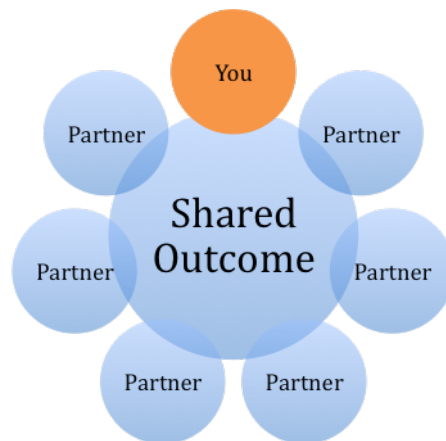


## Strengths-Based Collaboration Toolkit

Traditional approaches to increasing impact in the social sector have focused on growing and sustaining organizations—growing a budget, growing the number of programs, growing staff and services delivered by individual organizations.

Recent research has shown that this is less effective than focusing on the development of collaborations or networks around a shared, desired community impact. In 2008, Forces for Good (Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant, 2007) found that high impact organizations created movements by adopting six practices—all six include collaboration. “The Networked Nonprofit” (Jane Wei-Skillern and Sonia Marciano, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Spring 2008) showed how community impact was drastically increased by the formation of networks of nonprofits with a desired community impact at the center.

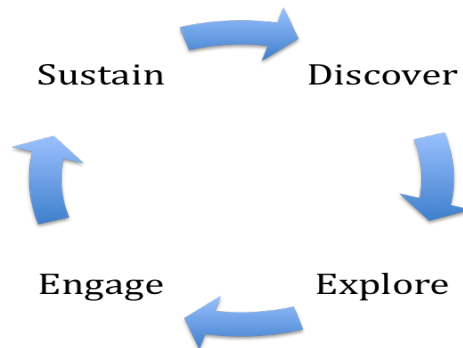
The goal of the **Strengths-Based Collaboration Toolkit** is to help organizations develop collaborations and partnerships around shared, desired goals. The Toolkit was created and piloted with 15 organizations that forged collaborations around the shared, desired outcome of increasing community health.



### The Toolkit outlines a process that:

- Identifies multiple organizations that are interested in creating the same community impact
- Develops strategies to increase impact collectively
- Implements these strategies using existing resources
- Identifies strategies to increase impact further through sustainable resource development.

**The four phases of this process are as follows:**



- **Phase I—Discover:** Organizations begin by defining a region or community in which to begin the initiative and start the process of discovering organizations and individuals that they are currently partnering with, have partnered with in the past, and could potentially partner with in the future.  
**The outcomes of Phase One will be:**
  - Information on existing, past, and potential partners,
  - Reflections on the brainstorming, and
  - A starting point for Phase II.
  
- **Phase II—Explore:** Participants prioritize potential partners and then begin exploring—reaching out to existing and potential partners and asking to set up one-on-one conversations. The purpose of contacting these individuals and organizations is primarily to learn more about what they are doing, to assess the interest of the individuals and organizations in developing or expanding partnerships, and to begin to develop ideas on how to increase collaboration.  
**The outcomes of Phase II will be:**
  - The identification of information about the existing resources, strengths, and assets of individuals and organizations in the community, and discovery of what is working that could be built upon,
  - The development of relationships with individuals and organizations who share a common goal and are interested in working with others to explore how to leverage existing resources,
  - Some initial ideas of how partnerships could be formed or expanded to maximize existing resources, and
  - A starting point for Phase III.



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- **Phase III—Engage:** This process is designed to be generative and emergent. We discuss and provided process design graphics that illustrate the following three possible structures:
  - i. Collaborations are formed with individual partners to leverage impact and further shared goals.
  - ii. You enter into an existing coalition in order to leverage impact and further shared goals.
  - iii. In collaboration with key partners identified in this process, you form a strengths-based collaboration to leverage impact and further shared goals.

The strengths-based collaborations developed in each of these scenarios are equally valuable—as long as collaborations that have their foundation in strengths and work to increase impact are being built, this is success.

**The outcomes of Phase III will be:**

- Actions taken on initial ideas developed in Phase II,
- Development of additional strategies and actions that could be implemented through collaboration,
- Identification of strategies that are sustainable by design because they build on existing resources, and that can be implemented immediately, and
- A starting point for Phase IV.

- **Phase IV—Sustainable Resource Development:** This phase helps groups explore answers to the question: *How can we increase our capacity to create positive lasting change?* It focuses on identifying ways to increase impact by sharing and leveraging resources and institutionalizing methods of building new partnerships and broadening the conversation to include new partners. This method of resource development is sustainable by design—it builds on existing resources, connections and successes.

**The outcomes of Phase IV will be:**

- Increase strategies to build capacity of collaborations to create lasting change,
- Enhancement of existing strengths through identification of resources that are sustainable and will enhance the ability of the partnerships to work toward their big goals or outcomes.

Wholonomy Consulting llc is a network of consultants and coaches who assist organizations and partnerships increase impact through the use of strengths-based approaches to change, evaluation and sustainability.

For more information contact:

Cassandra O’Neill, [cassandraoneill@comcast.net](mailto:cassandraoneill@comcast.net), 520-403-0687

Sarah Griffiths, [slmgriffiths@hotmail.com](mailto:slmgriffiths@hotmail.com), 520-271-7970