Creating Collective Impacts on Critical Issues

“The Re-Amp Network is the poster child for collective impact.”
— Aileen Lee, Program Director, Wild Salmon Ecosystem’s Initiative, The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

The Garfield Foundation is launching an initiative to support the development of highly strategic, collaborative networks based on the experience and success of the Re-Amp Network.

* See Re-Amp Network Experience, page 7

The Foundation seeks to work with another set of foundations and advocates to create collective impacts beyond what has been possible with traditional foundation and non-profit practices. The initiative will start by identifying a set of foundations, advocates and others who are interested in partnering to create a new Collaborative Network (CN), or enhance the effectiveness of an existing network.

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Benefits of Collaborative Networks

- Progress is produced faster through rapid feedback and adaptation
- Investments are significantly leveraged through funder alignment
- Additional funds are attracted to the issue of focus
- Progress indicators are articulated and tracked
What are we looking for?

The Garfield Foundation is inviting proposal ideas for co-creating network projects that fall within the following criteria.

Imperative issues that…
- address Garfield’s mission to advance towards an equitable, healthy and sustainable world.

Collaborators who…
- are inspired by opportunities to create collective impact
- are interested in collaborative approaches to grantmaking and program work
- are able to bring advocates and resources together

Commitments to…
- align program work and grantmaking around shared insights and strategies
- co-create and support a shared infrastructure that efficiently enables collaboration
- support a culture of networking and learning

Who brings what to the table?

Garfield Foundation:
- The engagement and expertise of the Collaborative Networks leadership team, the designers and co-creators of the Re-Amp Network.
- Engagement of consultants experienced in each phase of network development.
- A grants budget between $500k to $750k per year to establish the network leadership and infrastructure, and fund participating NGOs to initiate projects aligned with insights gained through a systems mapping process.

Collaborators:
- A systemic environmental challenge that is imperative to solve for the health of people and planet.
- A willingness to convene and collaborate with other stakeholders involved in that challenge.
- Subject matter expertise regarding an industry/sector/region/issue.
- Organizational openness to new ways of approaching complex challenges.
- A willingness to align program work and grant-making with the insights gained through a systems mapping process.
The Systems-Based Approach

Informed by our Re-Amp experience and by others’ work in the field, the CN program will engage partners in four phases of work over three years:

1. **Map the System Together**
   - *Work together to map the system we want to change*
   - ▶ Shared understanding of the system
   - ▶ Agreement on the most promising intervention points
   - ▶ Collective alignment on a long-term goal

2. **Organize Teams and Strategic Planning**
   - *Organize teams to develop strategies for each intervention*
   - ▶ Actionable five-year strategic plan with very clear first and second year strategies and objectives
   - ▶ Foundations invite proposals for carrying out the work

3. **Cultivate Collaborative Learning**
   - *Build members’ capacity to think systemically and act collaboratively*
   - ▶ Democratic governance
   - ▶ Working group leadership and facilitated gatherings
   - ▶ Shared narrative
   - ▶ Web-based collaboration platform

4. **Network Implementation**
   - *Cultivate network leadership and distributed infrastructure*
   - ▶ Shared network resources, connections, and relationships
   - ▶ Coordinated portfolio of projects
   - ▶ Aligned strategies between funders and advocates

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**Phase 1: Map the System Together**

With the aid of deeply experienced systems mappers, a selected cross-section of participants will co-create a map of the system we’re collectively focused on.

As we map the system, we experience collaboration in action, we see how each other think and express ourselves. Each participant holds particular knowledge of some part of the system and by working together everyone learns new insights about the system that they hadn’t recognized or had misunderstood. Everyone gets smarter about the field, even if they’ve been working in it for decades. That’s the nature of integrating our individual understanding of the system.

Once we have a working visual map, we begin probing for places we can intervene to move the system towards the direction of our existing goals. Organically, a shared long-term, audacious goal emerges that captures our collective imagination and inspires aligned action.

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1 GF has carefully sought out the advice and engaged the services of some of the most advanced thinkers in social action network building in North America & Europe. A range of them will be involved in each phase of work. The funneling of thinkers and doers around this project is one of its most attractive features.
Phase 2: Self-Organized Teams and Strategic Plans

In the system mapping process, key leverage points are revealed and respected voices emerge with deep knowledge of each intervention. These leaders are awarded a planning grant to gather a “dream team” and collaboratively develop a five-year strategic plan for accelerating progress towards the long-term goal. In this way, the number of organizations engaged expands by several-fold around each intervention. As part of “on-boarding” new participants receive an orientation that includes the insights and conclusions from phase 1.

Each planning team is supported in developing their five-year plan by strategic planning facilitators, who then bring all teams together to verify, align and create synergies across the plans.

Phase 2 is complete when each team has produced an actionable five-year strategic plan with very clear first and second year strategies and objectives.

With this in hand, all participants go back to their organizations to adjust or redesign their programs to play essential roles in implementing the collective strategies. The involved foundations use the completed strategic plans to invite proposals for implementing the work.

Ideally, little time elapses between completion of strategic plans and foundation grants to support them, thus propelling the momentum and participant enthusiasm.
Phase 3: Cultivate Collaborative Learning

In phase 3, the collaboration moves into building functional hubs and supportive connections between people and organizations — to support thinking systemically and acting collaboratively. There is no one-size-fits-all action network design, yet the principles necessary to function as a network are consistent, regardless of the goal, issue and geography. To perform as a network, we need:

- Leadership structure: A democratic governance structure that reflects a commitment of foundations, advocates and others to work shoulder to shoulder.
- Shared stories: Professionally developed messaging and communications strategies that use sound public opinion research to frame the issues in potent and influential terms.
- Web-based communication and collaboration platform: An efficient way to communicate quickly, to keep each other informed and to coordinate action between advocates and funders working across the region.
- Working group support: Resources for working group leaders and convenings to support advocates working on the same interventions to benefit from each others’ expertise.
- Knowledge management and learning: An efficient means to share valuable knowledge and shorten the cycles between learning high-value, actionable information and applying it to grantmaking and advocacy work.

Before any infrastructure is put in place, an assessment of participating organizations is done to profile what capacities and expertise exists within the network. Wherever possible, the network’s functional needs are addressed by investments that enhance existing organizational capacity to serve the whole network.

Phase 3: Invest in capacity building to support communication, collaborative action and continuous learning.
Phase 4: Network Implementation

The primary objectives of phase 4 is to develop members’ capacity to operate as a Network, including sharing resources, making connections, building relationships and taking collective actions. The network leadership and participating organizations step up to the responsibility for operating like a network, implementing strategic plans, developing shared infrastructure, and aligning additional funding. The Garfield Foundation will continue to act as a program advisor and funder as the network moves into implementing the strategic plans.

The strategic implementation of a synergistic portfolio of projects is designed to create dynamic, aligned efforts between funders and advocates that cultivate network thinking, accelerate learning and build a culture of collaboration resulting in significant systemic social change.

Phase 4: Implement the shared infrastructure by applying a “network mindset” throughout the system.

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The Re-Amp Network Experience

In 2004, the Foundation set out to test a simple hypothesis: That by using the tools of systems mapping, a group of foundations and their grantees could align their efforts and accelerate progress towards a shared, audacious goal.

Early on, this effort, popularly known as “Re-Amp,” adopted a network structure as its organizational form. From the outset, Re-Amp was deliberately experimental. Overall, Re-Amp exceeded our expectations and attracted the attention of a wide range of foundations, consultants, and social change advocates.

There are now 160 non-profit organizations and a dozen foundations participating in Re-Amp. Although these organizations are spread across eight Mid-western states, Re-Amp has allowed them to coalesce around specific carbon pollution reduction and clean energy adaptation goals, and to employ complementary and mutually supportive strategies.

Re-Amp Network Participants:

**2005:** 36 NGO’s and 10 foundations; 6 states

**2013:** 160 organizations and 15 foundations; 8 states

Independent Evaluation

3rd-party assessment of network participants:

- **63%** of member organizations agree that Re-Amp is an effective use of staff, time, and resources

- **89%** report that as a result of their participation foundations and advocates in the network have become better aligned, and advocates have become better aligned with each other

- **65%** agree that as a result of their participation in Re-Amp they are using better strategies

- **92%** of foundation members agree that their participation in Re-Amp is helping them make better funding decisions

Collective Impacts


- 20 proposed coal plants stopped, 40 old plants scheduled to retire
- 20x increase of wind power capacity
- 6x increase in energy efficiency investments