# TOOL | COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

***The Backbone:*** *How to establish a governance structure?*

The backbone infrastructure of a Collective Impact effort is focused on six core roles. These are:

- Guide vision & strategy
- Support aligned activities
- Established shared measurements
- Build public will
- Advance policy
- Mobilize funding

An in-depth study by FSG of successful backbones, revealed that: their value is unmistakable; they share strengths in guiding vision and strategy and supporting aligned activities; they shift focus over time; they need ongoing assistance with data; they build public will, and Backbones help to advance policy.

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### Collaborative Governance Principles

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Decisions take place in the public eye.

- **Equity and Inclusiveness:** All interests who are needed and willing contribute to solution.

- **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** Solutions are tested to make sure they make practical sense.

- **Responsiveness:** Public concerns are authentically addressed.

- **Forum Neutrality:** Different perspectives are welcome; the process itself has no bias.

- **Consensus-Based:** Decisions are made through consensus rather than majority rule.

TOOL DESCRIPTION:

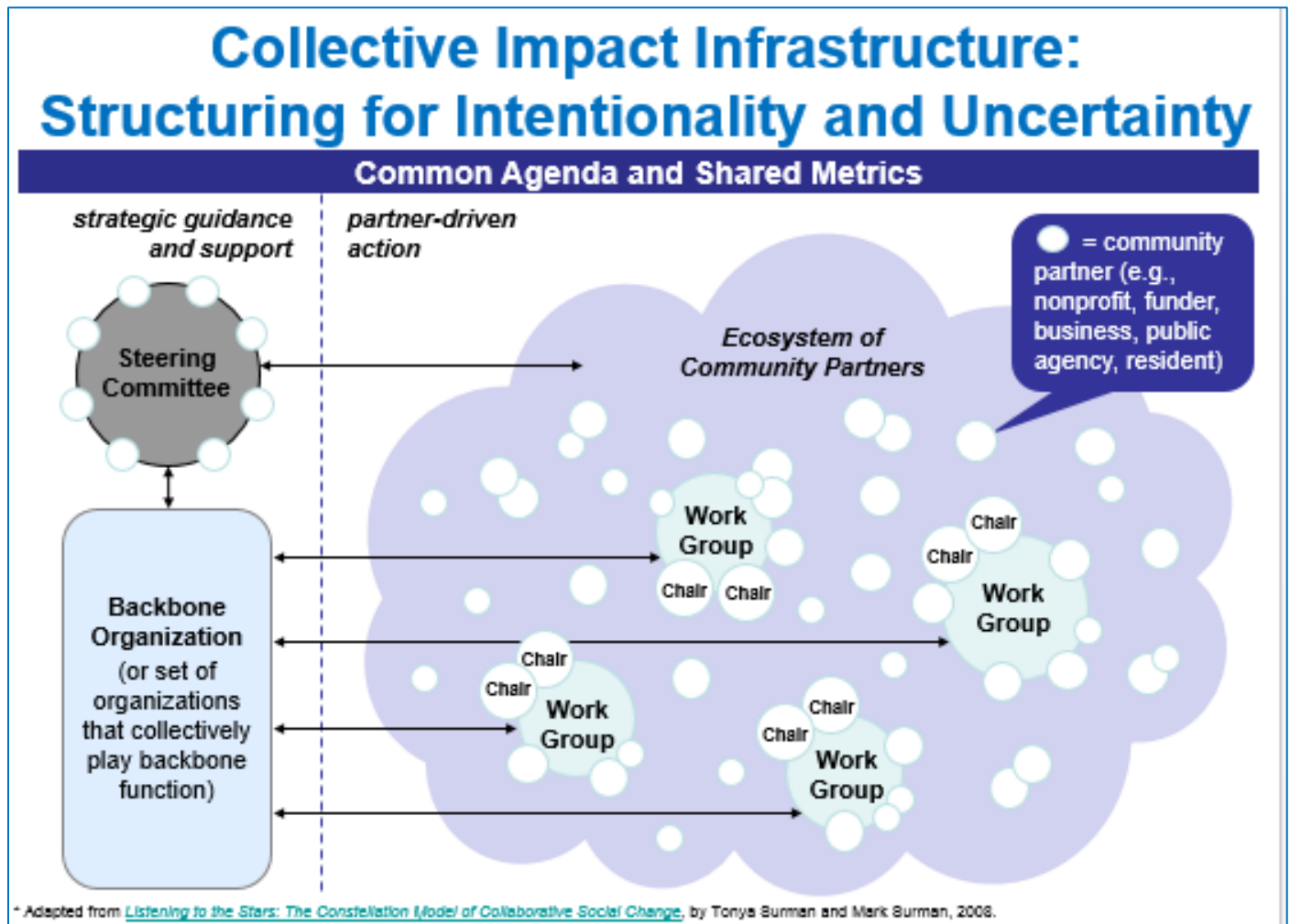The core elements of collaborative structure and governance include:

- Working through a host/convener
- Managing overlapping roles in the governance structure
- A leadership group
- A backbone organization with staff
- A fiscal/legal agent
- Executive or Coordinating Committee
- Working Groups and/or Action Teams

There is no right way to establish a collaborative governance model. Models are shaped by the following factors: local context; member attributes; magnitude and pace of change desired; the style and spirit of the leadership; the group's framework for change; the preferences of the convener or fiscal sponsor; and the flexibility and adaptability your initiative requires. A good design for collaborative governance is one in which:

- The group is making satisfactory progress;
- The effort and conflict required to make progress is reasonable;
- Members are achieving some personal or organizational objectives;
- Everyone involved is learning much more about the complex issue; and,
- The overall process is self-fulling, leading to greater ambition and capacity for the initiative.

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## TOOL HOW TO:

**Step 1. –** Use the above information and the Collective Impact Infrastructure visual below to guide you and your colleagues to determine an effective leadership structure for your Collective Impact initiative.



Collective Impact Infrastructure: Structuring for Intentionality and Uncertainty

* Adapted from *Listening to the Stars: The Constellation Model of Collaborative Social Change*, by Tonya Surman and Mark Surman, 2008.

**Step 2. –** Use the worksheet to assess the strength and gaps of your initiatives governance structure and develop plan to address them. (20 min)

**Collaborative Governance Framework**

| Role | Who Can Fill this Role? | Current Strengths | Current Weaknesses | Next Steps |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Host & Convener** | | | | |
| **Managing Overlapping Governance Roles** | | | | |
| **A Leadership Group** | | | | |
| **Backbone Infrastructure with staff** | | | | |
| **Fiscal Agent** | | | | |
| **Executive Committee** | | | | |
| **Working Groups or Action Teams** | | | | |
| **Citizen Engagement & Participation** | | | | |

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## TOOL DEBRIEF:

Debrief questions can Include:

- What actions are needed based upon our reflection?
- Who will do what and by when?