more actionable objectives are on the next level strategy maps for "Active Living" and "Healthy Eating." In the Active Living Strategy Map, there are more specific objectives that provide an important level of detail for how the community will "Create Toolkits & On-line Resources for Community Use."


In this example, there are now three more detailed objectives for creating specific kinds of toolkits and one more specific objective for using on-line tools. Each of these objectives can have a different "Lead Advocate" or owner, different measures, and different initiatives (projects or activities). This

ability to agree as a community on the high-level direction and then "zoom in" on the more specific objectives is key to creating the alignment that supports Collective impact. Individual organizations may then define their own objectives that align with the more specific objectives shown on the zoomed in strategy map. A community with a well-developed strategy management system may have one Strategy Map for each priority issue (such as "Minimizing Tobacco Use" or "Maternal and Child Health"). In some cases, there may be a more detailed strategy map for a subset of that higher-level map. Beyond that, the zooming-in may be to more specific objectives that are not necessarily viewed in the typical Strategy Map format, but they are still objectives with all the same attributes that appropriate for objectives. It is the consistent structure of objectives, and the way that they relate to each other, that enables the zoomability that is so important in Community Strategy Maps. This flexible "zoomability" is difficult to achieve in the Logic Model approach, where each link in the cause-and-effect logic has a different definition such as inputs, outputs, short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes.

## Logic Models and Shared Measurement

Even if a group pursuing Collective Impact can agree on "Shared Measures" for the main outcomes (like "% of kids reading at grade level in 3rd grade" or "High School graduation rate"), the widespread use of Logic Models will hinder the ability to develop a Shared Measurement System. One of the emerging Collective Impact best practices is to move beyond having just agreed-upon *outcome* measures and have a shared platform that can provide consistency and transparency to monitor a wide range of related measures. When using the Logic Model approach, the recommended approach for measurement is to develop metrics based on the various elements in the Logic Model. If each community partner develops its own Logic Model, this approach to measurement creates a very fragmented set of measures and will likely lead to a great deal of redundancy in data gathering, inconsistent data definitions and other results that will hinder efforts to achieve the benefits of a shared measurement system.

In contrast, when the measurement system is based on the process and structure for Community Strategy Maps that include cascaded objectives, there is a collaborative effort to build consensus on much more than just a few outcome measures. Measures for all the community-focused objectives get created using a process that minimizes redundancy and inconsistently defined measures. When individual programs or organizations create their own measures, they can be confident that they align with higher-level objectives in a rational way. This process also creates a relatively small number of shared strategic measures that exist between the performance measures of organizations or programs and the slowly-changing outcome measures. It is these intermediate measures, which are very difficult to create in a community where measures are based on fragmented Logic Models, that are some of the most valuable measures for monitoring and improving strategy execution.

## Conclusion

Logic Models were a useful tool in an era when the focus was on evaluating the isolated impact of individual programs. They may still be useful in some cases for the evaluation of individual programs that are not part of a larger strategy. However, as the concept of Collective Impact gains more and more acceptance and validation as a key to making greater progress on the major challenges in our communities and in our society, it is time to upgrade to a set of tools that support rather than hinder the type of collaboration required to achieve a Collective Impact.

## About the Author

Bill Barberg, president of Insightformation, Inc., is a globally-recognized expert on collaborative strategy execution and strategic measurement systems. He has recently presented on best practices for achieving Collective Impact at two national conferences (2012 Association for Strategic Planning, 2012 National Network of Public Health Institutes) and has consulted with a wide variety of organizations and coalitions on collaborative efforts to improve health, environmental, and other community issues. Scorecard and performance expert, James Creelman, author of the recent book, "More with Less: Maximizing Value in the Public Sector" described Mr. Barberg as a "global thought leader" on the topic and stated that "his knowledge of the do's and don'ts of building scorecards is as good as anyone in the world, and some of his innovations (especially around creating space for partner collaborations) are simply unrivalled." LinkedIn 3/30/12

## About Insightformation, Inc.

Insightformation, Inc. specializes in strategy management for organizations and communities. Insightformation's strategy management platform, InsightVision is being used by states, counties, communities, hospitals and other organizations for performance management, Collective Impact, and improved strategy execution. Learn more at www.insightformation.com

## For More Information,

Contact Bill Barberg bill.barberg@insightformation.com or call 763-331-8361