

# Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION<sup>Review</sup>

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***Editor's Note***  
**Collective Impact 2.0**  
By Eric Nee

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

## Collective Impact 2.0

**I**n the Winter 2011 issue of *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, we published what would become our most widely read and influential article, “Collective Impact.” Today, there are thousands of collective impact initiatives, some small and others large, tackling a host of social problems including education, health care, and job training. And it is an approach that has found adherents around the world, with initiatives in Latin America, Asia, and Europe.

The collective impact approach, however, is not static. Over the last 11 years the practice has undergone changes and refinement, and we have published dozens of articles on the subject. Many of the critiques have focused on the importance of involving the community and centering equity in the collective impact process.

The original five conditions of collective impact did not address those two issues. Some of the initiatives took a top-down

approach, bringing leaders of large and influential organizations and institutions together to come up with goals and activities that did not reflect the input or needs of the communities they were seeking to serve. These types of initiatives usually suffered and sometimes failed because of that.

Today, there is consensus among the original architects of collective impact and many of those most involved in the field that it is time to significantly revise the collective impact approach. To do that, six authors (including the coauthors of the original “Collective Impact” article) came together and wrote the article “Centering Equity in Collective Impact,” which we bring to you in this Winter 2022 issue of *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

The authors start by redefining collective impact itself: “Collective impact is a network of community members, organizations, and institutions that advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population

and systems-level change.” They go on to explore what it means to put equity at the center and how that changes the collective impact process itself.

The original collective impact approach didn’t exclude the possibility of including equity as a part of the process, but it also didn’t call for it. In fact, it didn’t mention the word *equity* at all. This oversight was not unique to collective impact. Many other social innovation approaches at that time—including impact investing, design thinking, and system change—did not address equity either.

That has all changed. Over the last decade, and particularly in the last few years, the issue of equity has come to the forefront of social innovation. And for good reason. One can’t expect to create an equitable society if it is not centered in the social innovation process itself.

When we use the word *equity*, we are of course talking about race. But it is also about addressing the needs of other people who are marginalized in society because of their gender, sexual orientation, caste, class, ability, religion, ethnicity, and other attributes.

“Centering Equity in Collective Impact” does a good job of exploring what it means to center equity in the process of collective impact. And in doing that, it provides an example that other social innovation approaches can learn from. —ERIC NEE

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