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Exploring Collective Impact: A Developmental Program Evaluation of a College Access Program

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Abstract

The Partnership was established in 2015 when the Arbor Glen School District, Brook Heights Community College, and Remarkable Outcomes rallied around their common priorities of increasing college matriculation rates in their community. The Partnership created programming that promotes the preparation and transition of students into postsecondary education and the completion of a postsecondary credential. The COVID-19 global pandemic directly impacted The Partnership, including the loss of grant funding, changes in data reporting systems, changes in the delivery method of its services to students, and significant staff turnover. The combination of these factors caused The Partnership's organizational structure, measurement systems, activities, and purpose to become less defined. While the members are still committed to working collaboratively to increase college matriculation rates, The Partnership needs a new formal, aligned, and coordinated approach in which to operate and collaborate after the pandemic.

I identified Collective Impact (CI) as a potential framework for The Partnership to operate, evolve, and sustain the work. Although not explicitly designed to be a CI initiative, The Partnership exhibited similarities to CI initiatives because it served as a cross-sector community collaboration focused on solving a critical issue within the community. I proposed that evaluating The Partnership's implementation of the five CI conditions would allow the members to reflect on their current practices, celebrate their areas of strength, and consider ways in which they might adapt the initiative's design and strategies.

To assist in the program evaluation, I created a CI framework comprised of CI performance indicators associated with each of the five CI conditions. These performance indicators provided the criteria for the data collection methods in the program evaluation. Using a developmental evaluation model (Patton, 2010) and convergent mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), I gathered quantitative and qualitative data to measure the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the five CI conditions. I analyzed the results and findings to determine each CI condition's implementation level and evidence. I then provided recommendations on how The Partnership could further implement the CI conditions to support the initiative's continued work and sustainability.

This program evaluation identified that The Partnership had partially implemented four of the five CI conditions, showing the alignment between the CI framework and the organizational and operational structures already in place within The Partnership. Findings also included evidence of the critical role stewardship played within The Partnership. While these findings and results are specific to The Partnership, there are implications and suggestions for further research for other college access programs, CI initiatives, and CI theory and research.

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This program evaluation identified that The Partnership had partially implemented four of the five CI conditions, showing the alignment between the CI framework and the organizational and operational structures already in place within The Partnership. Findings also included evidence of the critical role stewardship played within The Partnership. While these findings and results are specific to The Partnership, there are implications and suggestions for further research for other college access programs, CI initiatives, and CI theory and research.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Arbor Glen School District,[1] a small suburban school district in Colorado, was concerned about its high school graduates' low college matriculation, persistence, and credential attainment rates. Between 2009 and 2014, 80-90% of graduating seniors self-reported on their high school exit survey their intention to attend a postsecondary institution; however, college matriculation data from the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) (2023) reported fewer than 40% of Arbor Glen students enrolled in college in the fall following high school graduation. During those same years, the state average for college matriculation was 57.05% (CDHE, 2023). The low persistence rates of the Arbor Glen students who attended college were equally concerning. Between 2009 and 2014, only 66% of students returned to college for a second year, with the state average for persistence being 80% (CDHE, 2023). A final concern was Arbor Glen's graduates' low credential attainment rates – the 2009-2014 average attainment rate was 30.7% within six years, nearly 25 percentage points lower than the state's average attainment rate of 55.4% (CDHE, 2023).

Arbor Glen was fortunate to have strong relationships with two entities that shared similar concerns about low college matriculation, persistence, and postsecondary credential attainment rates. District leadership had an existing partnership with

[1] Pseudonym used to protect the school district and participants.

Remarkable Outcomes,[2] a social enterprise[3] focused on increasing the number of students who graduate from high school, decreasing the dropout rates, and increasing the number of students who go to college. Remarkable Outcomes had expertise and experience addressing the "summer melt"[4] condition and wanted to work with Arbor Glen to address the low college matriculation rates.

Arbor Glen also had a long-standing relationship with its local community college, Brook Heights Community College.[5] The college and district leaders had collaborated for several years providing many services to Arbor Glen students, including concurrent enrollment, summer Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programming, college application assistance, financial aid information, Accuplacer testing, guest speakers for college and career fairs, GED support, and campus tours. These three organizations developed The Partnership[6] in 2015 to create programming that promotes the preparation and transition of students into postsecondary education and the completion of a postsecondary credential.

Background and Context

Policies, priorities, and initiatives at the local, state, and national levels shaped the creation and evolution of The Partnership. When woven together, these influences form

[2] Pseudonym used to protect the organization and participants.

[3] A social enterprise is defined as "a business that puts the interests of people and the planet ahead of shareholder gain. These businesses are driven by a social/environmental mission and reinvest profits into creating positive social change" (Social Enterprise Mark, 2023).

[4] Summer melt is defined as the scenario in which high-school graduates apply to and are accepted to college but do not actually enroll or attend (Harvard University, 2023).

[5] Pseudonym used to protect the college and participants.

[6] Pseudonym used to protect the organizations and participants.

an essential context for understanding the origin of and need for The Partnership. The following section describes the context in which The Partnership developed.

Local Context: District-level Priorities

Beginning in 2008, the Arbor Glen School District increased its efforts to create postsecondary and workforce readiness programs in its schools. These efforts included but were not limited to expanding the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, adding concurrent enrollment programs, and building career and technical education (CTE) pathways. These programs aimed to increase student engagement and ensure that all Arbor Glen students were ready for a career and college after high school.

The district leaders expanded AVID throughout its middle and high schools. AVID is a college readiness system that focuses on closing the opportunity gap in college graduation rates among diverse and underrepresented demographic groups through targeted student support, increased teacher effectiveness, and leadership development (AVID, 2023). Over a period of ten years, Arbor Glen purchased the AVID college-readiness curriculum, trained teachers on rigorous instructional methodologies, and provided professional development to school and district administrators on effective strategies for increasing college readiness and matriculation.

In addition to AVID, district leaders knew that students who take college classes during high school are more likely to enroll in college within one year following high school graduation and are more likely to complete their postsecondary education (CDHE & CDE, 2021). As such, Arbor Glen expanded its concurrent enrollment opportunities for students to earn college credit while in high school. Each district high school offered

concurrent enrollment courses including guarantee transfer, CTE, and developmental education. The high schools also provided college developmental education classes, known as college remediation courses, to their seniors. Creating these courses was a critical strategy to support seniors' enrollment in college-level courses after graduation without needing remediation.

District leaders also understood the power of CTE programs. High school students who complete two years of a CTE program are ten percentage points more likely to enroll in a postsecondary option within two years than their peers who do not (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). Arbor Glen added several new CTE pathways, most offering students college credit. All CTE pathways were directly aligned with postsecondary credential programs.

Although these programs had been in place for several years, by 2015, matriculation, persistence, and postsecondary credential attainment rates showed little improvement. Arbor Glen's college matriculation rates fluctuated from 25.7% to 39.1% between 2009 and 2015; its persistence rates ranged from 60.9% to 75.9%, and credential attainment rates within six years fluctuated from 26.1% to 45.5%. These dramatic rate ranges did not necessarily trend positively or negatively. The rates fluctuated annually and never met the state averages. Table 1.1 includes the historical data trends that influenced the development of The Partnership. Arbor Glen leaders knew they needed to look at programs and student services differently if they were going to see more students successfully transition into and complete their postsecondary education.

Table 1.1

Arbor Glen School District Historical Matriculation, Persistence, and Postsecondary Credential Attainment Rates

Year	Matriculation Rate	Persistence Rate	Postsecondary Credential Attainment Rate within six years
2015	38.5%	61.8%	45.5%
2014	31.0%	66.7%	23.1%
2013	31.4%	75.9%	44.8%
2012	25.7%	60.9%	26.1%
2011	31.5%	59.1%	28.8%
2010	35.2%	69.7%	39.5%
2009	39.1%	64.8%	22.0%

State Context: School District Accreditation

In addition to the work and initiatives occurring at the local level to increase postsecondary and workforce readiness, the state of Colorado also increased its focus on improving college matriculation rates. In 2015 the Colorado Department of Education, the accrediting agency for all Colorado public school districts, implemented HB15-1170 – the *Increasing Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act*. The legislation intended to "encourage matriculation of high school graduates into various postsecondary opportunities including higher education and career and technical education programs" (CDE, 2019, p. 1). Once fully implemented, the law held school districts and high schools accountable for their matriculation rates – defined as the percentage of high school graduates who enroll in technical schools, two-year colleges, or four-year colleges, earn an industry certificate, or enlist in the military during the summer or fall

term immediately following graduation (CDE, 2019). This accountability policy was introduced as a performance rating on the District Performance Framework issued by the Colorado Department of Education.

The Colorado Department of Education (2023a) set the state cut score for the student matriculation rate at 61.1%. Since the policy's implementation in 2016, the Arbor Glen school district has had matriculation rates significantly below this cut score and earned a performance rating of "does not meet" on the District Performance Framework. This rating has hurt Arbor Glen's overall accreditation with the state and served as an additional impetus for creating The Partnership.

State Context: Labor Demands, the Talent Pipeline, and Attainment Gaps

The relationship between the postsecondary climate and the Colorado labor market is complex and unique. The state's challenges are rooted in changing demographics, the implications of the knowledge economy, and the evolving job market that demands educated workers who can adapt to change and remain relevant (CDHE, 2020c). These complicating factors create labor and attainment gaps that several state agencies are working to address to provide all Coloradans with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to adapt to the changing occupational and educational landscape.

Colorado Workforce Development Council's 2021 *Talent Pipeline Report* found that 90.7% of Tier 1 Top Jobs[7] in Colorado require a credential beyond high school. Economists state that Colorado has the fifth highest demand for college-educated adults in the nation (CDHE, 2020d). Despite the need for an educated workforce, only 61% of

[7] Colorado Tier 1 Top Jobs are defined as jobs with greater than 40% annual openings, a ten-year projected growth rate of over 10%, and a living hourly wage that can support a family of three with one working adult, one non-working adult, and one child (CWDC, 2021).

Colorado adults have a degree or certificate, and only 52.4% have an associate degree or higher (Lumina Foundation, 2022).

Colorado attracts many people from outside of the state to fill open positions. Because of this imported talent, Colorado is ranked third for the highest-educated adult population (McCann, 2020); however, 74% of Colorado adults with education beyond high school were not born in Colorado (CWDF, 2017). At the same time, Colorado has one of the country's lowest postsecondary completion rates of Colorado-educated K-12 students, with only one in five ninth graders continuing to college and earning a four-year degree (CDHE, 2019). This condition is known as the Colorado Paradox (Deruy, 2016; Johnson, 2018).

Another gap exists within the state linked to race and ethnicity. Unfortunately, this is not unique to Colorado. When analyzing the attainment of racial and ethnic groups, the educational attainment of Colorado citizens is unequal. Colorado Department of Higher Education data (2020e) show the attainment rates of Colorado residents, ages 25-64, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Colorado's fastest-growing population, Hispanics, has a 29% attainment rate. African Americans have a 39% attainment rate, while American Indians have a 33% rate compared to an attainment rate of 64% for whites. That means the white majority population earns a postsecondary credential at more than twice the rate of Hispanics and American Indians and about 1.5 times the rate of African Americans. The Colorado attainment gap is the second largest in the nation, just behind California (CDHE, 2020e).

National Context: The Importance of Higher Education

Across the nation, the demand for higher education is surging with some form of postsecondary credential required to earn a living wage and achieve middle-class status (Colorado Commission on Higher Education [CCHE], 2017; Colorado Workforce Development Council [CWDC], 2019; Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce [GUCEW], 2013; Lumina Foundation, 2019b). Research from the Lumina Foundation (2019a, 2020) found that most jobs in the United States require some type of high-quality credential beyond high school, and that trend shows no sign of slowing down. The demand for a college-educated workforce is punctuated by research confirming that the labor force is not adequately prepared for the nation's most in-demand jobs – jobs showing high growth and paying above a living wage (CWDC, 2019). Postsecondary education is the primary strategy to address this knowledge and skills gap and to support future economic prosperity at the national, state, and individual levels.

While policymakers assert the economic importance of higher education, the benefits of postsecondary education can also be measured at the individual and societal levels. At the individual level, lifetime earnings for a person with a bachelor's degree are 1.6 times higher than for those who earned only a high school diploma, a difference of over $900,000 in median lifetime earnings (Tamborini et al., 2015). Benefits of higher education to individuals include longer life expectancy, greater life satisfaction, and better general health. Society also benefits from an educated populace through increased tax revenues and citizen productivity, lower rates of the need for government assistance such as Welfare and Medicaid, higher voting rates, and lower crime rates (Department for

Business Innovation and Skills, 2013; Perna, 2006). Higher education's personal and public benefits provide a backdrop for state policymakers and local practitioners' efforts to increase postsecondary credential completion.

The Partnership

The complex and multi-layered arena of college access and completion provides essential context for understanding the climate and conditions facing Arbor Glen School District, Brook Heights Community College, and Remarkable Outcomes. This program evaluation finds that local, state, and national priorities and issues amplified these organizations' existing concerns and created a sense of urgency to develop a responsive solution. The following section describes how these three organizations rallied together around their common priorities, leveraged their individual expertise and state resources, and established The Partnership.

Influenced by the state's economic and labor conditions and the national higher education landscape, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education developed a state master plan – *Colorado Rises: Advancing Education and Talent Management. Colorado Commission on Higher Education Master Plan* (CCHE, 2017). This plan set an ambitious attainment goal for the citizens of Colorado – 66% of the adult population would hold a postsecondary credential by 2025 (CCHE, 2017). Because the master plan identified postsecondary credential attainment as "the state's top higher education priority" (p. 7), several programs were implemented to understand and remove barriers to postsecondary access and completion. One such program was the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI).

Administered through the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the overall goal of COSI was to "increase the attainment of postsecondary credentials and degrees for underserved students in Colorado" (CDHE, 2018, p. 5). COSI served as the umbrella initiative under which two distinct programs were developed – one to address affordability and one to address accessibility. The first program focused on improving higher education affordability by offering COSI grants to higher education institutions for matching scholarships. Institutions awarded scholarships and then used the COSI grant to match the scholarship awards. The second grant program, and the program under which The Partnership was established, was the Community Partnership Program Grant. This grant focused on improving access, retention, persistence, and completion of a postsecondary credential through programs that help prepare students for higher education and support them to completion (CDHE, 2020a).

Community collaborations of local school districts, higher education institutions, nonprofits, and community groups were encouraged to submit COSI Community Partnership Program Grants applications to support students' preparation and transition into higher education. This grant aligned well with the concerns and priorities of the Arbor Glen School District, Brook Heights Community College, and Remarkable Outcomes. Together, these organizations submitted a COSI application to create comprehensive college access programming in the Arbor Glen community. The Colorado Department of Higher Education awarded COSI grants to The Partnership in 2015, 2016, and 2018.

Initiative documents such as the original grant application to fund The Partnership provided evidence that the members understood that a single organization or institution

could not solve the complex issues of college matriculation, persistence, and postsecondary credential completion in isolation. Rather, the solution lay with the combined expertise and strength generated from cross-sector collaboration, leveraged resources, and united efforts to achieve common goals. Each organization held expertise in specific areas. Interview and document analysis data indicated that Arbor Glen School District knew its students, understood the existing programs and services, and held the postsecondary outcomes data for its graduates. Brook Heights Community College was masterful at college admissions, financial aid, and advising. Remarkable Outcomes had deep expertise around systemic approaches to student engagement and summer melt mitigation and provided knowledgeable staff members to serve as postsecondary advisors.

The Partnership designed and implemented targeted services for Arbor Glen seniors, including support with college exploration and selection, applications, and financial aid. Wrap-around services from the college were available once Arbor Glen graduates enrolled in Brook Heights. Details of each of the member organizations are provided in chapter three.

Statement of the Problem

As I discuss further in Chapter Three, I held a unique position in this program evaluation as both a member of The Partnership and as the evaluator. As a member, I have background knowledge of the initiative's historical and current state. Combining this background knowledge with information from the data collection process, I was able to identify how the COVID-19 global pandemic directly impacted The Partnership. First, the initiative lost COSI grant funding in 2020 when that state redistributed COSI dollars

to support displaced workers across Colorado due to the COVID-19 shutdown. This loss of funding required The Partnership to develop a new financial model to sustain the initiative. Arbor Glen School District absorbed the contract costs of the Remarkable Outcomes staff, and Brook Heights Community College agreed to continue the work through in-kind contributions of staff time and expertise.

Second, the formal reporting measures associated with the COSI grant were no longer in place. This changed the metrics and accountability structures of the initiative. The Partnership continued to collect data on student outcomes – college applications, college acceptances, FAFSA completion, scholarships, and college enrollment. However, the data systems and the communication of results became less formalized.

Third, the global shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic changed the activities and strategies of The Partnership. The regular in-person nature of the support provided to high school and college students pivoted online. This altered the frequency and availability of support services and the relationship between the service providers and the students. In-person activities offered before the pandemic, such as college application workshops, group advising sessions, family FAFSA nights, and summer bridge programs, were suspended. The Partnership was forced to develop other remote services to meet the needs of students and families.

Fourth, staff turnover – at all levels and in each organization within The Partnership – became extremely common during and after the pandemic. New members joined the initiative, and interviews revealed that several reported feeling confused about The Partnership's history and purpose. There was uncertainty about the initiative's goals,

the data being collected, and the measures of success. When senior leadership in The Partnership turned over, there were questions about who would own and lead the work.

The combination of these factors caused the initiative's organizational structure, measurement systems, activities, and overall purpose to become less defined and unclear, especially to the newer members. While members are still committed to working collaboratively to increase matriculation rates, The Partnership lacks a formal, aligned, and coordinated system in which to operate and collaborate.

Because The Partnership is a cross-sector community collaboration focused on solving a critical issue within their community, there are many similarities to Collective Impact (CI) initiatives. CI is defined as "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem" (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 36). CI initiatives follow a structured approach using five CI conditions that facilitate intentional systemic change and support the success and sustainability of the initiative (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Although not explicitly designed as a CI initiative, exploring how The Partnership implemented the five CI conditions might provide a framework in which The Partnership can operate, evolve, and sustain the work.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

The Partnership already had student outcome data to assess the positive effects on students. Although student outcomes are important as a form of initiative accountability, in isolation, they do not help The Partnership evaluate its overall design, respond to changing conditions, and adapt strategy. As such, the purpose of this program evaluation was three-fold. First, I offered CI to The Partnership as an organizational and operational

structure that can guide their work because the CI model is designed to foster continuous learning, informs strategic decision-making, and provides direction for future operational success. Second, I used a CI framework to conduct a utilization-focused developmental evaluation of the initiative's current design and implementation (Patton, 2008; Patton, 2010). I used quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate how The Partnership has implemented the CI conditions. Third, I used this program evaluation's results to provide actionable recommendations for The Partnership to expand its CI implementation.

Research Questions

These three research questions drove this program evaluation:

1. To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI?
2. In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI?
3. How might further implementation of the CI conditions support The Partnership's continued work and sustainability?

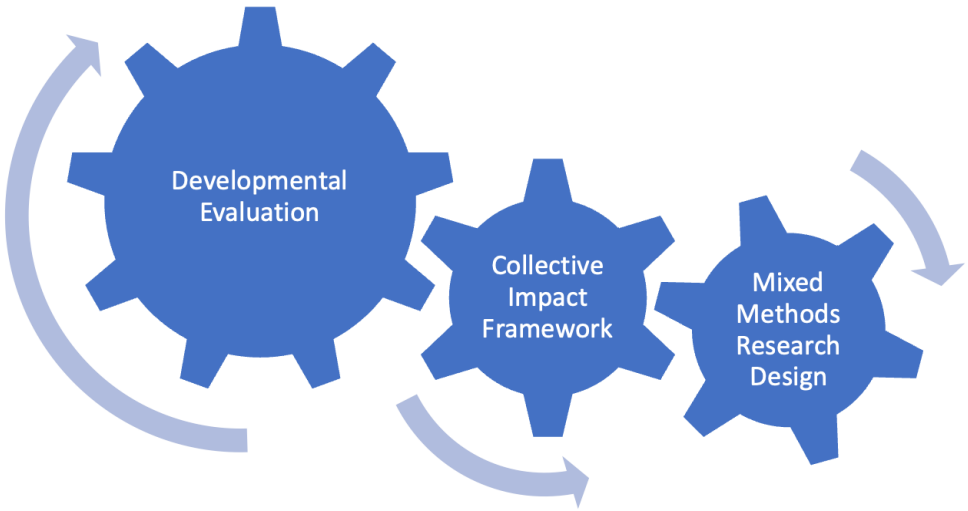
The first two research questions examine how the conditions of CI emerged within The Partnership. By reviewing initiative documents and gathering members' voices – through surveys and interviews – I was able to quantify and qualify evidence of CI implementation. The third research question focused on using the results to make recommendations to The Partnership on further implementing the CI conditions. Because the program evaluation had a utilization and developmental focus (Patton, 2008), my goal was for The Partnership to use the recommendations to reflect upon and adapt program design, strategy, and practice.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this program evaluation was to explore how The Partnership implemented the conditions of CI in order to provide it with a framework in which it can operate, evolve, and sustain its important work in the community. To accomplish this, I developed a conceptual framework for this program evaluation that combined three research methodologies. First, I used the developmental evaluation approach as a primary mechanism to drive the program evaluation (Patton, 2010). Second, using *The Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact* (Preskill et al., 2014), I developed a CI framework comprised of the five CI conditions and corresponding performance indicators. I used this CI framework to evaluate The Partnership's implementation of CI. Last, I used a mixed methods research design to structure the data collection strategy (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Figure 1.1 includes a graphic representation of this program evaluation's conceptual framework.

Figure 1.1

Conceptual Framework



Developmental evaluation is the primary mechanism driving the program evaluation, as this approach focuses on learning, adaptation, and innovation (Patton, 2010). To facilitate this learning process, I developed specific criteria to evaluate The Partnership's implementation of the CI conditions – this came in the form of the CI framework. To measure the criteria within the CI framework, I used a mixed methods research design to structure the data collection process (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The following sections describe each of these methodologies in depth.

Developmental Evaluation

I selected utilization-focused developmental evaluation as the approach for this program evaluation (Patton, 2010). This approach was recommended by other evaluators of CI initiatives (Kania & Kramer, 2013; Preskill et al., 2014). Kania and Kramer (2013, p. 4) state that developmental evaluation is "particularly well suited to dealing with complexity and emergence" in CI initiatives. Second, developmental evaluation paired well with The Partnership and its focus on addressing problems within its community. Patton (2010) states that developmental evaluation supports learning and innovation and guides adaptation in complex environments. Third, developmental evaluation focuses on improving program design and process, not solely on producing summative results. Developmental evaluation is a non-summative approach that does not produce an overall judgment of an initiative's worth or effectiveness (Patton, 2010). Finally, developmental evaluation allowed me to be both the evaluator and current member of The Partnership. In developmental evaluation, the evaluator is part of the program and plays the role of "critical friend" to help discern the essential takeaways of the evaluation and facilitate learning in real-time (Preskill et al., 2014, p. 16). By serving as a critical friend, I was

able to leverage my existing relationships and commitment to the initiative to support the organizational learning and development of The Partnership.

Collective Impact Framework

CI is based on the premise that approaches used by single entities are ineffective at addressing complex social issues; however, when cross-sector stakeholders collaborate, they are more effective at addressing social issues within their community (Preskill et al., 2014). This structured approach to problem-solving consists of five CI conditions: a common agenda, shared metrics, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone organization to facilitate the work (Kania & Kramer, 2011). (I discuss the five CI conditions further in Chapter Two). CI philosophically aligned well with The Partnership's principles and objectives as diverse stakeholders established the initiative to solve issues within their community.

In 2014, Preskill and colleagues from The Collective Impact Forum published the *Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact* which provides a structure for evaluating a CI initiative's development and effectiveness. This was a critical resource for this program evaluation. The guide provided a system for measuring the five CI conditions through a series of sample performance indicators.

I selected specific performance indicators that (1) were appropriate to The Partnership's stage of development, (2) were measurable through quantitative and qualitative methods, and (3) could provide actionable information for the members. I used these selected performance indicators to develop a CI framework for the program evaluation. The framework was the foundation for developing all data collection methods

in this program evaluation, including survey and interview questions and the overall coding and analysis structure for the quantitative and qualitative strands.

Mixed Methods Research

The final component of the program evaluation's conceptual framework was a mixed methods research design. Neither quantitative nor qualitative research methods could solely answer the research questions. Creswell and Clark (2017) state that each research design has its strengths and limitations, and the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods provides a more complete understanding of the problem than either method does alone. This program evaluation used quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including a survey, interviews, and document analysis. This methodological combination resulted in a more thorough understanding of The Partnership's implementation of CI.

Summary of Results and Findings

I integrated the quantitative and qualitative strands of this program evaluation to determine the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented CI. Using the CI framework, I evaluated the evidence for each CI performance indicator corresponding with the five CI conditions. I found that The Partnership implemented the CI performance indicators at varying levels. I determined that The Partnership had fully implemented four of the CI performance indicators, partially implemented ten indicators, and had yet to implement six of the CI performance indicators. I then synthesized the results for each of the CI performance indicators and determined the overall level of implementation of the five CI conditions. This program evaluation identified that The Partnership partially implemented four of the five CI conditions: a common agenda, shared metrics, mutually

reinforcing activities, and continuous communication. The Partnership had not implemented the CI condition of a backbone support organization. Findings also included evidence of the critical role stewardship played within The Partnership.

In Chapter Five, I made 12 recommendations to The Partnership on how they could further implement the CI conditions to establish a formal, aligned, and coordinated system in which to operate and collaborate. The recommendations offered The Partnership information that allowed members to reflect on their current practices and consider ways they may want to adapt the initiative's design and strategies.

Significance of the Program Evaluation

This program evaluation generated three important outcomes for The Partnership. First, the evaluation provided The Partnership with detailed information on the CI model. Members could make interpretations and judgments on how CI aligned with the design and purpose of The Partnership. Second, the evaluation measured the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the CI conditions and performance indicators within the initiative. This allowed members to reflect upon the current design of the initiative and consider the further implementation of CI to support organization and operational decisions. A third outcome of this program evaluation was a series of recommendations on expanding CI to reinforce existing strengths while addressing growth areas.

Outside of The Partnership, this dissertation may prove helpful to others. This program evaluation contributed one of the first published evaluations of a CI college access program and adds to the rapidly growing body of literature on CI initiatives. As CI becomes a more prevalent strategy to address complex social issues, this program evaluation may help bolster the research. Although The Partnership cannot be considered

an official CI initiative, there are lessons to be learned from this program evaluation for those conducting similar CI work and those evaluating those initiatives.

This program evaluation is also significant because it proposes a sixth condition of CI – stewardship. The results and findings of the program evaluation elevated the concept of stewardship as a common ethos held by most members regarding their participation in The Partnership. Stewardship captures the intrinsic motivation to facilitate trust, teamwork, and a joint commitment to The Partnership's work. It also reflects the sense of responsibility the stakeholders felt to move the work forward in the best interest of the students and the community.

Finally, this program evaluation may be useful to the broader college-access community. The program evaluation's results may provide insight and understanding into cross-sector collaborations and program design. Garnering a deeper understanding of The Partnership's success and challenges and the CI conditions and performance indicators may help bolster college-access practices and expand the exposure of successful programs.

Definition of Key Terms

To ease the understanding of this program evaluation, I have provided definitions of key terms I used throughout the dissertation.

Career and Technical Education (CTE): CTE prepares learners for the world of work by providing them with academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training necessary to succeed in future careers and become lifelong learners (Advance CTE, 2023).

Collective Impact (CI) initiative: The commitment of a group of individuals or organizations from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. The initiative follows the conditions of the Collective Impact Model (Kania & Kramer, 2012).

Collective Impact (CI) model: A theoretical model which addresses broad cross-sector coordination. Fundamental tenets of the model include a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants (Kania & Kramer, 2012).

College access program: A program that helps low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students aspire to, prepare for, enroll in, pay for, and complete postsecondary education (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2016; Domina, 2009; Schultz & Mueller, 2006).

College matriculation: The process of a student formally enrolling in a postsecondary institution.

Cross-sector collaboration: "Alliances of individuals and organizations from the nonprofit, government, philanthropic, and business sectors that use their diverse perspectives and resources to jointly solve a societal problem and achieve a shared goal" (Becker & Smith, 2018, p. 2).

Persistence: A student who continues their postsecondary education for a second year (National Student Clearinghouse, 2021).

Postsecondary: Any setting where an individual pursues additional instruction beyond high school. This extends to two-year or four-year degree programs, certification

programs, licensure programs, apprenticeships, or training programs in the military (Conley, 2012).

Postsecondary and workforce readiness: I rely on the Colorado Department of Education's definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness because this is the definition most Colorado college and career initiatives refer to. "Colorado high school graduates demonstrate the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens" (Colorado Department of Education, 2023c).

Postsecondary credential: I rely on the US Department of Labor's definition of a postsecondary credential because this is the definition used across national and local labor and education initiatives. "A credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by a State or the Federal Government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree" (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

Retention: A student who returns to the same institution of higher education (National Student Clearinghouse, 2021).

Stewardship: A shared ethos focused on collective actions and contributions toward a common purpose greater than oneself. This is the definition I am advancing through this dissertation.

Summer Melt: The scenario in which high-school graduates apply to and are accepted to college but do not enroll or attend (Harvard University, 2023).

Dissertation Overview

Chapter One provided local, state, and national background and context for creating The Partnership. I described the purpose of the program evaluation, the research questions, and the conceptual framework used to drive the evaluation. I summarized the results and findings and shared the significance of this program evaluation. Finally, I defined key terms used throughout the dissertation.

Within Chapter Two, I summarize the research and literature on college access programs, including the programs' history, types, principles, and impact. I provide background on CI and the five conditions of successful programs. I discuss how CI differs from other change initiatives and offer criticisms of the CI approach. I discuss how CI informs this program evaluation and the conceptual framework for the program evaluation. I include information on five college access programs that utilize the CI approach to achieve postsecondary enrollment goals in their communities. I provide background information on stewardship and how the ethos of stewardship informed the work of The Partnership. Finally, I identify this program evaluation as one of the first to evaluate a college access CI initiative.

Chapter Three provides information and the rationale for the methodological approaches I used to explore the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented CI. I share my positionality and how it informed my role as the evaluator. I discuss the research design, conceptual framework, site description, and participant recruitment processes. I describe the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and the coding and analysis procedures. Finally, I share ethical considerations for the program evaluation, steps I took to increase trustworthiness, and the evaluation’s limitations.

Chapter Four presents the quantitative results and qualitative findings from data collected and analyzed in the mixed methods developmental program evaluation. I answer the first two research questions on the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented CI. I discuss the theme of stewardship as a significant finding in the program evaluation and propose that stewardship might be considered a sixth condition of successful CI initiatives.

Lastly, I discuss in Chapter Five the results and findings for each CI condition and the ways in which The Partnership benefited from an ethos of stewardship. I address my third research question by offering recommendations to The Partnership on how further implementation of the CI conditions may provide an intentional system to operate and sustain the work. I share the program evaluations' implications on The Partnership, college access programs, and CI theory and research. I conclude the chapter with suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this program evaluation was to explore how a college access program, which I refer to as "The Partnership," implemented the conditions of Collective Impact (CI) in order to provide it with a framework in which it can operate, evolve, and sustain its important work in the community. This chapter discusses the existing research and literature on college access programs and CI to provide a foundational understanding of the concepts within this program evaluation. First, I examine the literature on college access programming providing important history and context to understand The Partnership's efforts. Second, I explore the literature on CI and how cross-sector collaborations use this model for community change efforts. Third, I provide examples of college access programs that utilize the CI model. Fourth, I discuss the available research on CI college access program evaluations. Finally, I discuss stewardship and stewardship theory as they provide essential context for understanding this program evaluation's findings.

College Access Programs

The literature often uses the terms college access, pre-college, college readiness, and college transition programs synonymously. For this dissertation, I use the term "college access program" and define it as a program that helps low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students aspire to, prepare for, enroll in, pay for, and complete postsecondary education (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2016; Domina,

2009; Schultz & Mueller, 2006). The following section describes the history of college access programs, two types of college access programs – credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing – the general principles of these programs, and the impact of college access programs on postsecondary enrollment.

History of College Access Programs

The United States federal government played a critical role in developing college access programs, with the literature pointing to the creation of Upward Bound as the catalyst for expanding other college access programs (Gullatt & Jan; 2003; Perna & Swail, 2001). As part of United States President Johnson's War on Poverty, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 established the Upward Bound college access program. Upward Bound's purpose was to support low-income and first-generation college students in preparing for enrollment in and completion of a postsecondary credential (U.S. Department of Education, 2023f). Services include academic instruction, tutoring, counseling, mentoring, work-study, and financial literacy programs.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 developed the Talent Search program which focused on supporting individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds with the college application and financial aid processes (U.S. Department of Education, 2023e). In addition, Talent Search encouraged individuals who had yet to complete their secondary or postsecondary education to re-enroll and complete a postsecondary credential. Services included academic, career and personal counseling, tutoring, admissions and financial aid support, and family workshops.

In 1968, the US government amended the Higher Education Act of 1965 to include the Student Support Services program. This grant provided funding for higher

education institutions to increase the enrollment of low-income, first-generation, and college students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2023d). Services included academic tutoring, course advising, financial aid advising, and support for continuing postsecondary education through transfer or graduate study programs.

Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services collectively became known as TRIO. TRIO programs were the first federally funded college access programs designed to increase college enrollment and completion rates for underrepresented populations and still exist today (Perna & Swail, 2001; Pitre & Pitre, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2023c). TRIO identifies and provides services to low-income, first-generation, and ethnic/racial minority students. These programs provide the navigational skills and support students need for college readiness, enrollment, and success (Perna, 2015; Pitre & Pitre, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2023a).

The federal government expanded its commitment to college access programs in 1992 when it authorized the National Early Intervention Scholarship Program (NEISP). NEISP awarded matching grants to states for programs providing financial incentives, academic support services and counseling, and college-related information to low-income students or students at-risk of dropping out students and their parents (Perna & Swail, 2001). As part of reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, the federal government funded GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) in 1999 to replace NEISP. GEAR UP is still operating today, awarding six or seven-year grants to states and community partnerships that expose students to a college-preparatory curriculum and provide scholarships to students (Swail & Perna, 2001; Gullatt & Jan; 2003). GEAR UP serves high-poverty middle and high schools using a cohort model

starting no later than seventh grade. It follows these students through high school, supporting them to enter and succeed in postsecondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2023b).

In addition to these federal programs, colleges, universities, foundations, and private organizations have developed college access programs. The National Association of College Admission Counseling's (NACAC) Directory of College Access and Success Programs (2023) lists over 540 programs, with additional programs opening yearly. Two of the most prominent programs are the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program, developed in 1980, and the I Have a Dream (IHAD) Program, established in 1981 (AVID, 2023; Perna & Swail, 2001). AVID is a national college access program focused on increasing postsecondary access through student support, teacher effectiveness, building leadership capacity, and using data to ensure all students across all demographics have equitable access to college (AVID, 2023). AVID serves two million students annually in over 8000 K-12 schools (AVID, 2023). IHAD's creation occurred when a New York businessman guaranteed funding for college to 61 students from Harlem. The program expanded across the country serving nearly 18,000 students in over 200 programs providing students with the knowledge and skills to be successful in higher education and tuition assistance (I Have a Dream Foundation, 2023).

Types of College Access Programs

Several published reports inventory various college access programs (Swail, 2000; Gándara & Bial, 2001; Perna, 2002; Bailey & Karp, 2003; King, 2009; Tierney et al., 2009). To explain these programs, I used Bailey and Karp's 2003 model of categorizing programs into two distinct types – credit and non-credit-based college access

programs. The following section describes these two types of college access programs in detail.

Credit-Based College Access Programs. Credit-based college access programs prepare students for the rigors of college by replicating the college experience through academic preparation and building the behaviors and skills for success (Bailey & Karp, 2003). These programs traditionally allow students to earn college credit in high school; however, not all credit is guaranteed to transfer. Although each of these programs is unique, all aim to support students, including high-achieving, college-bound youth and students traditionally underrepresented in higher education (Bailey & Karp, 2003; King, 2009). Three of the most common credit-based college access programs are Advanced Placement (AP), concurrent and dual enrollment, and International Baccalaureate (IB).

Advanced Placement (AP). The AP program offers high school students the ability to take rigorous courses and exams in 38 subjects. Run by the College Board, AP exams are offered annually with possible scores ranging from one to five. Students may earn college credit at approved institutions (College Board, 2023).

The AP program started in the 1950s in response to the fear that US high schoolers were falling behind their Soviet counterparts. Research funded by the Ford Foundation recommended that secondary schools and colleges collaborate to reduce duplication of coursework and allow motivated students to advance as quickly as possible (College Entrance Examination Board, 2003). In the early years, the AP program served high-achieving high school students. AP was an exclusive and prestigious tool used to gain entry into highly selective colleges. A decade into the program, the College Board administered fewer than 38,000 exams, most of which served affluent, predominantly

white students (Carlton, 2022). After an ACLU lawsuit in 1999, the College Board increased AP access to all students across public high schools. In 2021, nearly 1.2 million students took more than 4 million exams, with a third of those students being from underrepresented populations (College Board, 2021a). The College Board conducted research in 2021 and found that students who take AP courses and exams are more likely to attend college and graduate regardless of their exam scores (College Board, 2021b). Further research is needed to understand the postsecondary outcomes of AP students compared to students who participate in other credit-based college access programs such as concurrent and dual enrollment.

Concurrent and Dual Enrollment Programs. Concurrent and dual enrollment programs allow high school students to take college courses while in high school. College-approved teachers teach these courses in a secondary or postsecondary setting (CDE, 2023a; NACEP, 2023). Depending on the state or program, concurrent enrollment is typically a low-cost option for students and families. Colorado per pupil revenue covers the total tuition costs for students taking concurrent enrollment courses on the high school campus. In addition, many Colorado school districts pay for students to take concurrent enrollment courses on the college campus. According to the *Annual Report on Dual and Concurrent Enrollment Programs in Colorado* (CDHE & CDE, 2022), 99% of all Colorado school districts offered concurrent enrollment programs, with over 51,000 students enrolled in the 2020-21 academic year. In addition, a 2020 study conducted by the Colorado Department of Higher Education and the University of Colorado Boulder found that students who participated in concurrent enrollment in high school were more likely to matriculate, persist, earn a two-year or four-year degree, and have higher

workforce earnings regardless of student income, ethnicity, or gender (Buckley et al., 2020).

Research on concurrent and dual enrollment programs' impact on college matriculation and success is growing (Cassidy et al., 2010; CDHE & CDE, 2022; Kilgore & Taylor, 2016). However, additional research on these programs is needed. Specifically, further research is required to determine the potential benefits of concurrent and dual enrollment programs – including financial, enrollment, and accreditation outcomes – for higher education institutions.

International Baccalaureate (IB). The IB program started in 1968 for students attending international schools across the world. IB uses a liberal arts course of study with a global awareness and critical thinking focus (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Sandoval, 2022). Students can take end-of-course IB exams with possible scores ranging from one to seven. College credit allocations vary based on the score a student receives, with some colleges only awarding credit for students who earn 24 points or higher on all exams and hold the full IB Diploma

IB offers over 7,800 programs worldwide and serves over 1.95 million students (International Baccalaureate, 2023). Research conducted in 2017 examined the higher education outcomes of IB students in the Career-related Programme and showed that graduates in the US had higher college enrollment and persistence rates (IBO, 2017). A 2014 study found that IB students in the Diploma Program were better prepared for college as measured by academic and non-academic factors. Those students who completed four or more Diploma Program courses had higher college persistence rates (Conley et al., 2014).

Non-Credit-Based College Access Programs. There are many examples of non-credit-based college access programs that serve students. These programs traditionally do not offer college credit but still prepare students to get accepted into, succeed in, and complete college (Bailey & Karp, 2003; King, 2009; Perna, 2006, 2015). Some programs are supported through federal legislation and receive national funding such as TRIO and GEAR UP (COE, 2016; Swail & Perna, 2002; Thorius, 2009). Other pre-collegiate programs receive support through state and local governments, non-profits, private organizations, or local funding sources. These are programs such as AVID, Project GRAD, I Have a Dream Project, Denver Scholarship Foundation, and countless others (COE, 2016; NACAC, 2020; Swail & Perna, 2002; Thorius, 2009). The Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) Community Partnership Program pre-collegiate program, the grant used originally to fund The Partnership, is an example of a state-led non-credit-based college access program, as previously discussed in Chapter One. In addition to these large-scale programs, local communities offer additional programs such as senior-year services and summer bridge programs. The Partnership conducts this type of local college access programming.

Principles of College Access Programs

The literature showed there is a consensus on the philosophical underpinnings and desired outcomes of college access programs – increasing college readiness through academic skills, promoting college awareness, and increasing college enrollment, affordability, and completion (Domina, 2009; Swail & Perna, 2002; Tierney et al., 2009). Although target populations can vary between programs, most programs focus on

increasing higher education access for culturally and economically diverse populations (Swail & Perna, 2002; Thorius, 2009).

Curriculums and activities will vary between programs; however, most share similar principles – academic preparation for postsecondary courses, college exploration, admissions processes, and financial aid support (AVID, n.d.-a; CDHE, 2018; COE, 2016; Jones & Weigel, 2014; Perna, 2006; Perna &Thomas, 2006; Tierney et al., 2009). College visits, career guidance, admissions counseling, scholarship support, test preparation, tutoring, study groups, and financial aid package advising are common across programs (Brown-Lerner & Brand, 2006; Gullatt & Jan, 2003). Swail and Perna (2002) found that building student self-esteem, facilitating motivational activities, providing role models, and involving parents are additional program components that help achieve program goals. College access activities may occur during the regular school day, after school, or during summer programs, but all programming supplements and extends their traditional academic experience (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). Additional research is needed to determine which college access activities best support specific populations such as students with disabilities.

Impact of College Access Programs on Postsecondary Enrollment

There is ample literature on outcomes and impact when reviewing the research on college access programs. National and local programs report many common student outcomes indicators such as achievement, application, acceptance, matriculation, persistence, retention, and completion data. (AVID, n.d.-b; Buckley et al., 2020; College Board, 2021; Conley et al., 2014; USDE, 2020). Research has shown that college access programs improve postsecondary enrollment for underrepresented students including

low-income, first-generation, and minority students (Macy, 2000; Gándara & Bial, 2001). The most effective programs do this by improving academic skills, providing early interventions, involving parents/families, promoting college awareness and attendance, providing social support, and providing financial assistance (Domina, 2009; Perna, 2002; Schultz & Mueller, 2006). Perna (2002) concluded that college access programs can significantly impact the preparation and college enrollment of students from underrepresented in higher education.

Collective Impact

The term Collective Impact (CI) was first used in a 2011 article by John Kania and Mark Kramer in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review,* a magazine and website published by The Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. Kania and Kramer (2011) define CI as "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem" (p. 36). The framing and specific structures of CI were outlined in three subsequent *Stanford Social Innovation Review* articles by Kania, Kramer, and Hanleybrown between 2011 and 2013 and serve as the foundational resources and guiding practices for practitioners implementing CI.

The literature refers to CI as an approach, model, and framework and describes CI as a collaborative approach to solving complex social problems. CI brings together diverse partners that share a common goal and leverages their collective resources to increase the initiative's impact in their community (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; Walzer et al., 2016). When single entities address complex social issues, their approaches are usually ineffective; however, when cross-sector stakeholders collaborate while

addressing social issues within their community, they are more effective (Preskill et al., 2014).

Prior to using the term Collective Impact, the literature referred to diverse organizations working together on community-wide problems as cross-sector partnerships (Andrews & Entwistle, 2010; Koschmann et al., 2012); cross-sector social partnerships (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Waddock, 1989, 1991); and social service partnerships (Takahashi & Smutny, 2002). In their 2011 publication, Kania and Kramer also explained that various types of collaborations are working to solve social problems. Examples are funder collaboratives where funders pool their financial resources. Public-private partnerships are created between government and private sector organizations to achieve specific goals. Multi-stakeholder initiatives bring various stakeholders from different sectors to work voluntarily toward a common goal. Finally, social sector networks are individuals or organizations that build relationships and share information. In contrast to these other types of collaborations, CI initiatives are distinctly different. The following sections describe the unique attributes of CI.

Isolated Impact versus Collective Impact

Most social change efforts are approached by individual organizations and agencies and focus on individual activities to achieve results. Kania and Kramer (2011) refer to this approach as isolated impact. Isolated impact focuses on finding and funding a solution within a single organization with the goal that the organization's impact will be expanded or replicated. Kania and Kramer explain that there is little evidence that isolated initiatives work to improve today's complex social problems. Table 2.1 provides a comparison between isolated impact and Collective Impact.

Table 2.1

Isolated Impact vs. Collective Impact

Isolated Impact	Collective Impact
Funders select individual grantees that offer the most promising solutions.	Funders and implementers understand that social problems, and their solutions, arise from the interaction of many organizations within a larger system.
Nonprofits work separately and compete to produce the greatest independent impact.	Progress depends on working toward the same goal and measuring the same things.
Evaluation attempts to isolate a particular organization's impact.	Large-scale impact depends on increasing cross-sector alignment and learning among many organizations.
Large-scale change is assumed to depend on scaling a single organization.	Corporate and government sectors are essential partners.
Corporate and government sectors are often disconnected from the efforts of foundations and nonprofits.	Organizations actively coordinate their actions and share lessons learned.

Note. Reprinted from "Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work*"* by F. Hanleybrown, J. Kania, & M. Kramer, 2012, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, p. 57.

As Table 2.1 indicates, isolated impact and CI differ in their collaborative approach. CI is intentional, structured, and coordinated, leading to more system-wide progress with social problems than isolated impact initiatives (Henig et al., 2015).

Conditions of Effective Collective Impact Initiatives

Three preconditions and five conditions distinguish the CI approach from other types of community collaborations. Hanleybrown and colleagues (2012) state there must be three crucial preconditions in place before starting a CI initiative: "an influential champion, adequate financial resources, and a sense of urgency for change" (p. 60). First,

the influential champion is considered the most crucial precursor, as dynamic leadership catalyzes and sustains the efforts. Second, adequate financial resources are needed to operate the initiative. Lastly, a sense of urgency for change is required to persuade people to come together around an issue (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; Lane, 2014).

With the establishment of the pre-conditions, CI initiatives implement the five core conditions that serve as a structured problem-solving approach and framework (Walzer et al., 2016). These five conditions are a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communications, and a backbone infrastructure (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

A Common Agenda. When cross-sector community organizations rally around common concerns and coordinated approaches, they increase the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes (Anthony et al., 2016; Hanleybrown et al., 2012; Kania & Kramer, 2011). Foundational to this work is establishing a common agenda that unites the participating organization under a shared view of the problem they are trying to address and the vision they hold for their community despite differences in their interests and positions. Participating organizations must discuss and resolve differences to ensure alignment of priorities and strategies. (Anthony et al., 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014).

To set this agenda, stakeholders must create boundaries around the issues they will or will not focus on and the geographic area they will serve (Anthony et al., 2016; Hanleybrown et al., 2012). It is essential to clarify these boundaries to avoid confusion and determine which stakeholders and organizations to engage. The common agenda should identify the overarching goals that align with the vision and the specific objectives

and outcomes that will measure the initiative's success. The common agenda should serve as a roadmap for addressing the community issue with identified strategies and action steps that keep efforts focused, simple, and flexible. (Anthony et al., 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014).

Shared Metrics. Once the initiative identifies its common goals, effective collaborative efforts agree on metrics to measure, monitor, and report progress. CI initiatives do this through the use of a shared measurement system. Consistency with data collection and measuring results ensures alignment of efforts, facilitates continuous learning and improvement, and supports transparency and partner accountability (Anthony et al., 2016; Hanleybrown et al., 2012; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014).

The initiative's success indicators must align with the goals established in the common agenda and should address the most pressing needs. Anthony and colleagues (2016) state the importance of identifying indicators that measure community outcomes and impact rather than measuring performance indicators such as the number of activities offered or individuals served. Participating organizations should collect baseline data for the selected indicators early in the initiative and establish a consistent timeline and process for the ongoing collection, analysis, and reporting of data on the progress made toward the common indicators.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities. The diverse entities in a collective impact initiative should work together but do not need to do the same work. Each stakeholder should undertake activities based on strengths that coordinate with the larger group and are distinct from other stakeholders (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014). Mutually reinforcing activities should be differentiated, and non-duplicative while being

coordinated and connected, allowing individual organizations to achieve their goals while supporting the initiative's common agenda (Anthony et al., 2016). As Barberg (2015) suggested.

> It should come as no surprise that effectively managing mutually reinforcing activities is usually the most challenging part of achieving Collective Impact. This is where the actions happen, where resources are deployed, and where sharing and trust are required. The mutually reinforcing activities are where the proverbial rubber meets the road. (p. 1)

Mutually reinforcing activities fill gaps in services, help to scale what is already working, identify activities that are not working, and develop new strategies based on data and lessons learned – all contributing to the CI initiative achieving its goals.

Continuous Communication. Stakeholders must develop information-sharing systems that ensure open and consistent communication. This development process takes time and intention through frequent meetings, interactions, and informal and formal communication (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014). Stakeholders must meet regularly to share progress, data, and stories to grow alignment within the initiative (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

In addition to communication strategies and tools such as in-person meetings, websites, and newsletters, continuous communication also refers to the relationship between the stakeholders within the initiative and establishing trust. A lack of communication generates a lack of trust; therefore, trust-building and the open sharing of information must be an intentional and ongoing practice of the initiative (Anthony et al., 2016). Transparency and frequent communication enable members to openly give and receive feedback fostering the exchange of ideas and continuous improvement.

Backbone Support Organizations. Effective collective efforts require a dedicated staff separate from the participating stakeholder groups that plan, organize, and manage the work. This entity takes the lead in facilitating the work, mediating conflicts, and supporting the efforts while applying the necessary pressure to move the work forward (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014). Hanleybrown and colleagues (2012) identified six essential functions the backbone organizations serve: "providing overall strategic direction, facilitating dialogue between partners, managing data collection and analysis, handling communications, coordinating community outreach, and mobilizing funding" (p. 67).

Anthony and colleagues (2016) provide the metaphor of the backbone organization as a ship. The backbone organization acts as the captain of the ship, guided by the map or compass of the initiative's common agenda. The backbone organization acts as the ship's anchor keeping the initiative stable and afloat by managing many of the administrative functions. The anchor plays a critical behind-the-scenes role in leading the important work of the initiative while not overtaking the initiative and assuming ownership.

Together the five CI conditions "enable participating organizations to collaborate in ways that not only increase their understanding of the complex issues but also help form cross-sector coalitions to apply emergent solutions to the issues addressed" (Walzer et al., 2016, p. 161). The five CI conditions provide a framework for structured problem-solving and the alignment of the work to ensure success in achieving social change.

Criticism of the Collective Impact Model

In the 12 years since the CI model's creation, practitioners have identified the model's limitations (Kania & Kramer, 2015; Kania & Kramer, 2016; LeChasseur, 2016; Weaver & Cabaj, 2018; Wolff, 2016). Criticism includes the model being too "top-down" and not involving the community being served by the initiative in identifying needs (Raderstrong & Boyea-Robinson, 2016; Wolff, 2016). Kania and Kramer (2015) and LeChasseur (2016) state that the model does not intentionally focus on equity. Wolff (2016) states that the model does not include policy or systems change as an intentional outcome. Additionally, there are criticisms that peer-reviewed academic research on CI is in its infancy, and further study is needed (Ennis & Tofa, 2020; Wolff, 2016).

Collective Impact and This Program Evaluation

I determined that the CI approach aligns well with The Partnership by comparing the five CI conditions with The Partnership's existing organizational structures. First, the CI condition of a common agenda pairs nicely with the development process of The Partnership. The Partnership brought together diverse stakeholders to collaboratively solve the issues of low matriculation, persistence, and postsecondary credential rates within a community. Second, The Partnership collects data to monitor and report the progress of its students which aligns with the second CI condition of shared metrics. Third, The Partnership has several activities to support students which corresponds with the CI condition of mutually reinforcing activities. Fourth, the CI condition of continuous communication aligns with how The Partnership communicates to its members and students. Finally, the CI condition of a backbone support organization does not necessarily align with The Partnership but may provide interesting information for The

Partnership to consider. Although not originally designed to be a CI initiative, applying the CI conditions to The Partnership may help identify and reinforce the practices successfully used to meet its goals. It may also identify areas where The Partnership can further implement CI performance indicators to improve practices and sustainability.

CI also aligns well with the developmental evaluation model I selected for this program evaluation. CI is very process oriented as is developmental evaluation. Both CI and developmental evaluation center on strategies, methods, and procedures involved in social innovation (Patton, 2010; Preskill et al., 2014). CI also matches the intent of the developmental evaluation design which provides feedback and promotes adaptation and learning (Patton, 2010).

Finally, the five CI conditions were foundational in developing a CI framework for this program evaluation. I utilized recommendations from Preskill and colleagues' (2014) *Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact* to develop a CI framework for this evaluation consisting of the five CI conditions and corresponding performance indicators. Chapter Three describes this CI framework in depth (see Table 3.1 on page 60). Evaluating The Partnership's implementation of the CI performance indicators and the CI conditions can facilitate organizational learning allowing members to reflect on areas in which they have successfully implemented the CI conditions and areas in which further implementation of the CI conditions might help them adapt the program design and practices. (Preskill et al., 2014).

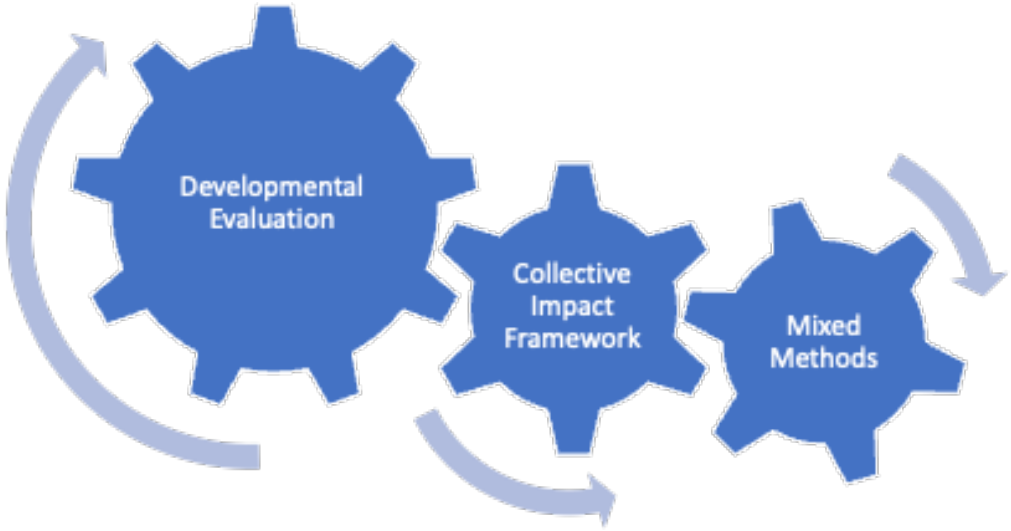
Conceptual Framework for the Program Evaluation

I combined developmental evaluation (Patton, 2010), the CI framework, and mixed methods research design (Creswell & Clark, 2017) to form the conceptual

framework for this program evaluation. See Figure 2.1 (shown initially in Chapter One and repeated below for ease of reference) for a graphic representation of this program evaluation's conceptual framework.

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework



Developmental evaluation was the primary mechanism driving the program evaluation as this approach focuses on learning and innovation (Patton, 2010). To evaluate the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the CI conditions, I utilized the CI framework consisting of the CI conditions and corresponding CI performance indicators to establish the specific criteria for the program evaluation. Finally, to measure the criteria within the CI framework, I used a mixed methods research design to structure the data collection process (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Chapter Three describes each of these methodologies in depth.

Examples of Collective Impact College Access Programs

Several college access programs have utilized the CI model to increase college readiness, matriculation, and credential completion rates. This section highlights five prominent examples from across the United States leveraging the CI conditions to impact postsecondary enrollment and success in their communities.

The Strive Partnership, founded in 2006, was one of the original CI models mentioned in Kania and Kramer's (2011) CI article. Urban leaders in Cincinnati wanted to improve the educational outcomes for students experiencing poverty in their community. These leaders partnered with three school districts in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to expand college access programming and practices already seeing results. Leaders developed a civic infrastructure organized around a common vision and shared accountability measures. Due to its success, the initiative expanded in 2011 and was renamed StriveTogether. StriveTogether (2023) supports a network for communities across the United States to improve cradle-to-career outcomes.

When reviewing the research on program evaluations of StriveTogether, an evaluation was conducted on how indicators of a strong civic infrastructure were present in the communities in which StriveTogether works (Equal Measure, 2019). A 2022 dissertation by Rebecca Parshall, Ph.D. studied how StriveTogether partnerships perceived and attributed CI to improve postsecondary outcomes for students of color in StriveTogether Communities (Parshall, 2022). However, at the time of this dissertation, StriveTogether has yet to publish a program evaluation of its CI college access programming.

Unite LA, a division of the CI initiative L.A. Compact, is a collaboration between Los Angeles leaders from the education, business, government, labor, and non-profit sectors. Established in 1998, Unite LA expands college access and provides workforce development opportunities to Los Angeles youth. Unite LA offers several programs and initiatives including college prep and financial aid support, STEM programming, internships, and paid work experience (Unite LA, 2023). Unite LA produces an annual impact report highlighting its various programs. However, at the time of this dissertation, Unite LA has yet to publish a specific program evaluation of its CI college access programming (Unite LA, 2023b).

#DegreesNYC uses a CI approach to achieve equity in postsecondary access and completion in New York City. Established in 2015, the program is a collaboration between young people, city agencies, community-based organizations, and funding organizations. #DegreesNYC utilizes student voices and experiences as a critical aspect of developing programs and policies that promote student success (#DegreesNYC, 2023; Siaca Curry, 2019). At the time of this dissertation, #DegreesNYC has yet to publish a specific program evaluation of its CI college access programming.

The Florida College Access Network ensures students complete an education beyond high school by partnering with educators, communities, and leaders throughout the state. Using CI, the Florida College Access Network supports local college access networks across the state with improving educational outcomes for non-traditional college students including first-generation, low-income, and adult learners. Their state-level work supports local networks by establishing partnerships, research and knowledge development, equity, advocacy, organizational stability, and communication (Florida

College Access Network, 2023). In 2019, the Florida College Access Network reviewed its college access work as part of the development process of its 2020-2025 strategic plan. Although specific evaluation results are not published, results appear to have been used to inform the goals and strategies of its CI college access work (Florida College Access Network, 2020).

A final example is the Michigan College Access Network, a collaborative of leaders representing K-12, higher education, nonprofits, government agencies, business, and philanthropic organizations that help students across Michigan access and attain postsecondary credentials. Michigan College Access Network serves as the statewide coordinating body for college access in Michigan and supports local college access networks across the state. Founded in 2010, this organization has developed a set of benchmarks for local college access networks to implement CI conditions to improve college access. At the time of this dissertation, the Michigan College Access Network has yet to publish a specific program evaluation of its CI college access programming.

Stewardship

As will be discussed in Chapter Four, stewardship was a unique finding in this dissertation. To provide context and a conceptual understanding of the findings, I include an explanation of stewardship theory in this literature review. I also define stewardship as it relates to this program evaluation and explain how an ethos of stewardship aligns with The Partnership.

Donaldson and Davis developed stewardship theory as an alternative to principal-agent theory (Donaldson & Davis, 1989, 1991; Keay, 2017; Segal & Lehrer, 2012; Van Slyke, 2007). It is essential to understand the theoretical underpinnings of principal-agent

theory in order to understand how stewardship theory sits relative to agency theory, not opposed to it (Davis et al., 1997). My program evaluation does not posit principal-agent theory as incorrect and stewardship theory as correct (Donaldson & Davis, 1991); it presents stewardship theory as an additional way to frame leadership dynamics.

Principal-agent theory suggests that the owners, or top organizational leaders, are principals, and the managers, or those that execute the work, are agents (Donaldson & Davis, 1991). This theory asserts the "model of man" where agents are self-interested and wish to maximize their personal economic gain (McGregor, 1960, as cited in Donaldson & Davis, 1991, p. 51). This model proposes that principals must incentivize and control their agents to get the desired outcomes they seek (Donaldson & Davis, 1991).

In contrast to principal-agent theory is stewardship theory which bases the model of man on "a steward whose behavior is ordered such that pro-organizational, collectivist behaviors have higher utility than individualistic, self-serving behaviors" (Davis et al., 1997, p. 24). Stewards are not motivated by individual goals; on the contrary, they are motivated to make decisions in the organization's best interest. Stewards believe that the act of working toward the organization's goals and objectives meets their personal needs. As opposed to incentives to generate top performance, stewards work best under "structures that facilitate and empower rather than monitor and control" (Davis et al., 1997, p. 26).

More contemporary research on stewardship theory builds on Donaldson and Davis's model but extends it to include a mission-driven and purpose focus. Stewardship theory centers on the long-term interests of a group and the common good instead of personal goals and self-interest (Wellum, 2007; Hernandez, 2008; Bright & Goodwin,

2010). New stewardship approaches reposition the model of man to focus on cooperative behavior and intrinsic motivation to increase the capacity for action (Weick & Sutfliffe, 2006).

For this program evaluation, I have defined stewardship as a shared ethos focused on collective actions and contributions toward a common purpose greater than oneself. An ethos of stewardship captures the intrinsic motivation used to facilitate empowerment, trust, teamwork, and a joint commitment to The Partnership's work. It also reflects the sense of responsibility the stakeholders felt to move the work forward in the best interest of the students and the community.

Gap in the Literature

When reviewing program evaluations for CI initiatives, it is evident that this work is still in its infancy. A 2023 review of CI program evaluations found 18 studies completed since 2011 – three focused on education, and none evaluated CI college access programs (Panjwani et al., 2023). I did not find specific program evaluations when researching existing CI college access programs. This program evaluation of The Partnership is one of the first to evaluate the CI conditions within a college access program. This dissertation adds to the growing body of literature around CI, CI college access programs, and CI program evaluations.

Conclusion

Chapter Two summarized the research and literature on college access programs, including the programs' history, types, principles, and impact. I provided background on CI and the five conditions of successful programs. I discussed how CI differs from other change initiatives and offered criticisms of CI. Next, I discussed how CI informed this

program evaluation and discussed the conceptual framework for the program evaluation. I then included information on five college access programs that utilize CI to achieve postsecondary enrollment goals in their communities. I provided background information on stewardship and how the ethos of stewardship informed the work of The Partnership. Finally, I identified this program evaluation as one of the first to evaluate college access CI initiatives.

Chapter Three describes the methodology I used in this program evaluation. I share my positionality and how it informed my role as the evaluator. I discuss the research design, conceptual framework, site description, and participant recruitment processes. Next, I describe the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and the coding and analysis procedures. Finally, I share ethical considerations for the program evaluation, steps I took to increase trustworthiness, and the program evaluation's limitations.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology and methods used to understand how The Partnership implemented the five Collective Impact (CI) conditions. The research questions that guided this evaluation are:

1. To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI?
2. In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI?
3. How might further implementation of the CI conditions support The Partnership's continued work and sustainability?

In this chapter, I share my positionality and describe how it informed my roles as the evaluator and a member of the initiative. Next, I discuss my research design and conceptual framework. I describe the site selected for this program evaluation and the participant recruitment process. I present the data collection and analysis procedures for the evaluation's quantitative and qualitative strands. Finally, I discuss the evaluation's ethical considerations, measures to ensure trustworthiness, and the program evaluation's limitations.

Researcher Positionality

As the primary instrument of the research, I recognized that my epistemology and positionality potentially influenced all phases of this evaluation. The selection of a developmental evaluation methodology reflected my constructionist epistemology and my belief that understanding is assembled through the sharing of experiences. I

appreciate how Ravitch and Riggan (2011) identify the role of the researcher as a "broker of knowledge" (p. 99). This constructionist lens captures my responsibility to be transparent, authentically represent the participants' voices and experiences, and allow the participants to co-shape the direction of the developmental evaluation.

Jones et al. (2014) state that there is often a relationship between the researcher and the subject being researched. This program evaluation was no exception, as the research site was a program in which I am an active member. As a program manager of The Partnership, I had first-hand knowledge of the desired outcomes and the current state of the initiative. I had existing relationships with The Partnership members and helped design the scope of work for the service providers working directly with students. These relationships and deep program knowledge may have impacted my perspective and identity as the evaluator; however, I chose to see these relationships and existing background knowledge as an asset to the evaluation. As someone who worked on the initial grant application to fund the initiative and worked with The Partnership members for several years, I did my best to stay open to other's perspectives and ideas. I tried not to center my own meaning-making in the evaluation even as I used my experience with The Partnership as one of the lenses for conducting the program evaluation. I prioritized the evaluation over my personal experience and preconceived notions of the program. I sought to include various viewpoints and ensure all relevant voices were heard. I was willing to explore all findings, including the possibility of programmatic and leadership failure.

In addition to being the evaluator, I assumed other professional roles that affected my identity and approach to this evaluation. As a school district administrator, I am

passionate about facilitating student postsecondary access and success. Having spent fifteen years developing college access programs for historically underrepresented students, I am profoundly influenced by my views on postsecondary readiness, college matriculation, persistence, and credential completion. These views influence how I approach my work within and outside The Partnership.

Throughout the research process, I needed to acknowledge the biases created by my identities and role with The Partnership. Based on my personal and professional experiences and background, I have biases toward the pursuit of higher education and the purpose of The Partnership. I was mindful of how these biases impacted my perception of The Partnership and the programs and services created as a result of its implementation. My goal was to use and leverage constructionism to manage the tension between my positionality and the accurate representation of my participants' perceptions and experiences, allowing this co-creation of new meaning to maintain congruence and consistency in the research process (Jones et al., 2014). In the "Trustworthiness" section at the end of this chapter, I describe the steps I took to use reflexivity to remain aware of my biases and the influence they might have on interpreting the program evaluation results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

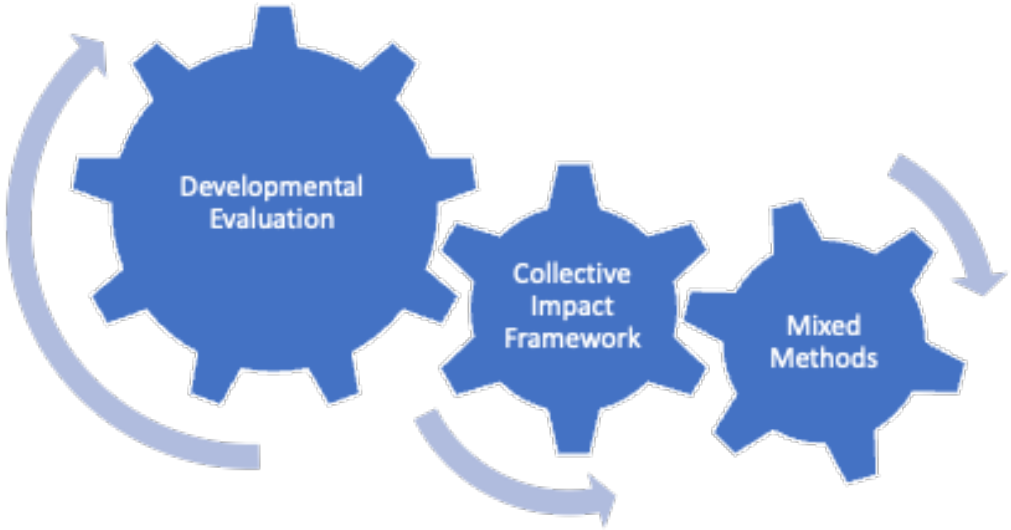
Research Design and Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this program evaluation was to explore how The Partnership implemented the conditions of CI in order to provide it with a framework in which it can operate, evolve, and sustain its important work in the community. To accomplish this, I developed a conceptual framework combining three research methodologies. First, I identified developmental evaluation as the most appropriate evaluation approach (Patton,

2010). Second, using *The Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact* (Preskill et al., 2014), I developed a CI framework consisting of the CI conditions and CI performance indicators to evaluate the implementation of CI within The Partnership. Third, I identified mixed methods as the data collection and analysis approach that would best answer the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Together these methodologies created the research design for this program. Figure 3.1 (shown initially in Chapter One and repeated below for ease of reference) includes a graphic representation of this program evaluation's conceptual framework.

Figure 3.1

Conceptual Framework



Developmental evaluation was the primary mechanism driving the program evaluation as this approach focuses on learning, adaptation, and innovation (Patton, 2010). To facilitate this learning process, I developed specific criteria to help evaluate the implementation of the CI conditions within The Partnership – this came in the form of a CI framework. In order to measure the criteria within the CI framework, I used a mixed

methods research design to structure the data collection process (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The following sections describe each of these methodologies in depth.

Developmental Evaluation

I determined that a utilization-focused evaluation would be best for this program evaluation as it is based on achieving "intended use by intended users" (Patton, 2010, p. 14). I used four criteria to select a specific utilization-focused evaluation approach. First, the approach needed to support the ongoing development of the initiative to help The Partnership improve and adapt. Second, the approach needed to focus on the initiative's processes as opposed to summative outcomes. Third, the approach needed to pair well with CI principles and research. Finally, the approach had to allow for the complex relationship I held as a member of The Partnership and the evaluator. Based on these criteria, I selected developmental evaluation as the specific utilization-focused approach that would best suit this program evaluation. The following section explains these selection criteria in more detail.

Focus on Continuous Improvement and Learning. The COVID-19 pandemic created a complex and changing environment for The Partnership. The loss of grant funding and the staff turnover created a situation in which The Partnership lacked a formal, aligned, and coordinated system in which to operate. For this program evaluation, I needed an evaluation approach that would support The Partnership during the early stages of its development while also being responsive to the dynamic conditions in which it is functioning. I was not seeking a summative evaluation approach that produced an overall judgment of The Partnership's effectiveness at this particular point in time. Instead, my goal was to provide The Partnership information and feedback that supported

reflection and continuous learning and would help the initiative adapt in a complex environment.

Developmental evaluation served this purpose as it is rooted in helping organizations explore and innovate within complex and dynamic environments. Developmental evaluation focuses on learning and transformation as opposed to generating a final verdict on a program's worth and value (Gamble, 2008; Patton, 2010). The developmental evaluation's change-oriented approach aligned well with the intent of this program evaluation and supported The Partnership with continuous improvement and learning. Developmental evaluation produced results and findings that helped The Partnership examine its current practices through a CI framework and make intentional decisions around how CI might support its organizational and operational systems.

Focus on Process. Considering The Partnership's early stage of development and its complex and dynamic environment, it was necessary to focus this program evaluation on process, not summative outcomes. The Partnership needed to focus on its processes in order to adapt its systems and approaches. It is not that outcomes and accountability were not important for The Partnership. Rather, a focus on process provided The Partnership with the organizational and operational strategies it needed at this stage of its development. A process-focused evaluation also aligned well with CI, a process-oriented approach to move a cross-sector initiative forward.

Developmental evaluation met this selection criterion because evaluators use this approach to support the ongoing innovation process, not to predict the initiative's outcomes. Developmental evaluation is used to track processes often difficult to evaluate – strategies, methods, and procedures involved in social innovation (Patton, 2010).

Developmental evaluation is designed to capture system dynamics in order to provide feedback, generate learnings, and inform ongoing innovation (Gamble, 2008; Patton, 2008). Developmental evaluation supported The Partnership's need to focus on process and develop effective approaches that generate results.

Alignment with Collective Impact. It was critical that the evaluation approach I selected paired well with CI. In addition to both CI and developmental evaluation being process-focused, researchers have identified developmental evaluation as a particularly useful approach for understanding how CI initiatives develop and adapt. The literature provided several examples of how CI programs nationwide utilize the developmental evaluation approach (Kania & Kramer, 2013; Preskill, 2014). Initiatives with multiple stakeholders, innovative decision-making, and areas of uncertainty require more flexible evaluation approaches than the linear approaches found in traditional forms of evaluation. Developmental evaluation served this purpose as it was born from the need to support complex initiatives with real-time learning (Gamble, 2008; Patton, 2008). Kania and Kramer (2013) state that developmental evaluation is "particularly well suited to dealing with complexity and emergence" in CI initiatives (p. 4). Developmental evaluation allowed me, as the evaluator, to be responsive to the dynamic nature of CI work and provide meaningful feedback to The Partnership

Role of the Evaluator. Because of my unique role as the program evaluator and member of The Partnership, I needed to select an evaluation approach that allowed for this dynamic. Developmental evaluation met this criterion as it frames the evaluator as an internal member of the team to support real-time learning and development within the initiative (Dozois et al., 2010; Patton, 2010). The evaluator brings evaluative thinking

into the innovation, providing data-supported feedback and helping the team make informed decisions (Dozois et al., 2010).

Developmental evaluation offered three key practices for evaluators which aligned seamlessly with my dual roles as evaluator and member. First, evaluators should orient themselves by understanding the initiative, its context, and its stakeholders. I accomplished this easily through my extended involvement with The Partnership. Second, as the evaluator, it is critical to build relationships with those within the initiative in order to access the information and build credibility with the stakeholders to influence change. This was not a concern because of my long-standing relationships with the members of The Partnership. Third, it is helpful to develop a learning framework to set the direction for learning and be strategic about the evaluation focus (Gamble, 2008; Dozois et al., 2010). I accomplished this practice using the CI framework (see Table 3.1 on page 60) and the methods matrix (see Appendix B) developed for this program. Table 3.1 and the methods matrix are discussed later in this chapter.

By following these three key practices for developmental evaluators, I positioned myself as a coach to help build the capacity of The Partnership – calling attention to both the positive and negative feedback within the evaluation to support the initiative's development. Developmental evaluation allowed for the relationships I had with the participants, the trust already built, and the shared commitment we all carried to maintain the initiative's momentum. This evaluation approach allowed me to capitalize on the degree to which I already understood the initiative and had expertise in college access programs while balancing the awareness of my biases and the power dimensions of being both an evaluator and a decision-maker within the initiative.

Methods for Conducting Developmental Evaluations. In addition to selecting an evaluation approach that met the four criteria previously mentioned, I needed an evaluation model that supported the mixed methods data collection strategies I planned to use. Developmental evaluation supported my data collection methods because it is an extremely flexible and context-specific approach that does not have a prescribed methodology. Patton (2010) states that developmental evaluation does not rely on one particular method, design, or tool. It can include quantitative, qualitative, or mixed data, and multiple data collection tools can be used. This flexibility in methods allowed me to utilize quantitative data collection methods in the form of a survey and qualitative data collection methods in the form of interviews and document analysis to answer my research questions.

Collective Impact Framework

In 2014, Preskill and colleagues published the *Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact,* which provides recommendations and strategies for evaluating a CI initiative's development and effectiveness. Based on their work with CI initiatives across the United States, Preskill and colleagues identified a bank of sample performance indicators for each of the five CI conditions. These indicators were examples of evidence that should be present in the design and implementation of CI initiatives and allow evaluators to assess whether a specific CI condition exists.

I used Preskill and colleagues' (2014) sample performance indicators as the foundation for creating a CI framework to evaluate The Partnership. The CI framework for this program evaluation consists of the five CI conditions and specific corresponding performance indicators selected from the *Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact* (Preskill

et al., 2014). Based on recommendations within the guide, I did not select every performance indicator available from this resource. Instead, I chose indicators that served three purposes.

First, the performance indicators needed to be relevant to The Partnership's stage of development. Because The Partnership is in the early years of the initiative, I determined that selecting performance indicators focused on program impact within the community were not appropriate. I selected indicators that focused on program design and implementation. Second, the performance indicators needed to be objective and measurable. As such, I selected performance indicators that could be measured through quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Third, the performance indicators needed to be concrete and allow The Partnership to take action to implement a CI indicator further if deemed appropriate. For example, under the CI condition of a common agenda, I chose three performance indicators: initiative members included diverse voices and perspectives, members had a common understanding of the problem, and members were committed to problem-solving with clear strategies and actions. Each indicator could translate into a specific action step The Partnership could implement if that indicator was not already present. Table 3.1 on page 60 includes the CI framework created for this program evaluation. This framework was the foundation for the survey, interview questions, and the overall coding structure for the quantitative and qualitative strands.

Table 3.1

Collective Impact Framework

Conditions of Collective Impact	Collective Impact Performance Indicators
Create a common agenda for the initiative.	• The Partnership includes voices and perspectives from multiple sectors. • The Partnership members have a common understanding of the problem trying to be addressed. • The Partnership members agree on the goals of the initiative. • The Partnership members use an adaptive/flexible approach to problem-solving. • The Partnership members have agreed upon clearly articulated strategies and actions.
Identify and use shared metrics to measure, monitor and report progress.	• The Partnership members have an agreed-upon set of indicators to measure • The Partnership members have quality data available to them in a timely manner. • The Partnership members use data to make decisions.
Design mutually reinforcing activities for the initiative.	• The Partnership members have developed and use a plan of action. • The Partnership members coordinate their activities to align with the plan of action. • The Partnership activities and strategies address gaps in programming/services. • The Partnership activities reduce duplication of efforts between member organizations. • The Partnership members allocate resources (human and financial) in support of the initiative.
Provide continuous communication that fosters trust between stakeholders and alignment of the work.	• The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage internal member organizations keeping them informed and inspired. • The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage external partners keeping them informed and inspired.
Provide a backbone organization to facilitate the work.	• The Partnership has established a central management entity or a "backbone" organization that facilitates the work. • The backbone organization guides The Partnership vision and strategy in collaboration with all members. • The backbone organization works in collaboration with other Partnership members to ensure alignment of activities and monitoring of progress. • The backbone organization and other Partnership members help align funding to support the goals. • The backbone and partners help align sufficient funding to support the goals.

Note. Adapted from Kania and Kramer, 2011 and Preskill, Parkhurst, & Splansky Juster, 2014.

As Table 3.1 demonstrates, the indicators for the CI condition of a common agenda reflected a focus on membership, goals, and problem-solving approaches. The indicators for the CI condition of shared metrics focused on defining desired outcomes and collecting and using data to make decisions. The indicators for the CI condition of mutually reinforcing activities focused on having a clear action plan with specific activities and allocated resources. The indicators for the CI condition of continuous communication focused on internal and external communication systems. Finally, the indicators for the CI condition of a backbone organization focused on a central entity overseeing the vision, activities, resources, and continuous improvement cycle. Each of these indicators was appropriate to the developmental stage of The Partnership, was measurable, and could provide actionable information to members.

Mixed Methods Research

Neither quantitative nor qualitative research methods could solely evaluate the extent to which The Partnership had implemented the five conditions of CI. Creswell and Clark (2017) state that quantitative data can provide a general understanding of the problem but can lack the rich context and voices of the participants. I understood that the quantitative method designed for this program evaluation was essential to measure participants' perceptions of how the CI indicators had been implemented. However, this method did not capture evidence of how CI had been implemented or allow participants to explain their thinking.

Creswell and Clark (2017) also state that qualitative data can provide depth in understanding individuals or cases but lack the ability to generalize the findings. For this

program evaluation, I understood that the qualitative methods allowed me to capture more of the story of The Partnership and the participant's beliefs and thinking about how the CI indicators had been implemented. However, these methods did not quantify participants' perceptions of CI implementation or allow me to calculate all participants' average CI performance indicator implementation scores.

Each research design has its strengths and limitations, and combining both quantitative and qualitative methods provides a more complete understanding of the problem than either method alone (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Therefore, I selected a mixed methods research design for this program evaluation. To better understand the alignment between the data collection methods I selected for the quantitative and qualitative strands and my research questions, I created Table 4.

Table 3.2

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods within the Quantitative and Qualitative Strands

Research Question	**Data Collection Method**
Quantitative Strand	
To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI?	Survey
How might further implementation of the CI conditions support The Partnership's continued work and sustainability?	Survey
Qualitative Strand	
In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI?	Interviews Document Review
How might further implementation of the CI conditions support The Partnership's continued work and sustainability?	Interviews Document Review

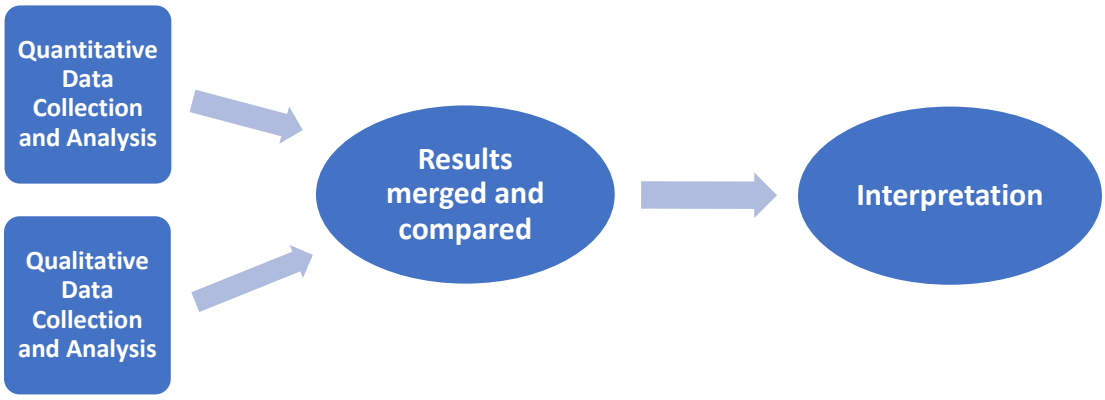
Creswell and Clark (2017) define mixed methods as having four characteristics. First, mixed methods include the rigorous collection and analysis of qualitative and

quantitative data in response to research questions and hypotheses. I achieved this by collecting and analyzing survey data, interviews, and documents to answer my research questions. Second, mixed methods integrate two forms of data and their results. I achieved this by integrating the quantitative survey data and the qualitative interview and document analysis data to conclude the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented IC. Third, mixed methods organize quantitative and qualitative procedures into a specific research design that provides the logic and procedures for conducting the program evaluation. I achieved this by selecting the convergent mixed methods design for data collection and analysis (this is discussed more within this section). Last, Creswell and Clark (2017) state that mixed methods should be framed within theory and philosophy. I accomplish this by grounding the program evaluation in my constructionist epistemology and the CI framework.

From the onset of this program evaluation, I intended to bring together the quantitative and qualitative data analysis results to compare and combine them to make recommendations for The Partnership. This approach is known as a convergent design (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Figure 3.2 includes a graphic representation of this convergent design.

Figure 3.2

The Convergent Design of Mixed Methods



Note. Adapted from Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 66.

Using the convergent design (Creswell & Clark, 2017), I combined the data collected and analyzed from the quantitative and qualitative strands and compared the results. I reviewed the coded data from the interviews and documents and compared these findings with the survey results. I completed this analysis by creating a summary table for each CI condition, including the results and findings from the quantitative and qualitative strands. (This analysis process is discussed further in this chapter's "Data Analysis" section, and the summary tables can be found in Chapter Four.) I determined whether there was alignment between the qualitative evidence and the quantitative survey results or whether there were contradictions. Together, these mixed methods resulted in a more thorough interpretation and understanding of The Partnership's implementation of CI.

Site Description

Arbor Glen School District, Brook Heights Community College, and the social enterprise Remarkable Outcomes shared a common concern regarding low matriculation, persistence, and postsecondary credential completion rates in their suburban Colorado community. Arbor Glen had high school graduation, college enrollment, and postsecondary persistence rates significantly below state averages. Together, these organizations recognized that a single organization or institution could not solve this problem in isolation and understood that the solution existed with the combined expertise and strength generated from cross-sector collaboration, leveraged resources, and united efforts to achieve common goals.

In 2015, these three organizations established "The Partnership." This group aimed to increase postsecondary access, matriculation, and credential completion in their community. Each partner brought unique expertise and networks that provided engaging learning opportunities and critical support for students.

Arbor Glen School District, enrolling under 2,300 students, serves 52% students of color and 55.2% students who qualify for free and reduced-rate lunch (Colorado Department of Education, 2023b). The school district serves a lower-to-middle-class community with an average individual annual income of $46,714 (U.S. Census, 2020a) and a poverty level of 12.1% (U.S. Census, 2020b). Arbor Glen is uniquely positioned geographically, surrounded by higher socioeconomic suburban school districts and communities. Arbor Glen has partnered with Brook Heights and Remarkable Outcomes for several years on various initiatives and has committed a senior director and program coordinators to participate as members in The Partnership.

Brook Heights Community College serves over 11,000 students and offers affordable high-quality education. The community college focuses on students who identify as first-generation, Pell-eligible, and students of color. The college has a long-standing partnership with the school district as Brook Heights is the number one institution Arbor Glen graduates enroll in after graduation. The college has committed several representatives to participate in The Partnership, including senior instructional and student affairs administrators and mid-level coordinators from admissions, advising, concurrent enrollment, financial aid, summer programs, and TRIO.

Remarkable Outcomes is committed to improving the completion rates of students at the high school and postsecondary levels. This organization works on programs and services with school districts, schools, postsecondary institutions, and local nonprofits to mitigate summer melt, implement early warning and response college systems, and recover college "stop-outs." Remarkable Outcomes worked with Arbor Glen on dropout recovery and postsecondary advising initiatives for many years. The president, CEO, and student service providers of Remarkable Outcomes participate in The Partnership.

The Partnership provides intensive services for students at both the pre-collegiate and postsecondary levels. Members meet quarterly to discuss initiative activities and student outcomes. In recent years, The Partnership added a college student representative as a team member. The student updates all members on the mentoring work occurring with the College Connect Scholars program. The student representative was not a participant in this program evaluation due to the complexity of the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval process for including students as research subjects.

Participant Recruitment

In this program evaluation, I used purposeful, criterion-based sampling to select the participants (Patton, 2015; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I chose purposeful sampling based on "the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). Criterion-based sampling was also appropriate because I needed participants to meet specific attributes. The specific criteria used were the participants' association with, experience, and expertise of The Partnership.

The total population available in this program evaluation included current members of The Partnership and past members, totaling 25 individuals. I identified a target sample of 18 potential participants through their association with The Partnership. The sample included senior leaders, mid-level coordinators, and direct student service providers within the initiative. In addition, the sample included current members who actively participate in The Partnership and past members who are no longer employed by the participating organizations but with whom I still had contact information. The sample included individuals who identified as male or female, were Latinx or White, and were over 21.

I sent recruitment emails (see Appendix A) to the individuals within the target sample requesting their participation in the evaluation. I obtained email addresses through The Partnership's current distribution lists, email addresses listed on organizational websites, and email addresses through my personal network. I first asked participants to complete a survey. I then asked those that took the survey to participate in interviews.

Fourteen individuals agreed to participate in the program evaluation, with 14 taking the survey and 13 agreeing to participate in semi-structured interviews. There was representation from each organization within The Partnership, each positional level, and individuals whose involvement within the initiative ranged from less than one year to over five years. Nine participants were current members, and five were past members. I will describe the participant population in Table 3.3 on page 69.

Data Collection

I selected data collection methods based on their alignment with the program evaluation's research design and their ability to measure how The Partnership implemented the five conditions of CI. I developed a methods matrix that mapped and aligned my research questions, the CI conditions, CI indicators, and data collection methods (see Appendix B). I used quantitative and qualitative methods in order to answer my research questions. I used quantitative procedures to understand the extent to which participants perceived the conditions of CI were evident in The Partnership. I used qualitative methods to understand the ways in which CI had been implemented and to capture evidence of the CI performance indicators. Table 3.2 on page 62 details the alignment between the research questions and data collection methods for the quantitative and qualitative strands of the program evaluation. I describe my data collection processes in the following sections.

Table 3.3

Participant Overview

Pseudonym	Organization	Position	Length of Membership in The Partnership	Membership Status
Member 1	School District	Mid-level Coordinator	3 years	Past Member
Member 2	Community College	Mid-level Coordinator	2 years	Current Member
Member 3	Community College	Mid-level Coordinator	< 1 year	Current Member
Member 4	School District	Mid-level Coordinator	1 year	Past Member
Member 5	Community College	Mid-level Coordinator	1 year	Past Member
Member 6	Social Enterprise	Mid-level Coordinator	2 years	Past Member
Member 7	Social Enterprise	Senior Leader	5+ years	Current Member
Member 8	Community College	Senior Leader	3 years	Current Member
Member 9	Social Enterprise	Senior Leader	1 year	Current Member
Member 10	Community College	Senior Leader	5+ years	Current Member
Member 11	Community College	Senior Leader	2 years	Current Member
Member 12	Community College	Senior Leader	4 years	Past Member
Member 13	Social Enterprise	Student Service Provider	1 year	Past Member
Member 14	Social Enterprise	Student Service Provider	< 1 year	Current Member

Quantitative Data Collection Procedures

I used quantitative data collection methods to quantify participants' perceptions of the extent to which CI had been implemented within The Partnership. Utilizing Floyd

Fowler, Jr.'s book *Survey Research Methods* (2013) and my CI framework as a guide, I developed a survey based on the five conditions of CI (Kania & Kramer, 2011) and the corresponding performance indicators for each condition (Preskill et al., 2014). See Appendix C for the survey.

The survey contained a total of 29 questions. Each question aligned with a single CI performance indicator and measured the participant's perception of that indicator's implementation level. I developed a five-point Likert scale with answer choices ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). I selected the Likert scale because it is helpful when measuring perceptions and beliefs about a particular subject (Smart Survey, 2023). Sample survey questions include:

- Members agree on the goals of the initiative.
- Members use data to make decisions.
- Activities reduce duplication of efforts between member organizations.

During the development process, colleagues reviewed the questions for clarity of language and to reduce unforeseen errors. To ensure "reliability (providing consistent measures in comparable situations) and validity (answers correspond to what they are intended to measure,)" I also piloted the survey with a single participant before being distributed to all participants (Fowler Jr., 2013, p. 75).

I used the internet-based tool Google Forms to develop and deliver the survey. I selected this tool for its privacy, encryption, and ability to password-protect the responses. As discussed in the Participant Recruitment section, individuals received an email with an invitation to participate in the program evaluation (see Appendix A). The email included a specific link to take the survey.

A total of 14 individuals participated in the survey during the spring of 2022. The survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. In the introduction section of the survey, participants were informed of the program evaluation's purpose, confidentiality, risks, and benefits. Participants indicated their consent to participate in the survey by checking a box – a formal signature was not collected. Personal Identifiable Information was collected to disaggregate the results by their length of time in The Partnership and their position within their organization. I then anonymized the responses by assigning pseudonyms to each survey participant.

I used survey results to quantify participants' perceptions of the extent to which CI has been implemented within The Partnership. I averaged all participants' responses to get an overall score for each indicator under each CI condition. I also utilized the survey responses to help craft follow-up interview questions. For example, a survey question asked participants whether The Partnership had agreed upon goals. I used this survey question and the participants' responses to develop a follow-up interview question asking participants to explain the goals of The Partnership as they understood them. The survey responses, in conjunction with the follow-up interview questions, helped me advance the mixed methods research design and created a more comprehensive understanding of the participant's perceptions of the goals of The Partnership.

Qualitative Data Collection Procedures

I collected qualitative data to understand further the extent of CI implementation and to capture evidence of how CI was implemented. Because developmental evaluation data collection methods depend on the research questions and the development of and decision-making about the program (Patton, 2010), I selected qualitative methods to

allow participants to expand their survey answers. I selected interviews and document review methods for this purpose.

Interviews. Interviews are a common and important means for collecting qualitative data (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose interviews as a data collection method to further understand how CI had been implemented within The Partnership. I invited individuals who completed the survey to participate in follow-up interviews. Thirteen of the 14 survey participants engaged in virtual, one-on-one interviews.

Instrument. Intensive or in-depth interviews supported the developmental evaluation methodology because they "elicit each participant's interpretation of his or her experience" (Charmaz as cited in Jones et al., 2014, p. 133). I created semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix D) using a combination of open-ended and clarifying questioning techniques (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The semi-structured design of the questions and interview process allowed the participants to help shape the direction of the interview which supported the developmental evaluation design and my constructionist epistemology (Jones et al., 2014; Patton, 2010). The questions were tied to the CI conditions and CI indicators and allowed participants to expand upon their survey responses. Example interview questions include:

- Please share with me the goals of The Partnership as you understand them.
- What data have you seen used in The Partnership?
- Tell me about the strategies and activities used in The Partnership.

Consent. I sent consent forms to participants to review prior to the interviews (see Appendix E). The consent form included information on the purpose of the program evaluation, the risks and benefits of participating, general interview procedures, and information on confidentiality and data sharing. The consent form encouraged participants to contact me via email or phone should they have any questions or concerns regarding the program evaluation or their participation. At the beginning of each interview, I asked participants to confirm that they were over 18, they understood the interview was being recorded, and their willingness to participate in the program evaluation. Their verbal consent was documented in the interview recording and transcripts.

Interview Protocol. Interviews were scheduled based on the availability and time preference of the participant. I emailed participants an invitation (see Appendix F) to participate virtually in the interview using the Zoom video conferencing platform. The invitation included a Zoom link, the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E), and a copy of the interview questions (see Appendix D). I sent participants copies of the questions ahead of time to build trust, eliminate concerns, and garner more thoughtful responses.

I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix G) that I read at the beginning of each interview. The script ensured consistency between the interviews while allowing for flexibility (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Each interview took approximately 45 minutes and was conversational and informal. At the conclusion of each interview, I provided participants with a $10 gift card in appreciation of their time. The interviews were recorded via Zoom to ensure notetaking and data analysis accuracy. I took detailed notes

during each interview capturing the participants' responses and reactions. I also created analytic memos that captured observations and emerging themes (Saldaña, 2016). Interviews were automatically transcribed through the Zoom recording, and I reviewed and edited the transcriptions to ensure accuracy.

Member Checking. Throughout the interview, I engaged in member checking to ensure my understanding and interpretation of what members said was correct. I clarified or corrected my understanding of participants' responses by paraphrasing and asking probing and follow-up questions during the interviews. In addition to real-time member checking, I sent each participant a follow-up email (see Appendix H) with the interview transcript and an interview summary containing themes, findings, and quotes. These documents allowed participants to provide feedback and confirm or revise my interpretations. All participants approved the interview summary documents and transcripts with only one participant providing grammatical revisions to their quotes.

Document Review. The purpose of utilizing documentary information in this program evaluation was to collect additional data and evidence of CI implementation within The Partnership that did not surface through the survey or the interviews. Data Use Agreements were enacted with all organizations participating in The Partnership, permitting me to use these documents within the program evaluation (see Appendix I for an example Data Use Agreement from this evaluation). I did not use documents with students' Personal Identifiable Information in this evaluation.

There were critical documents used in the planning, development, and execution processes of The Partnership that provided insight into my research questions. Documents dated between 2014 and 2022 included meeting agendas and notes,

correspondence between partners, grant application materials, grant end-of-year reports excluding student-level data, program marketing materials, and scholarship advertising materials. These documents helped illuminate the story of The Partnership and elevate examples of CI conditions.

Data Protection and Security. Data security and participant confidentiality were the primary ethical concerns in this program evaluation. I removed direct and indirect identifiers, such as participant names, positions, contact information, and employer, from the collected data. I assigned participants pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, and I saved the key to the pseudonyms on a password-protected and encrypted file stored separately from the transcripts and survey responses. Survey responses were encrypted, password protected, and accessible only to me. I downloaded and then deleted the interview recordings from Zoom and stored them in password-protected files. Interview transcriptions, notes, and summary documents were stored in password-protected files within Google Drive and the coding software NVivo. Finally, I stored all documents analyzed in this program evaluation, the document summary form, and the document coding in password-protected files. All quantitative and qualitative data collected will be securely stored for three years after my degree conferral when I will delete them.

Data Analysis

The convergent mixed-methods research design of this program evaluation required three phases of data analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2017). First, I analyzed the quantitative survey data using descriptive statistics to determine the participant's perceptions of how CI had been implemented within The Partnership. Second, I analyzed the qualitative interviews and documents by assigning codes and identifying broad

themes (Saldaña, 2016). Third, I integrated the quantitative and qualitative findings. This section describes the analysis methodologies I used for my program evaluation's quantitative and qualitative strands.

Quantitative Data Analysis

I converted the raw quantitative survey data collected through the Google Forms platform into a Google Sheets spreadsheet for more straightforward analysis. Because the sample size was small (14 participants) and did not allow for inferential analyses, I used descriptive statistics to analyze the data collected. Descriptive statistics, specifically measures of central tendency, identified the average score for each survey question (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018). Calculating the average score of survey responses best suited the purposes of this program evaluation and the audience of The Partnership membership. I did not deem further statistical tests necessary.

Data analysis of participant responses occurred in four phases. First, I calculated the mean of the total responses for each question, representing the average score for each CI indicator. Second, I averaged all the performance indicator scores under each CI condition, representing the average score for each of the five CI conditions. Third, I disaggregated the responses to each question based on the following criteria:

- Status of membership, which included current or past membership.
- Years in the partnership ranging from less than one year to five or more years;
- Organizational position, which included senior leaders, mid-level coordinators, and student service providers.

Fourth, I averaged the disaggregated responses to give a total score for each of the five conditions broken down by membership status, years of involvement in The Partnership,

and organizational position. The resulting analysis provided a total average score and a disaggregated score for each CI indicator and each CI condition.

Qualitative Data Analysis

I started the initial qualitative data analysis during the interview data collection process. After each interview, I wrote analytic memos to capture my interpretations and emerging themes (Saldaña, 2016). I used these analytic memos and early analysis processes to identify themes that would later be used for this program evaluation's coding system. Once all interviews were completed, I transcribed the 13 interviews verbatim, reconciling the automatically generated Zoom transcription with the audio and video recordings to ensure accuracy. I organized and formatted the transcriptions to be loaded into the data analysis software Nvivo.

I determined that Themeing the Data would be the best first step for analyzing the qualitative interview data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016). Themeing the Data is useful when a central topic is under investigation and is linked to the research questions, interview questions, conceptual framework, and literature review (Saldaña, 2016). This was certainly the case with this program evaluation, as the CI conditions were the central theme in all aspects of the research design. Using the CI framework and the themes identified in the analytic memos, I identified seven overarching themes for the analysis process – the five CI conditions, the concept of stewardship, and general program efficacy. I loaded these overarching themes into Nvivo and then coded each participant's interview using these themes.

I then conducted a second coding cycle in Nvivo with Descriptive Codes (Saldaña, 2016). I used Descriptive Codes to identify the CI performance indicators and

evidence of stewardship, program areas of strength, program areas of growth, and advice for others doing similar work. Table 3.4 on page 80 includes the themes and Descriptive Codes used in the qualitative data analysis process.

After Themeing the Data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016) and completing the Descriptive Coding (Saldaña, 2016), I developed an interview summary document for each participant containing the themes, findings, and quotes. I engaged in member checking, sending each participant the interview summary document and the complete interview transcript to ensure accuracy in my analysis and trustworthiness of the data. All but one participant was contacted for member checking; one participant left their position with no forwarding contact information. Those participants that were contacted approved the summary documents and transcripts with only one participant providing grammatical revisions to their quotes.

The final qualitative data analysis occurred with the documents I gathered from The Partnership. I reviewed a total of 58 documents. Using the same themes and Descriptive Codes listed in Table 3.4, I manually coded each document instead of using Nvivo for coding (Saldaña, 2016). This process consisted of electronically highlighting themes and making notes in the margins of the documents. I summarized my findings in a document summary form that denoted the following:

- document name
- document type
- summary of the document
- theme
- Descriptive Codes

Several of the documents included Personal Identifiable Information for The Partnership members. To protect the participants ' identities, I excluded specific identifiers such as organization names, member names, and contact information from the analysis and coding process.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Integration

In the final analysis phase, I integrated the quantitative and qualitative findings. I merged survey results, interview analyses, and document analyses and compared each performance indicator within the five CI conditions. I then synthesized the quantitative results and qualitative findings and created a summary table for each CI condition. These summary tables can be found in Chapter Four. Tables 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.8, and 4.10 summarize the data for each CI condition and capture my conclusions on the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented each CI performance indicator and the overall CI condition. I was able to conclude whether The Partnership had fully implemented, partially implemented, or had not implemented each of the CI conditions. The summary tables were critical in providing recommendations to The Partnership in Chapter Five.

Table 3.4

Themes and Descriptive Codes

Theme	Descriptive Codes
CI Condition: Common Agenda	The Partnership includes voices and perspectives from multiple sectors.
	The Partnership members have a common understanding of the problem trying to be addressed.
	The Partnership members agree on the goals of the initiative.
	The Partnership members use an adaptive/flexible approach to problem-solving.
	The Partnership members have agreed upon clearly articulated strategies and actions.
CI Condition: Shared Metrics	The Partnership members have an agreed-upon set of indicators to measure.
	The Partnership members have quality data available to them in a timely manner.
	The Partnership members use data to make decisions.
CI Condition: Mutually Reinforcing Activities	The Partnership members have developed and use a plan of action.
	The Partnership members coordinate their activities to align with the plan of action.
	The Partnership activities and strategies address gaps in programming/services.
	The Partnership activities reduce duplication of efforts between member organizations.
	The Partnership members allocate resources (human and financial) in support of the initiative.
CI Condition: Continuous Communication	The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage all internal partners, keeping them informed and inspired.
	The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage external stakeholders, keeping them informed and inspired.
CI Condition: Backbone Support Organizations	The Partnership has established a central management entity or a "backbone" organization that facilitates the work.
	The backbone organization guides The Partnership vision and strategy in collaboration with all members.
	The backbone organization works in collaboration with other Partnership members to ensure alignment of activities and monitoring of progress.
	The backbone organization and other Partnership members help align funding to support the goals.
	The backbone and partners help align sufficient funding to support the goals.
Stewardship	Evidence of stewardship
Program Efficacy	Program strengths
	Program areas of growth
	Advice for others doing similar work

Ethical Considerations

It is essential to disclose ethical considerations in the development and execution of this program evaluation. First, I gained the approval and cooperation to conduct the program evaluation from The Partnership. Next, I piloted the interview questions and protocols with peers, surfacing potential issues and allowing me to make revisions. Last, I sent my research proposal, including Data Use Agreements, survey questions, interview questions, and interview protocols, to the University of Denver IRB for review and approval to ensure ethical research practices.

In addition to the steps taken during the development process, I also ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of my participants throughout the data collection process. Using the Informed Consent Form, I signified my responsibility to protect the participants' privacy, including their identities and organizations (Jones et al., 2014). As described in this chapter's "Data Protection and Security" section, I took several data safety measures, including confidential transcriptions, the use of pseudonyms, and secure data storage. These considerations ensured the participants' right to privacy and the highest ethical professional practices at all stages of the research process.

Trustworthiness

To position the research as both credible and rigorous, I took several steps to increase trustworthiness. I first used triangulation, or "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1978, p. 291). Denzin identifies four types of triangulations – *data triangulation* refers to using a combination of various data sources; *investigator triangulation* refers to using multiple researchers; *theory triangulation* refers to using multiple theories or perspectives; and *methodological*

triangulation refers to using multiple methods. I incorporated two of Denzin's forms of triangulation into this program evaluation. I accomplished *data triangulation* through survey results, participant interviews, and documents from multiple sources. I accomplished *methodological triangulation* through the execution of both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews and document analysis) data collection methods. I did not incorporate *theory* and *investigator triangulation* in this program evaluation as I only used the CI framework for analysis and was the single researcher on this program evaluation.

Next, I used three strategies that Creswell and Clark (2017) recommended to minimize validity threats specifically within my convergent mixed methods research design. First, I created parallel questions for both the quantitative and qualitative strands. The survey and interview questions were similarly grounded in the five CI conditions. Second, I used similar sample sizes for both research strands. The quantitative survey had 14 participants, and the qualitative interviews had 13 participants. Last, I displayed and compared the quantitative and qualitative results side by side. This occurs in Chapter Four where I compare the survey results with the interview and document analysis findings. I used these strategies to increase the validity of the quantitative and qualitative results.

I used member checking as another strategy to increase trustworthiness. This is the process of taking data and interpretations back to the participants to confirm the accuracy of the information (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that member checks are "the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Throughout the interviews, I engaged in member checking by asking probing and follow-

up questions and paraphrasing to confirm, clarify, or correct my understanding of participant responses. During the data analysis phases, I returned the transcript and an interview summary sheet to the participants for additional member checking. These documents allowed the participants to confirm the credibility of the information and my interpretations and to make clarifications and corrections if needed. Participants approved the summary documents and transcripts with only one participant providing grammatical revisions to their quotes.

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, I provided an audit trail to increase trustworthiness. An audit trail is the researcher's documentation of the processes undertaken during a study. I kept analytic memos that recorded my ideas, questions, and interpretations during the data collection process, specifically during the interviews. This methodology chapter also serves as an audit trail, detailing how I conducted the program evaluation and analyzed the data.

As a final strategy to increase trustworthiness, I used researcher reflexivity – the process of self-disclosing my identities, assumptions, and beliefs that shaped the program evaluation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reflexivity occurred in two ways. First, I recorded my personal experiences, values, and biases in this chapter's "Researcher Positionality" section. The positionality statement was critical because of my roles as the evaluator, a member of The Partnership, and a champion for college access. Second, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, I kept analytic memos during the research process that included my observations and reflections that shaped the interpretation of the results. By examining and documenting my thinking and beliefs, I could mitigate and reduce the impact my biases had on the program evaluation. This awareness allowed me to honor

the data and the participants' voices without inserting my own opinions, therefore increasing the overall trustworthiness of the methods and interpretation of the results.

Limitations

As with most research, limitations were present in this program evaluation. Programmatic staff turnover was a limitation. Since the program's inception and more so since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been several staffing changes at all leadership levels of the initiative. These staffing changes manifested variances in the participants' program knowledge and length of involvement in the program. These staffing changes created program implementation fluctuations and limited the members' longitudinal perspective.

A second limitation is the generalizability of the program evaluation. The findings of this program evaluation will be of most use to The Partnership as I did not design this program evaluation to be generalizable beyond this initiative. Recommendations given to The Partnership may or may not be helpful to other CI college access programs; however, the findings still have value and merit. Readers may create hypotheses about the results and apply them to their own contexts. The findings may encourage other practitioners to replicate the program design, strategies, and CI activities found within The Partnership.

A third limitation is the program evaluation did not include the student member of The Partnership. Due to the complex nature of approving student research subjects in the IRB process, I was unable to include the student member as a participant. This was a limitation of the program evaluation in that all members' perspectives were not included.

Conclusion

Within Chapter Three, I provided information and rationale for my methodological approaches to explore the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented CI. I shared my positionality and how it informed my role as the evaluator. I discussed the research design, conceptual framework, site description, and participant recruitment processes. I described the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and the coding and analysis procedures. Finally, I shared ethical considerations for the program evaluation, steps I took to increase trustworthiness, and the evaluation's limitations. In Chapter Four, I present the quantitative results and qualitative findings from data collected and analyzed in the mixed methods developmental program evaluation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the results and findings from the developmental program evaluation of The Partnership. The purpose of this program evaluation was to explore how The Partnership implemented the conditions of CI in order to provide it with a framework in which it can operate, evolve, and sustain its important work in the community. More specifically, this program evaluation examined the following research questions:

1. To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI?
2. In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI?
3. How might further implementation of the CI conditions support The Partnership's continued work and sustainability?

Utilizing the convergent mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), I analyzed quantitative results, in the form of survey data, and qualitative findings, in the form of interviews and document analysis. I then integrated these data sources to report the results and findings in this chapter.

The CI framework I developed for this program evaluation (see Table 3.1 on page 60 in Chapter Three) was foundational for presenting this program evaluation's results. I organized this chapter by each of the five CI conditions. Under each condition, I listed the corresponding CI performance indicators and reported the quantitative results and qualitative findings for each CI performance indicator. I concluded each CI condition

section with a table summarizing the results and answering the first two research questions.

In addition to presenting my conclusions on the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented CI, I also included information on a unique finding that surfaced during the interview analysis process – the concept of stewardship. This chapter summarized the evidence that led me to elevate stewardship as an essential theme in the program evaluation.

CI Condition One: A Common Agenda

Foundational to CI work is establishing a common agenda that unites the participating organizations under a shared view of the problem they are trying to address and the vision they hold for their community (Anthony et al., 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014). To measure the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented a common agenda, I started with the survey data, analyzing the five survey questions focused on the CI condition of a common agenda. These five questions were also the CI performance indicators aligned to a common agenda on the CI framework. Table 4.1 on page 88 presents the survey results for participants' perceptions of how The Partnership implemented a common agenda. Table 4.1 includes overall survey results and disaggregated data based on participants' membership status, membership length, and organizational position.

Table 4.1

Survey Results: Evidence of a Common Agenda

		Disaggregated Data								
		Status of Membership		Years in The Partnership				Organizational Position		
Common Agenda CI Performance Indicator and Survey Questions	**Average Score**	**Current Member**	**Previous Member**	**>1**	**1-2**	**3-4**	**5+**	**Senior Leader**	**Mid-Level Coordinator**	**Student Service Provider**
The Partnership includes voices and perspectives from multiple sectors.	4.07	4.33	3.60	4.33	3.83	4.00	4.50	4.50	3.50	4.50
The Partnership members have a common understanding of the problem trying to be addressed.	4.46	4.37	4.60	4.33	4.50	4.33	4.50	4.40	4.33	5.00
The Partnership members agree on the goals of the initiative.	4.5	4.55	4.40	4.66	4.50	4.33	4.50	4.50	4.33	5.00
The Partnership members use an adaptive/flexible approach to problem-solving.	4.21	4.22	4.20	4.33	3.83	4.66	4.50	4.33	3.83	5.00
The Partnership members have agreed upon clearly articulated strategies and actions.	3.92	3.88	4.00	4.33	3.66	4.00	4.00	3.66	3.83	5.00
Average CI Condition Result	4.23	4.27	4.16	4.40	4.06	4.26	4.40	4.27	3.96	4.90

Table 4.1 reflects that the average CI condition result within the survey was a score of 4.23 – on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree) – indicating that participants agreed or strongly agreed that there was evidence of a common agenda within The Partnership. Disaggregated data corroborated this as well – the results by the status of membership, length of membership, and organizational position are similar, with most sub-groups agreeing or strongly agreeing that there was evidence of a common agenda.

Voices and Perspectives from Multiple Sectors

When I analyzed the disaggregated data by survey question and paired those results with the interview data and document analysis findings, additional noteworthy results surfaced. I reviewed the survey response data regarding The Partnership having voices and perspectives from multiple sectors. The average score from current members (4.33) was higher than that of previous members (3.60). The interviews revealed that previous members reported that additional stakeholders, specifically students, should be added to the initiative. Member 12, a senior leader, stated, "I could see a student having unique ideas around what it's like to be thinking about going to college when maybe you're the first person in your family to go… perhaps the student voice was missing." Member Six, a mid-level coordinator, stated, "Integrating student voice more – we had their data, we knew what they were doing, we were spies…getting at least one or two students to help drive that work, I think that would have been helped"

The Partnership added a college student to the initiative in 2019. Several current members stated they appreciated the addition of the student perspective. Member Nine, a

senior leader, stated, “One of the voices I enjoy most is the peer mentor voice. Member 10, a senior leader, added,

> We've tried to engage [student voice] through the peer mentoring process, but I think that we still struggle with the student voice. It's still administrators and adults kind of projecting what we think students and families need. I don't know that we have the student voice embedded in there as much as we should.

These combined results indicated that as The Partnership continued over time, it added more voices and perspectives from various stakeholder groups but there may be additional work needed in this area.

Interviews also revealed that several participants believed the diverse perspectives from the various organizations were an asset to the initiative. Member 12, a senior leader, stated, “I would always look forward to the meetings because of the engagement with the staff from [Arbor Glen School District]. The staff brought a different perspective than what we have in the community college.” Member Eight, a senior leader, stated,

> It's the only meeting I go to where we're all around the table… And we're really working together to support students, and I don't have anything else like that that truly brings the community together more to really do some good, to do something that's measurably a positive outcome for students… I love that we're really getting time at the table with our partners.

Across all but two interviews, participants stated they valued the different partners and that “There were so many hands in this partnership” (Member 14, a student service provider). Participants said they welcomed the diverse perspectives in the group and appreciated that everyone had a voice.

I also found evidence of various stakeholders when analyzing several years of meeting agendas. There was representation from Arbor Glen School District, Remarkable Outcomes, and Brook Heights Community College, with each organization having multiple people in attendance. Meeting agendas captured when The Partnership added new college departments and a college student member, which diversified the members' points of view and contributions. These combined results indicated that The Partnership had successfully implemented the CI performance indicator of including voices and perspectives from various sectors.

Common Understanding of the Problem

The average score from the survey data (4.46) showed that participants reported they agreed or strongly agreed that there was a common understanding of the problem The Partnership was working to address. However, previous members agreed at a higher rate (4.60) than current members (4.37) that there was an understanding of the problem. This result may indicate that newer members may need additional support to gain clarity on the specific concerns or problems the initiative addresses.

In addition, the interviews identified some inconsistencies with the understanding of the problem The Partnership is working to address. For example, Member Six, a mid-level coordinator, stated, “We were trying to help increase matriculation from [Arbor Glen School District] to [Brook Heights Community College].” Whereas Member Three, a mid-level coordinator, said, “The work is really centering on working with students who have historically been marginalized, especially in higher education.” Participants’ responses captured the general understanding that the purpose of The Partnership was to

increase the number of students who matriculate into college. However, there was significant variation in participants' responses.

Several positions – at all levels and in each organization within The Partnership – turned over after the COVID-19 pandemic. New members joined the initiative, and interviews revealed that some members reported feeling confused about the history and purpose of The Partnership. Member Nine, a senior leader, stated, “When I joined, it took me a while to understand what the group was doing…if there was a way to know the big picture kind of overview of the work, that would have been helpful.” This indicates that new members may need additional support and information to ensure they understand The Partnership’s goals and the problem the initiative is addressing.

Through document analysis, I found that multiple grant applications clearly articulated the problem The Partnership was trying to address. However, this was not evident in documents dated after 2020, when The Partnership lost state funding due to COVID. This finding may indicate that after the grant funding was lost and The Partnership no longer submitted formal applications to the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the initiative may have stopped formally communicating their common concerns of low matriculation, persistence, and credential completion rates. When integrating the data from the survey, interviews, and documents, the results indicated a lack of consistency with members understanding and communicating the specific problem The Partnership is working to solve in the community. Members may need to be re-grounded in the common concerns that brought The Partnership together in the first place.

Agreed Upon Goals

Survey results indicated that participants agreed or strongly agreed (4.5) that The Partnership had agreed upon goals. Through the document analysis process, I found evidence of common goals articulated in the early grant applications. The original grant application states three goals: to increase the number of Arbor Glen college-ready seniors, to increase the number of Arbor Glen college-intending seniors, and to increase college affordability for Arbor Glen students. Although I could surmise the grant goals based on information shared on grant activities in the meeting agendas and notes, I did not find formal statements of The Partnership's goals outside the early grant documents.

Participants' interview responses varied in their understanding of the goals of The Partnership. Although all individuals understood The Partnership's work to be grounded in increasing college access and enrollment, some participants articulated that the primary goal was to support students transitioning from high school to college. Member One, a mid-level coordinator, stated, “The primary goal, as I understood it, was to create a support structure for high school students to transition from being in high school to being in a community college. Student support was the primary goal.” Others understood the goals to focus on credential attainment at the college. Several participants stated that the purpose was to close equity gaps for under-represented students in higher education. Other participants felt the purpose was to provide students with tuition assistance. Member Two, a mid-level coordinator, stated the goal was “making sure that there's affordability that comes along with those postsecondary plans for students.” The significant variations in participants' responses may indicate that The Partnership needs to

revisit the initiative's goals and ensure that all members agree on what The Partnership is working to accomplish.

Adaptive/Flexible Approach to Problem-Solving

Survey results indicated that participants agreed or strongly agreed (4.21) that The Partnership had utilized flexible problem-solving approaches. Interview data supported this result – participants agreed that The Partnership was committed to utilizing creative and multiple approaches to solve problems. Member Four, a mid-level coordinator, stated, "There was almost a feeling like a think-tank – to be able to just brainstorm ideas… and kind of take it and run… It was just the open-endedness of it." Several participants mentioned they valued the adaptability of The Partnership's members and the group's commitment to thinking outside the box and trying new strategies.

Meeting notes indicated that as problems or concerns arose, members approached those concerns collaboratively and innovatively. For example, one meeting note highlighted that students who received scholarships persisted at higher rates than those who did not. Subsequent meeting notes reflected that The Partnership adapted its strategy and offered scholarships to additional students.

When looking at the disaggregated survey data, mid-level coordinators and those who had been members for 1-2 years scored that question lower (3.83) than other participants. While the combined documents, interviews, and survey data reflected that this CI performance indicator was evident within The Partnership, this disaggregated result may indicate that mid-level coordinators and those newer to The Partnership did not perceive the problem-solving approaches as particularly adaptive, or it may indicate that these populations may need support understanding how the initiative approaches and

addresses issues as they arise. Also noteworthy is that mid-level coordinators' scores across all questions in the survey were the lowest of all participants. This result may indicate that those not working directly with students and not in senior leadership positions may need additional information on the goals and strategies within the initiative.

Clearly Articulated Strategies and Actions

Of all the survey questions focused on a common agenda, the question on The Partnership having agreed upon and clearly articulated strategies and actions had the lowest average score of 3.92. Interestingly, all student service providers strongly agreed that these strategies were in place (5.00), while senior leadership scored this question the lowest (3.66). Interview data mirrored this, with only the two student service providers discussing specific strategies and approaches in working with students. Member 14, a student service provider, stated,

> We do a presentation and we do an action. And that strategy was really effective… We were able to break down [activities] in a way where we could effectively give [students] the information and then we could effectively act on that information and actually set them up, which is what the program, to me at least, is about. Letting [students] have support in their own school to do those [activities].

Document analysis also confirmed this result, as only the student service provider's scope of work identified specific strategies and goals used within their positions to increase college matriculation. This analysis generated two noteworthy results – first, those individuals directly doing the work with students had clarity on the

strategies of The Partnership. In contrast, those further removed from the direct work with students had less clarity on the strategies and actions within the initiative. Second, The Partnership may need to revisit and clarify the strategies used to meet their goals for all members.

Summary of CI Condition One: A Common Agenda

To answer my first two research questions, I created a table for each CI condition that summarized the information gathered from the survey, interviews, and document analysis. For my first research question (To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI?), I included the average survey score from each CI performance indicator in the summary table. To answer my second research question (In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI?), I denoted whether there was evidence of the CI performance indicator gathered through interviews and document analysis. Based on these three data sources, I noted in the summary table my conclusions as to whether The Partnership had fully implemented, partially implemented, or had not implemented each CI performance indicator and the overall CI condition.

Table 4.2 on page 97 summarizes the quantitative results and qualitative findings of The Partnership's implementation of the CI performance indicators within the CI condition of a common agenda. The table also provides answers to two of my research questions – the extent to which The Partnership implemented CI and the ways in which The Partnership implemented CI.

Table 4.2

Summary of Results - Implementation of CI Condition One: Evidence of a Common Agenda

	Research Question 1	Research Question 2		Result		
CI Performance Indicator	**Average Survey Score**	**Interview Evidence**	**Document Evidence**	**CI Performance Indicator Fully Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Partially Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Not Implemented**
The Partnership includes voices and perspectives from multiple sectors.	4.07	Present	Present	✓		
The Partnership members have a common understanding of the problem trying to be addressed.	4.46	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	
The Partnership members agree on the goals of the initiative.	4.5	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	
The Partnership members use an adaptive/flexible approach to problem-solving.	4.21	Present	Present	✓		
The Partnership members have agreed upon clearly articulated strategies and actions.	3.92	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	
Overall CI Condition Implementation	4.23	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	

Table 4.2 summarizes the results and findings for each CI indicator under the CI condition of a common agenda. The results for research question one - the extent to which The Partnership implemented CI - was an average survey score of 4.23, indicating that participants agreed or strongly agreed that there was evidence of a common agenda within The Partnership. The findings for research question two - the ways in which The Partnership implemented CI – were evidence was partially present from the interviews and documents. Therefore, I concluded that The Partnership had partially implemented the CI condition of a common agenda.

CI Condition Two: Evidence of Shared Metrics

The second CI condition is shared metrics. Effective collaborative efforts agree on how progress will be measured, monitored, and reported. Consistency with data collection and measuring results ensures alignment of efforts, facilitates continuous learning and improvement, and supports partner accountability (Anthony et al., 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014). To measure the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented shared metrics within The Partnership, I analyzed the data from the three survey questions focused on the CI condition of a shared measurement system. These three questions were also the CI performance indicators aligned to a shared measurement system on the CI framework. Table 4.3 on page 99 presents the survey results for participants' perceptions of how The Partnership implemented shared metrics.

Table 4.3

Survey Results: Evidence of Shared Metrics

		Disaggregated Data								
		Status of Membership		Years in The Partnership				Organizational Position		
Shared Metrics CI Performance Indicator and Survey Questions	**Average Score**	**Current Member**	**Previous Member**	**>1**	**1-2**	**3-4**	**5+**	**Senior Leader**	**Mid-Level Coordinator**	**Student Service Provider**
The Partnership members have an agreed-upon set of indicators to measure outcomes.	3.71	3.44	4.00	4.33	3.50	4.00	3.00	3.33	3.83	4.50
The Partnership members have quality data available to them in a timely manner.	3.71	3.88	3.40	4.33	3.66	3.33	3.50	3.50	3.66	4.50
The Partnership members use data to make decisions.	4.21	4.11	4.40	4.33	4.00	4.33	4.50	4.00	4.16	5.00
Average Score of CI Condition	3.88	3.81	3.93	4.33	3.72	3.89	3.50	3.61	3.88	4.66

When looking at the average CI condition results within Table 4.3, the score of 3.88 indicated that participants were neutral (answer of 3 on the survey) or agreed that there is evidence of shared metrics within The Partnership. The disaggregated results corroborated this as well – the results by status of membership, length of membership, and organizational position were similar, with most sub-groups being neutral or agreeing that there was evidence of a shared measurement system. Of interest is that the student service providers had the highest average scores. This result may be because the student service providers were the individuals who were collecting and monitoring much of the data within the initiative.

Common Set of Indicators to Measure Outcomes

The average score of 3.71 in the survey showed that participants reported they were neutral or agreed that The Partnership used a common set of indicators to measure progress. Previous members (4.00) agreed more than current members (3.44), demonstrating that as The Partnership has continued over time, outcome metrics may have become less clear. Similarly, members who participated in The Partnership for five or more years scored this question the lowest (3.00), suggesting that current measurement systems may need to be improved. Student service providers scored this question the highest (4.50), indicating they believed measurement indicators were in place as collecting and reporting data is a key component of their positions.

I captured little evidence from the interviews that participants were clear on agreed-upon indicators to measure outcomes. Although many participants discussed data points used to make decisions, none could speak to common and agreed-upon outcome indicators; however, Member Seven, a senior leader, did share, “We have what I call

‘snapshots’ of what's going on…” This finding may indicate an area of growth for The Partnership.

Document analysis indicated that grant applications and final reports within the first four years included measurable outcomes on which The Partnership reported to the Colorado Department of Higher Education per the conditions of the grant. However, once grant funding ended in 2020, these formal systems for reporting results to an audience outside The Partnership ended. Data collection shifted from grant accountability to measurements that individual organizations within The Partnership wished to report. For example, Arbor Glen School District and Remarkable Outcomes developed an annual scope of work for the student service providers that included specific data collection and reporting expectations such as the number of college applications submitted, FAFSAs completed, and scholarships awarded to students. The Partnership meeting agendas from the fall of 2020 to the spring of 2022 reflected that Brook Heights Community College collected data and reported bi-annual or annual outcomes for Arbor Glen graduates who enrolled in Brook Heights, such as the number of credits students took each semester, course pass rates, persistence rates, and credential completion rates. However, after the spring of 2022, these metrics from the college did not appear in meeting agendas or meeting notes. The survey data, interviews, and documents reflect that The Partnership currently does not have a common set of indicators to measure desired outcomes.

Data Available in a Timely Manner

The average score of 3.71 from the survey showed that participants reported they were neutral or agreed that The Partnership had data available in a timely manner. Members who participated in The Partnership for three to four years scored this question

the lowest (3.33), followed by members with five or more years of experience with the initiative (3.5). This result may suggest that those individuals with the most experience within the initiative are aware that access to data has declined over time.

Interviews did not produce findings for this CI performance indicator. Document analysis identified one set of meeting notes in which a member requested data from the college. Then at the following meeting, the agenda identified the college reported on those data points. The lack of evidence for this CI performance indicator may reflect that The Partnership should consider the structures they have in place to collect data in a timely manner.

Data Used to Make Decisions

Survey results indicated that participants agreed or strongly agreed (4.21) that The Partnership used data to make decisions. This result was mirrored in the disaggregated results as well. Student service providers scored this question the highest (5.00), indicating they strongly agreed that The Partnership used data to make decisions. This result was similar to the results of the other questions regarding the use of data for individuals who held student service providers roles and is logical based on their scope of work and their requirement to collect and monitor student data.

Interviews produced a wide variety of responses regarding The Partnership's use of data to make decisions. Participants identified multiple data sources used to make decisions, but these data sources were inconsistent among participants. For example, Member Seven, a senior leader, stated, "We use data and students' stories to improve the experience of our students," whereas Member Four, a mid-level coordinator, said, "There wasn't much data presented at the first handful of meetings I went to, and then later on,

admin put it together - looking at how many concurrent enrollment credits the kids were coming in with." Participants who held senior leadership positions within their organization gave lengthy responses in their interviews on The Partnership's use of data. They included data points such as student demographics retention data, course GPA, FAFSA completion, course attendance, and drop/withdrawal data. This finding was interesting as senior leaders had an average score of 4.00 on this survey question, the lowest average of all disaggregated groups. This combined result may indicate that while participants agreed that The Partnership used data to make decisions, there may be a need to agree upon and formalize the specific data sources that assist the members in decision-making processes.

Document analysis produced meeting notes discussing the persistence rates of students who received scholarships. As mentioned previously under the CI performance indicator of flexible problem solving, members used this data to develop new scholarships for additional students. Meeting notes showed that The Partnership used this same data source to develop new programming known as "College Connect."[18] I reviewed three iterations of College Connect marketing materials which described the services to students. This finding was a strong example of how The Partnership used data to make programmatic decisions.

Summary of CI Condition Two: Shared Metrics

Table 4.4 on page 104 summarizes the results within this section on the CI condition of shared metrics. Table 4.4 reflects the quantitative and qualitative data used

[8] Pseudonym used to protect the organization and participants.

Table 4.4

Summary of Results - Implementation of CI Condition Two: Evidence of Shared Metrics

	Research Question 1	Research Question 2		Result		
CI Performance Indicator	**Average Survey Score**	**Interview Evidence**	**Document Evidence**	**CI Performance Indicator Fully Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Partially Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Not Implemented**
The Partnership members have an agreed-upon common set of indicators to measure outcomes.	3.71	Not Present	Partially Present		✓	
The Partnership members have quality data available to them in a timely manner.	3.71	Not Present	Not Present			✓
The Partnership members use data to make decisions.	4.21	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	
Overall CI Condition Implementation	3.88	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	

to answer my first two research questions on the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the CI performance indicators within the CI condition of a shared measurement system.

Table 4.4 summarizes the results and findings for each CI indicator under the CI condition of shared metrics. The results for research question one - the extent to which The Partnership implemented CI - was an average survey score of 3.88, indicating that participants were neutral or agreed that there is evidence of shared metrics within The Partnership. The findings for research question two - the ways in which The Partnership implemented CI – were evidence was partially present from the interviews and documents. Therefore, I concluded that The Partnership had partially implemented the shared metrics CI condition.

CI Condition Three: Evidence of Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Researchers explain that the CI condition of mutually reinforcing activities is when each stakeholder within a CI initiative undertakes activities based on their own strengths that coordinate with the larger group and are not redundant with other stakeholders (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014). To measure the extent and ways The Partnership implemented mutually reinforcing activities, I analyzed the results from the five survey questions focused on the CI performance indicators of mutually reinforcing activities. These five questions were also the CI performance indicators aligned to mutually reinforcing activities on the CI framework. Table 4.5 on page 106 presents the survey results for how participants perceived the implementation of these indicators within The Partnership.

Table 4.5

Survey Results: Evidence of Mutually Reinforcing Activities

		Disaggregated Data								
		Status of Membership		Years in The Partnership				Organizational Position		
Mutually Reinforcing Activities CI Performance Indicator and Survey Questions	**Average Score**	**Current Member**	**Previous Member**	**>1**	**1-2**	**3-4**	**5+**	**Senior Leader**	**Mid-Level Coordinator**	**Student Service Provider**
The Partnership members have developed and use a plan of action.	3.85	4.10	3.40	4.00	4.00	3.66	3.50	3.83	3.50	5.00
The Partnership members coordinate their activities to align with the plan of action.	4.07	4.33	3.60	4.33	4.00	3.66	4.50	4.00	3.83	5.00
The Partnership activities and strategies address gaps in programming/services.	4.50	4.66	4.20	5.00	4.33	4.33	4.50	4.33	4.50	5.00
The Partnership activities reduce duplication of efforts between member organizations.	3.87	4.11	3.40	5.00	3.66	3.00	4.00	3.66	3.66	5.00
The Partnership members allocate resources (human and financial) in support of the initiative.	4.35	4.44	4.20	4.66	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.50	5.00

Table 4.5 reflects that the average CI condition result was a score of 4.13 indicating that participants agreed or strongly agreed that there was evidence of mutually reinforcing activities within The Partnership. Disaggregated results reflected a slightly different story. The average CI condition score from previous members (3.76) was lower than the average CI condition score of current members (4.33), demonstrating that as The Partnership continued over time, the initiative improved its ability to develop a plan of action and aligned programming. There was also a discrepancy in perceptions between student service providers (5.0) and senior leaders (3.96), suggesting that those individuals providing direct services to students perceived these activities as meeting all of the indicators associated with this CI condition.

A Plan of Action is Developed and Used

The average score of 3.85 in the survey results reflected that participants were neutral or agreed that The Partnership developed and used a plan of action; however, disaggregated results, interviews, and documents showed several conflicting results. Student service providers strongly agreed (score of 5.00) that The Partnership implemented this CI performance indicator. Document analysis supported this. Student service providers were the only group with a specific scope of work that mapped out their job responsibilities, student activities, and measurable goals. This finding may mean that those members directly working with students perceived the plan of action to be in place and were executing it with students. In contrast, mid-level coordinators scored this question the lowest (3.50), with more than one individual scoring the question with "disagree." Member Six, a mid-level coordinator, spoke about the plan of action and said, "I feel it is more like brainstorming and thinking through the lens of the students, and

then looking at that data and trying to see what other barriers presented themselves." This indicated that mid-level coordinators did not perceive that a formal plan of action was in place. They saw the work as less structured and focused on being responsive to the needs of students.

Current members agreed or strongly agreed (score of 4.10) more than previous members (score of 3.40) that The Partnership implemented a plan of action, indicating this implementation has improved over the years of the initiative. However, participants who were members for five or more years scored the development and use of a plan the lowest (3.50), suggesting these individuals perceived that a formal plan of action was not in place. Member Seven, a senior leader, who was a member for five or more years, stated, "We all get together and talk about the experience of that student and to make that better and better…. It's like here's the general scope of work, put your spin on it, how do you want to do this?" This finding indicates that there was a general understanding of the purpose of the work, but a specific plan of action for The Partnership may not be present. In reviewing documents, I did not find a specific plan of action to guide the overall work of The Partnership.

Activities are Aligned with the Plan of Action

Survey results indicate that participants agreed (4.07) that The Partnership aligned their activities to the plan of action. All current members agreed or strongly agreed (4.33) more than previous members (3.60) that activities were aligned with the plan of action, indicating that The Partnership improved the alignment of its activities over the years of the initiative. The finding is supported by participants with five or more years of experience in The Partnership agreeing or strongly agreeing (score of 4.5) that the

alignment of activities to the plan of action is in place. Student service providers strongly agreed (score of 5.0) that this CI performance indicator was in place. Once again, those directly doing the work with students perceived that the activities of The Partnership aligned with the overall plan of action.

Interviews reflected that participants listed a series of activities in which The Partnership engaged, including application support, FAFSA completion assistance, college advising, pairing students with a mentor, and organized celebrations for students. Member two, a mid-level coordinator, stated,

> I think a lot of the strategies and activities are those very strategic advising events that are set up pretty much monthly, and so the students have access to how to apply to [college] and they get their application in…They do Accuplacer testing and making sure that they have Accuplacer scores for the math and for English, …they have all those different pieces done so they're ready to register for those fall classes…and then all the way through the final activity which is celebrating graduating and coming to [college] and so there's everything from the beginning of the process of applying to the institution, all the way through registering and then celebrating coming to the institution.

Document analysis reflected these same activities. Agendas and meeting notes, programming flyers and marketing materials, and the student service providers' scope of work reflected many activities supporting students with their college transition. However, neither the interviews nor the documents produced evidence that the activities explicitly aligned with a plan of action. While the survey data reflected that participants agreed that activities aligned with a plan of action, results from the previous survey question

indicated that a plan of action was not entirely in place. Together, these results suggest that while many activities are occurring within The Partnership, the activities do not align with an overall plan of action.

Activities and Strategies Address Gaps in Programming/Services

Survey results reflected that this question scored the highest of all questions associated with the mutually reinforcing activities CI condition. The average score was 4.50, indicating that participants agreed or strongly agreed that the activities and strategies used within The Partnership addressed gaps in programming or services. Across all disaggregated survey results, responses reflected that participants agreed or strongly agreed (with scores ranging from 4.20 to 5.00) that this CI performance indicator was in place within The Partnership.

Document analysis also supported this finding. Meeting notes indicated that The Partnership developed several new activities in response to member discussions or data indicating a need. Examples of these new activities include assigning a designated college advisor for Arbor Glen graduates once they enrolled at Brook Heights, adding a student mentoring program, and hosting end-of-year student celebrations for high students who completed the College Connect program.

Interviews reflected similar findings. Participants stated that The Partnership designed activities to meet students' needs and to address holes in the current high school-to-college transition processes. Member Seven, a senior leader, said, "We were seeing where the gaps are, where the weaknesses of our initiative are, and we're plugging and playing from there." When data was analyzed and a barrier or issue was found, The Partnership created new programming to address the need. For example, Member One, a

mid-level coordinator, recalled looking at concurrent enrollment participation data for high school students. The Partnership determined that additional programming was needed to encourage students who already had college credit through concurrent enrollment to continue their education at the college.

Activities Reduce Duplication of Efforts

The average score of 3.87 from the survey showed that participants reported they were neutral or agreed that The Partnership's activities reduced the duplication of efforts between partners. There were large fluctuations in participants' responses to this question ranging from "disagree" to "strongly agree." Those participants who disagreed that this CI performance indicator was in place were all previous members. The average score of previous members was 3.40, while the average score of current members was 4.11. This result indicates that as the initiative continued over time, The Partnership made improvements to eliminate duplication of efforts. The range of responses to this question may suggest that members need additional communication regarding each partner's activities within the initiative.

Interviews revealed that most participants discussed the many activities occurring within The Partnership but did not mention whether they felt stakeholders were duplicating each other's work. I identified only one participant who specifically addressed their perceptions on how The Partnership reduced the duplication of efforts within the initiative. Member Seven, a senior leader, stated,

> It's efficient. You're not trying to have 15 people write a proposal - I wasn't writing proposals on the college end. They were writing them and asking me for

input. We write them on the high school side and ask them for input, so I think it's been good.

This quote reflects the distribution of responsibilities and how the member organizations support each other with tasks.

Document analysis produced meeting notes that reflected how each organization within The Partnership had specific roles and managed specific tasks. There did not appear to be a duplication of efforts; however, the meeting notes did not specifically discuss how The Partnership was trying to reduce duplication of efforts. The lack of evidence on this topic through the document analysis process and interviews made it difficult to conclude whether this CI performance indicator was present within The Partnership.

Members Allocate Resources in Support of the Initiative

Survey results show that the average participant score for this CI performance indicator was 4.35, indicating that participants agreed or strongly agreed that members allocated human and financial resources to support The Partnership. Disaggregated results across all categories mirrored this result with scores ranging from 4.00 to 5.00, suggesting that participants believed each organization supported The Partnership's work through financial, human, and in-kind resources.

Document analysis showed that the COVID-19 global pandemic directly impacted The Partnership and the financial resources allocated to this initiative. I identified email correspondence and grant documentation that revealed that The Partnership lost funding in 2020 when The Colorado Department of Higher Education redistributed COSI dollars to initiatives supporting displaced workers across Colorado

due to the COVID-19 shutdown. This loss of grant funding required The Partnership to develop a new financial model to sustain the initiative. Arbor Glen School District absorbed the contract costs of the Remarkable Youth staff, and Brook Heights Community College agreed to continue the work through in-kind contributions of staff time and expertise. These documents are strong evidence of how The Partnership has allocated resources to support the initiative.

Interviews provided ample evidence that participants believed each organization contributed resources to ensure the success of The Partnership. Member Seven, a senior leader, stated, "I think anybody with a resource or potential resource has brought it to the table." Member 12, a senior leader, added, "All of us invested in the project." Participants spoke about financial resource allocation in the interviews mentioning student scholarships, salaries of advisors assigned to this project, and the cost of contracts for the student services providers. Member 10, a senior leader, also mentioned the leadership resources that supported the project, stating,

> I think also there's something to be said for the resources we put in the room each month - like you look around, who participates in [The Partnership] meeting? That's some pretty significant resources... We know that there's the weight of leadership behind the project too…It's not just the front money level - there's upper levels that are supporting the program. I think that's a resource allocation choice.

The interviews and document analysis evidence confirmed that The Partnership fully implemented this CI performance indicator by allocating resources to support the initiative.

Summary of CI Condition Three: Evidence of Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Table 4.6 on page 115 summarizes the combined results from this section on the CI condition of mutually reinforcing activities. Table 4.6 shows the quantitative and qualitative data used to answer my first two research questions on the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the CI performance indicators within the CI condition of mutually reinforcing activities.

Table 4.6

Summary of Results - Implementation of CI Condition Three: Evidence of Mutually Reinforcing Activities

	Research Question 1	Research Question 2		Result		
CI Performance Indicator	**Average Survey Score**	**Interview Evidence**	**Document Evidence**	**CI Performance Indicator Fully Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Partially Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Not Implemented**
The Partnership members have developed and use a plan of action.	3.85	Not Present	Partially Present		✓	
The Partnership members coordinate their activities to align with the plan of action.	4.07	Not Present	Not Present			✓
The Partnership activities and strategies address gaps in programming/services.	4.50	Present	Present	✓		
The Partnership activities reduce duplication of efforts between member organizations.	3.87	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	
The Partnership members allocate resources (human and financial) in support of the initiative.	4.35	Present	Present	✓		
Overall CI Condition Implementation	4.13	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	

Table 4.6 summarizes the results and findings for each CI indicator under the CI condition of mutually reinforcing activities. The results for research question one - the extent to which The Partnership implemented CI - was an average survey score of 4.13 indicating that participants agreed that there is evidence of mutually reinforcing activities within The Partnership. The findings for research question two - the ways in which The Partnership implemented CI – were evidence was partially present from the interviews and documents. Therefore, I concluded that The Partnership had partially implemented the mutually reinforcing activities CI condition.

CI Condition Four: Evidence of Continuous Communication

The CI condition of continuous communication is the information-sharing systems that ensure open and consistent communication around progress, data, and stories so that alignment grows (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014; Hanleybrown et al., 2012). To measure the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented continuous communication systems, I analyzed the results from the two survey questions focused on the CI condition of continuous communication. These two questions were also the CI performance indicators aligned to continuous communication systems on the CI framework. Table 4.7 on page 117 presents the survey results of participants' perceptions of how The Partnership implemented continuous communication systems.

Table 4.7

Survey Results: Evidence of Continuous Communication Systems

		Disaggregated Data								
		Status of Membership		Years in The Partnership				Organizational Position		
Continuous Communication CI Performance Indicator and Survey Questions	**Average Score**	**Current Member**	**Previous Member**	**>1**	**1-2**	**3-4**	**5+**	**Senior Leader**	**Mid-Level Coordinator**	**Student Service Provider**
The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage internal member organizations keeping them informed and inspired.	4.00	4.11	3.80	4.33	4.00	3.66	4.00	4.00	3.66	5.00
The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage external partners keeping them informed and inspired.	2.92	2.88	3.00	3.33	2.66	3.00	3.00	2.83	2.83	3.50
Average Score of CI Condition	3.46	3.50	3.40	3.83	3.33	3.33	3.50	3.41	3.25	4.35

Table 4.7 shows that the average score of this CI condition is 3.46 indicating that participants agree or are neutral in their perceptions of evidence of continuous communication systems. There are only two questions/indicators for this CI condition, and the survey results for each question are significantly different. As such, it was important to analyze each question in isolation.

Communicating with Internal Partners

The average score of 4.0 in the survey indicated that participants reported they agreed there were structures and processes to engage internal members keeping them informed and inspired. Current members scored this survey question higher (4.11) than previous members (3.80), indicating that The Partnership has improved its internal communication processes as the initiative has continued over time. The newest members of the initiative – those participating less than one year – had an average score of 4.33 on the survey compared to those who have been members for three to four years (3.66). This interesting result indicates that members involved with the initiative longer are less satisfied with the communication structures than newer members.

Interviews and document analysis produced several noteworthy findings. Participants shared that most communication between member organizations happened at quarterly meetings. Member 12, a senior leader, recalled that the meetings focused on brainstorming, planning, and identifying areas for improvement. Most of the documents I gathered and used for analysis came from the agendas and notes from these quarterly meetings. These agendas and notes served as evidence of internal communication strategies.

A few interview participants reported concerns about the quarterly meetings. Member Four, a mid-level coordinator, stated she did not recall a lot of communication or updates between meetings. Member Six, a mid-level coordinator, said they sometimes believed that people were frustrated during the meetings. “I think sometimes we talked, but we didn't make any progress.” This important finding requires additional investigation into the members' satisfaction levels during the quarterly meetings.

Aside from the quarterly meetings, most of the communication happened between the student service providers and the students. Member Nine, a senior leader shared,

> I'm calling [the school district and college admissions representatives] primary actors because they're really involved in that day to day and figuring out how to get the group of students from day one to matriculation. So I think that there's a ton of communication within the primary actors of the project…And then I see some of the other people that maybe are less involved in the day-to-day, our secondary actors, and so there's consistent meetings to bring everybody together and kind of fill everyone in. So lots of communication happening with people who are on the ground in the work and then you know, consistent and frequent enough communication to keep those people who are more on the periphery informed and involved.

This quote also mirrors the survey data where student service providers strongly agreed (5.0) that internal communication structures were in place compared to mid-level coordinators with an average score of 3.66. Several participants agreed that most of the initiative’s communication occurred between students and the student service providers.

Interview participants brought up additional concerns regarding internal communication structures. Several of the newer members indicated they wished there had been documentation they could reference that told the background story on The Partnership. Other members wished there were formal meeting notes created from these meetings or something that could summarize and communicate the next steps after the meetings. Member 10, a senior leader, shared, “I think there's open and organic communication, but I think it lacks some formal structure that can assist the partners in moving forward. Even a quarterly assessment of where we are or even an annual report.” These findings indicate that although internal communication structures are in place, there is room for growth for The Partnership to improve its communication processes.

Communicating with External Partners

Survey results for external communication processes and structures varied greatly from the survey results of internal communication processes. This question received the highest number of “neutral” and “disagree” responses across all survey questions giving it an average score of 2.92. This score was the lowest average score of the survey. The average score for current members was 2.88, and the average score for previous members was 3.00, indicating that external communication processes may have declined over time. Those members involved in The Partnership for one to two years scored this question the lowest of all sub-groups with an average score of 2.66. Notably, these members would have had most of their involvement with The Partnership during the COVID-19 pandemic where The Partnership conducted a large share of the work remotely. The low average survey results for external communication strategies may warrant further

investigation now that the work with students has returned to in-person delivery methods.

Document analysis reflected a few external communication examples targeting student audiences. These included a paper brochure, a bookmark, a flyer, and a webpage. I also considered end-of-year grant reports as external communication strategies as these documents communicated the status of The Partnership's work to the Colorado Department of Higher Education. These documents reflected limited communication with external audiences.

Interview data reflected that participants had differing ideas on exactly who the external stakeholders were. Some considered this to mean the top levels of leadership within their organizations such as school boards or the board of directors. Others thought this included state agencies or other potential partners. Still, others thought the external audience was the high school community. Member 11, a senior leader, stated, "It really starts with our partner at the school helping us - we can't get to the students without the help of the counselors." Member 13, a student service provider, expressed concerns that the message regarding the program and services provided by The Partnership was not getting out to students in meaningful ways. Member 13, a student service provider, stated,

> I think that sometimes what we were doing was going a little unnoticed throughout the entire school, and I wish that it was promoted a little bit more… we have a lot of students who don't have as much exposure to [the program], so I think that would have been really nice.

Regardless of how the participants interpreted external stakeholders, there were apparent inconsistencies with the communication structures and processes used to engage an external audience.

Summary of CI Condition Four: Evidence of Continuous Communication

Table 4.8 on page 123 summarizes the results within this section on the CI condition of continuous communication. Table 4.8 reflects the quantitative and qualitative data used to answer my first two research questions on the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the CI performance indicators within the CI condition of continuous communication.

Table 4.8

Summary of Results - Implementation of CI Condition Four: Evidence of Continuous Communication

	Research Question 1	Research Question 2		Result		
CI Performance Indicator	**Average Survey Score**	**Interview Evidence**	**Document Evidence**	**CI Performance Indicator Fully Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Partially Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Not Implemented**
The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage internal member organizations keeping them informed and inspired.	4.00	Present	Present		✓	
The Partnership has structures and processes in place to engage external partners keeping them informed and inspired.	2.92	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	
Overall CI Condition Implementation	3.46	Partially Present	Partially Present		✓	

Table 4.8 summarizes the results and findings for each CI indicator under the CI condition of continuous communication. The results for research question one - the extent to which The Partnership implemented CI - was an average survey score of 3.46 indicating that participants agreed or were neutral that there is evidence of continuous communication within The Partnership. The findings for research question two - the ways in which The Partnership implemented CI – were evidence was partially present from the interviews and documents. Therefore, I concluded that The Partnership had partially implemented the continuous communication CI condition.

CI Condition Five: Evidence of a Backbone Support Organization

The fifth CI condition establishes a backbone support organization. Effective collective efforts require a dedicated staff, separate from the participating stakeholder groups, that plan, organize, and manage the work. This entity takes the lead in facilitating the work, mediating conflicts, and supporting the community change efforts while applying the necessary pressure to move the work forward (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014).

It is important to note that The Partnership did not have a specific backbone organization at the helm of the initiative when it first started. In the beginning stages of The Partnership's work, the college hosted collaborative meetings with all the participating organizations and served as the fiscal agent. As the initiative continued over several years and the grant funding ended, the college continued to serve as the convenor with each organization playing a role in the meetings. At the time of this program evaluation, The Partnership had not formally named a lead organization for the initiative.

To measure the extent and ways in which The Partnership had established a backbone organization, I analyzed the five survey questions focused on the CI condition of a backbone support organization. These five questions were also the CI performance indicators aligned to a backbone support organization on the CI framework. Table 4.9 on page 126 presents the survey results for participants' perceptions of how The Partnership implemented a backbone organization.

Table 4.9

Survey Results: Evidence of a Backbone Organization

		Disaggregated Data								
		Status of Membership		Years in The Partnership				Organizational Position		
Backbone Organization CI Performance Indicators and Survey Questions	**Average Score**	**Current Member**	**Previous Member**	**>1**	**1-2**	**3-4**	**5+**	**Senior Leader**	**Mid-Level Coordinator**	**Student Service Provider**
The Partnership has established a central management entity or a "backbone" organization that facilitates the work.	3.92	4.00	3.80	4.00	3.66	4.33	4.00	4.16	3.33	5.00
The backbone organization guides The Partnership vision and strategy in collaboration with all members.	3.78	4.00	3.40	4.33	3.66	3.33	4.00	3.83	3.33	5.00
The backbone organization works in collaboration with other Partnership members to ensure alignment of activities and monitoring of progress.	3.92	4.00	3.80	3.66	3.66	4.33	4.50	4.33	3.50	4.00
The backbone organization and other Partnership members collect and use data for accountability, learning, and improvement.	3.71	3.66	3.80	4.00	3.66	3.66	3.50	3.50	3.83	4.00
The backbone organization and other Partnership members help align funding to support the goals.	3.78	3.88	3.60	4.33	3.50	3.66	4.00	3.66	3.66	4.50
Average CI Condition Result	3.82	3.91	3.68	4.06	3.63	3.86	4.00	3.90	3.53	4.50

Table 4.9 reflects that the average CI condition result within the survey was 3.82 indicating that participants agreed or were neutral that a backbone support organization was in place within The Partnership. Disaggregated survey data reflect similar results with the exception of student service providers. Student service providers had an average score of 4.50, indicating they agreed or strongly agreed that a backbone organization was present within The Partnership. Mid-level coordinators had the lowest average score of 3.53. This discrepancy between student service providers and mid-level coordinators may indicate that mid-level coordinators had a better understanding of the organizational structure of The Partnership than those working directly with students.

A "Backbone" Organization Facilitates the Work

Survey results show that the average participant score for this CI performance indicator was 3.92, demonstrating that participants agreed or were neutral that The Partnership had a backbone support organization. Disaggregated subgroups show similar results with scores ranging from 3.33 to 4.33 except for student service providers with an average score of 5.00. These results may indicate that participants are unclear as to which organization within The Partnership is the backbone organization, or they have their own perceptions that one of the organizations has unofficially assumed this role.

Interviews provided additional clarification on participants' perceptions of a backbone support organization. Several participants indicated they saw Brook Heights Community College as the unofficial backbone organization, especially those participants who were members for two or fewer years. Member Nine, a senior leader, stated, "I see [the college] is the lead of the group's efforts [because] a lot of the work that is happening is at their site and from their staff. I see them as overseeing the program and

the scholarship program." Participants described how the college created the quarterly agendas for the meetings and how senior leadership at the college scheduled the meetings and coordinated with the various college departments.

When I analyzed The Partnership documents, all three organizations appeared to be equal partners in the initial grant application. Logistics such as determining the fiscal agent for The Partnership and identifying a host for the meetings led the college to assume the management entity for the group. As the funding source changed in 2020 due to the loss of the COSI grant, as indicated in meeting notes and emails, the college no longer maintained the fiscal agent status, and the school district assumed the responsibility of covering the contract for the student service provider with Remarkable Outcomes. At the time of this program evaluation, meeting agendas and notes reflected that Brook Heights Community College still scheduled the quarterly meeting and created the agendas.

I combined the survey, interviews, and documents and determined that The Partnership did not have a separate entity outside the participating stakeholder groups to serve as the backbone organization, nor was there a dedicated staff to plan and manage the work. It appeared Brook Heights Community College was responsible for convening and organizing the stakeholders in quarterly meetings. Many participants perceived that the community college assumed the role of the backbone organization. These results indicate that The Partnership partially implemented the CI performance indicator of establishing a backbone organization to facilitate the work.

The Backbone Organization Guides the Vision and Strategy

Survey results show that the average participant score of this CI performance indicator was 3.78, indicating participants agreed or were neutral that the backbone organization, in collaboration with all members, guided the vision and strategy of The Partnership. Disaggregated sub-groups show similar results. Mid-level coordinators had the lowest average score of 3.33, suggesting they were unclear about how the backbone organization set the vision and strategy.

I determined through analyzing the interviews that there were conflicting views as to which organization was setting the vision for the group. Some participants stated they believed the college set the direction for The Partnership; others felt the school district was leading the vision of the work. Member 11, a senior leader, believed that college admissions counselors set the strategy for The Partnership.

> The admissions counselor - that's who's actually driving the ship for the students. I mean, of course, we can't do it without the financing and marketing and other pieces, but the coordination of eight different sessions, at least at four different schools, post-follow-up sessions, and communication with each student and counselor and families – I mean that is a lot, so I think that the admissions counselor that's been driving the program is really key there.

There are conflicting perceptions of which organization or individual was leading the vision and strategy for The Partnership. This finding may indicate that members need additional clarity on whether one organization within The Partnership sets the vision for the group or if the vision is set collaboratively through all organizations.

Document analysis did not produce specific evidence that determined one specific organization set the vision and strategy for The Partnership. Meeting notes indicated that decisions on new programming and activities were generated collaboratively with all stakeholders. Meeting notes did reflect that a member of the school district, who had been a part of the original team who developed The Partnership, often verbally explained the history and purpose of The Partnership to new members; however, there were no specific findings from the documents that indicated a single organization or individual set the vision for the group. Combined results of the survey data, interviews, and documents suggested that The Partnership did not implement a backbone organization that collaboratively guided the vision and strategy for the initiative.

The Backbone Organization Ensures Alignment of Activities and Monitors Progress

Survey results showed the average participant score for this CI performance indicator was 3.92, indicating that participants agreed or were neutral that the backbone organization, in collaboration with all members, ensured alignment of activities and monitored the progress of The Partnership. Senior leaders had an average score of 4.33 indicating they agreed or strongly agreed that the backbone organization ensured the activities aligned to the purpose and met the goals. This result may suggest that as senior leaders, these members assumed the role of ensuring The Partnership executed the activities and met its goals.

I could not produce specific findings from the interviews that identified how the backbone organization ensured the alignment of activities and monitored progress. Member 14, a student service provider, spoke about the admissions counselors leading the work in the high schools and the fulfillment of program goals. Member Four, a mid-

level coordinator, spoke about the critical role of the student service provider in meeting individual student needs and accomplishing annual goals. The inconsistency in participant responses led me to conclude that participants were unclear as to which organization or individual was ensuring the alignment of the work and monitoring the progress of The Partnership.

Through the document analysis process, I located meeting agendas that included data sharing and student outcome results. Although this does not necessarily indicate a backbone organization was monitoring progress, it does provide evidence that The Partnership was sharing student outcomes resulting from the activities within The Partnership. Using this combined evidence, I concluded that The Partnership did not implement the CI performance indicator of establishing a backbone organization that ensures the alignment of activities and monitors progress.

The Backbone Organization Collects and Uses Data

The survey results show that the average participant score for this CI performance indicator was 3.71 indicating the participants agreed or were neutral that the backbone organization collects and uses data. This question earned the lowest average score under this CI condition. Interestingly, the average score of 3.71 was the same average score given to the survey question regarding the members having a common set of indicators to measure outcomes. An additional similarity between these two questions was that previous members scored these questions higher than current members, indicating that The Partnership's use of data has declined over time.

Interview data did not produce specific findings on how the backbone organization collected and used data. Because The Partnership did not have an identified

backbone organization leading the initiative, participants responded to interview questions based on how The Partnership used data systems overall, not how one organization used data. For these same reasons, it also proved difficult to locate documents specific to the backbone organization's use of data versus The Partnership's overall use of data. These combined results demonstrated little evidence of the backbone organization's use of data and reinforced my conclusion that The Partnership did not fully implement strong data systems.

The Backbone Organization Helps Align Funding to Support Goals

The average score of 3.78 on the survey showed that participants reported they agreed or were neutral that The Partnership had a backbone organization that helped align funding to support goals. Similar to the other indicators within this CI condition, the result for this survey question reflected that participants may have been unclear as to which organization was considered the backbone organization. I could not produce findings for this indicator through interviews or document analysis.

As a point of comparison, I looked at the evidence from the mutually reinforcing activities CI condition. I reviewed the survey results on how The Partnership allocated resources to support the initiative. Participants' average score was 4.35, indicating they agreed or strongly agreed that The Partnership allocated financial and human resources. There was also evidence of financial resources from interviews and documents. When integrating this information with the interview findings that participants did not understand who the backbone organization was, I concluded that the financial resource indicator under mutually reinforcing activities better reflected The Partnership's allocation of funding to support goals. Although I concluded that The Partnership did not

implement the CI performance indicator of the backbone organization aligning funding to support goals, I recognize that The Partnership as a whole did secure financial resources.

Summary of CI Condition Five: Evidence of a Backbone Support Organization

Table 4.10 on page 134 summarizes the results from this section on the CI condition of a backbone support organization. Table 4.10 shows the quantitative and qualitative data used to answer my first two research questions on the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the CI performance indicators within the CI condition of a backbone support organization.

Table 4.10

Summary of Results - Implementation of CI Condition Five: Evidence of a Backbone Support Organization

	Research Question 1	Research Question 2		Result		
CI Performance Indicator	**Average Survey Score**	**Interview Evidence**	**Document Evidence**	**CI Performance Indicator Fully Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Partially Implemented**	**CI Performance Indicator Not Implemented**
The Partnership has established a central management entity or a "backbone" organization that facilitates the work.	3.92	Partial Evidence	Partial Evidence		✓	
The backbone organization guides The Partnership vision and strategy in collaboration with all members.	3.78	Partial Evidence	No Evidence			✓
The backbone organization works in collaboration with other Partnership members to ensure alignment of activities and monitoring of progress.	3.92	No Evidence	Partial Evidence			✓
The backbone organization and other Partnership members collect and use data for accountability, learning, and improvement.	3.71	No Evidence	No Evidence			✓
The backbone organization and other Partnership members help align funding to support the goals.	3.78	No Evidence	No Evidence			✓
Overall CI Condition Implementation	3.82	Partial Evidence	Partial Evidence			✓

Table 4.10 summarizes the results and findings for each CI indicator under the CI condition of a backbone support organization. The results for research question one - the extent to which The Partnership implemented CI - was an average survey score of 3.82 indicating that participants agreed or were neutral that there is evidence of continuous communication within The Partnership. The findings for research question two - the ways in which The Partnership implemented CI – were evidence was partially present from the interviews and documents. Based on the evidence from each of the individual CI indicators, I concluded that The Partnership did not implement the backbone support organization CI condition. This result was primarily because The Partnership did not have a specific backbone structure when the members developed the initiative, nor had it intentionally named a backbone organization over the years of the initiative.

Summary of CI Results and Findings

Tables 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.8, and 4.10 summarize the results gathered from the survey, interviews, and document analysis for each CI performance indicator and CI condition. These tables captured my conclusions on how The Partnership implemented each CI condition. To synthesize these five tables and the answers to my first two research questions, I created Table 4.11 on page 136 to summarize how The Partnership implemented all five CI conditions.

Table 4.11

Summary of The Partnership's CI Implementation

CI Condition	Research Question 1: To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI?	Research Question 2: In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI?	
		CI Performance Indicator Fully Implemented	CI Performance Indicator Partially Implemented
A Common Agenda	Partially Implemented	Evidence of voices and perspectives from multiple sectors	Partial evidence members have a common understanding of the problem trying to be addressed
		Evidence of adaptive/flexible approach to problem-solving	Partial evidence members agree on the goals of the initiative
			Partial evidence members have agreed upon clearly articulated strategies and actions.
Shared Metrics	Partially Implemented		Partial evidence members have an agreed upon a common set of indicators to measure outcomes
			Partial evidence of the members' use of data to make decisions
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Partially Implemented	Evidence of activities and strategies that address gaps in programming/ services	Partial evidence members have developed and use a plan of action.
		Evidence of the allocation of human and financial resources in support of the initiative	Partial evidence activities reduce duplication of efforts between member organizations
Continuous Communication	Partially Implemented		Partial evidence of communication structures to engage internal members and organizations
			Partial evidence of communication structures to engage external audiences
A Backbone Support Organization	Not Implemented		Partial evidence of a central management entity that facilitates the work

The results of this program evaluation indicated that overall, The Partnership partially implemented four of the five CI conditions. The Partnership partially implemented the common agenda, shared metrics, mutually reinforcing activities, and continuous communication CI conditions. The Partnership did not implement the CI condition of a backbone support organization. The Partnership fully implemented four of the CI performance indicators, partially implemented ten indicators, and had yet to implement six of the CI performance indicators.

Stewardship: A Possible Sixth CI Condition

Throughout the interview process, participants shared that what drew them to The Partnership's work was the selflessness of the project and the belief that they were contributing to something meaningful. Member 12, a senior leader, said, "I thought it was important work, and I wanted to be able to contribute in any way that I could. I think there's also just a sense of being part of something bigger." Participants discussed how their commitment to students and the community drove their involvement in the initiative. The work appealed to their hearts as much, if not more so, than the practical aspects of their professional responsibilities. Member Eight, a senior leader, shared,

> I wanted something that I could really put my love behind and my heart, so when I heard about [The Partnership], I said I would love to be part of that…I was so eager to get involved with [The Partnership] because I knew that we could be helping students who really needed that connection - that kind of extra push to do well in college and get into college and feel supported and stay through this initiative. So I was very invested and excited about it from the start.

Participants centered the work on serving students instead of any financial benefits their individual organizations experienced. Member 12, a senior leader, said, "We weren't coming together for the money, and I think that's one of the reasons it works… We're all just participating and we're trying to make the collective whole better." Member Ten, a senior leader, added,

> I like the fact that it's not a forced arrangement - this is a partnership of willingness. It truly is an organic, internal-driven [initiative] which is a little more unique because I think sometimes these collaborative initiatives, they're grant imposed. To get the resources, you have to do this. We said to center students - we're going to figure out the resources and will continue to try to get resources but we're still going to do this.

Participants discussed the sense of reciprocity and meaningful collaboration within The Partnership. Member Seven, a senior leader, stated,

> You've got to be committed. I think you got to check your ego at the door a little bit. There's not any one [organization] driving it…You've got to look out for each other, more than for yourself and trust that there's other people at the table looking out for you. I think it's a way to get better work done.

Member Nine, a senior leader, shared a similar sentiment. They stated,

> What I really appreciate about this group is it feels collaborative, really collaborative. And I don't know exactly how you guys made that happen, but there's been many times I've worked in projects where people are partnering, and it just feels disconnected and it doesn't feel like a partnership. This really feels

> collaborative, so I don't know if it's the players, I don't know what it is, or if it's that the mission of the things that everyone's trying to accomplish are so intertwined. But if you can make it feel like a collaborative effort - it's just so much more effective and enjoyable for all the people involved than a partnership in which you feel like you're sort of working against each other in some ways or there's some competitive components of the partnership.

Participants approached the work of The Partnership with a sense of personal responsibility to the students, the community, and the other organizations that extended beyond the benefits that any one individual or organization would experience. I synthesized these themes as the concept of stewardship.

For the purpose of this program evaluation, I have defined stewardship as a shared ethos focused on collective actions and contributions toward a common purpose greater than oneself. This ethos of stewardship captured the intrinsic motivation used to facilitate empowerment, trust, teamwork, and a joint commitment to The Partnership's work. Stewardship also reflects the sense of responsibility the stakeholders felt to move the work forward in the best interest of the students and the community. This personal connection to the cause and the community appeared to transcend any potential individual or organizational benefits.

In the case of The Partnership, I concluded that stewardship was a foundational underpinning for its members' belief systems and practices. Stewardship was the ideological lure that attracted members to the initiative and brought them back to the

work of The Partnership month after month. This ethos of stewardship bolstered members' commitment to the community, to the work, and to the other organizations.

Prior research around CI does not explicitly discuss stewardship. The current program evaluation elevates the theme of stewardship within The Partnership as a unique principle essential to the creation of the initiative, the belief system of its members, and its practices. I concluded that stewardship was not only evident within The Partnership but might also apply to other CI initiatives as it establishes a philosophical foundation and motivating force that fosters engagement and commitment of participants. I suggest that stewardship could be a potential sixth condition of Collective Impact.

Conclusion

Chapter Four presents the results and findings from data collected and analyzed in a mixed methods developmental program evaluation of The Partnership. The purpose of this program evaluation was to explore the extent and ways in which The Partnership implemented the five conditions of Collective Impact. Data analysis showed evidence of The Partnership implementing these conditions at varying levels, with some CI performance indicators being fully implemented and others partially implemented. Through the data analysis process, I identified an additional theme of stewardship that contributed to the creation of the initiative and continues to serve as a motivating factor for members' continued participation. I proposed that stewardship might be considered a sixth condition of successful CI initiatives and is worthy of further study. Chapter Five discusses the implications of this evidence and provides recommendations for further

implementation of the CI conditions in order for The Partnership to continue and sustain its work.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Arbor Glen School District, Brook Heights Community College, and the social enterprise group Remarkable Outcomes, shared a common concern regarding low matriculation, persistence, and postsecondary credential completion rates in their community. In 2015, these three organizations established "The Partnership." The aim of this group was to increase postsecondary access, matriculation, and credential completion in their community through targeted services for Arbor Glen seniors. These services include support with college exploration and selection, applications, financial aid, and wrap-around services from the college once Arbor Glen graduates enrolled in Brook Heights Community College.

The COVID-19 global pandemic directly impacted The Partnership in several ways. First, The Partnership lost grant funding and had to develop a new financial model to sustain the initiative. Second, data tracking and reporting systems shifted after the loss of the grant and became less formalized. Third, the in-person delivery model of the activities and strategies shifted to remote models and altered the frequency and availability of student support. Finally, each partnering organization had staff turnover, which required new members to join The Partnership and build a new understanding of the work. The combination of these factors caused the initiative's organizational structure, measurement systems, activities, and purpose to become less defined and

unclear, especially to the newer members. The Partnership lacked a formal, aligned, and coordinated system in which to operate and collaborate.

Although not explicitly designed as a Collective Impact (CI) initiative, I identified many similarities between The Partnership and other CI programs. As such, I presented CI to The Partnership as an organizational and operational model in which it can operate, evolve, and sustain the work. I then engaged in a mixed methods developmental program evaluation of The Partnership examining the following research questions:

1. To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI?
2. In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI?
3. How might further implementation of the CI conditions support The Partnership's continued work and sustainability?

I organize this chapter by the five conditions of CI. Under each CI condition, I provide a high-level summary of my integrated quantitative and qualitative results which answered my first two research questions. I then provide recommendations to The Partnership on ways in which it can further implement CI to support its continued work and sustainability – this answered my third research question. In this chapter, I also include a discussion on stewardship and its value as a new CI condition. Finally, I provide implications of the program evaluation and recommendations for further study.

Summary of Results and Recommendations for The Partnership

I used a utilization-focused developmental evaluation approach for this program evaluation because I wanted The Partnership to use the findings to inform and improve its practices. Developmental evaluation focuses on organizational learning and innovation

and guides exploration and adaptation (Gamble, 2008; Patton, 2010). The goal of this developmental evaluation was to support the learning of The Partnership's members and provide The Partnership with a CI framework that could facilitate organizational and operational sustainability. Thus, I intentionally did not provide recommendations for every CI performance indicator under each CI condition. Instead, I provided 12 specific recommendations to support The Partnership in meaningful reflection and decision-making.

A Common Agenda

Discussion of Results. Using the results and findings from Chapter Four, I determined that The Partnership partially implemented the first CI condition of establishing a common agenda and had fully implemented two of the common agenda CI performance indicators. Evidence showed that The Partnership included diverse voices and perspectives from multiple sectors including the school district, the community college, and the social enterprise. Members appreciated that each organization brought a unique perspective, leading to different contributions and insights. The Partnership added a student member, which several participants saw as a true value-add to the initiative. The student's voice and experience provided critical insights into what was working and needed wrap-around services to promote successful student transitions into higher education. There was also evidence that The Partnership used adaptive and flexible approaches to problem-solving. Members valued the adaptability of The Partnership and the group's commitment to thinking outside the box and trying new strategies.

I concluded that The Partnership partially implemented three additional CI performance indicators under the common agenda CI condition. First, there were significant variations in the participants' understanding of the problem The Partnership was addressing, the initiative's overall purpose, and its goals. In addition, participants could not consistently articulate the specific strategies and activities that supported the initiative.

Recommendations for Further Implementation of a Common Agenda. Further implementation of the CI condition of establishing a common agenda may provide The Partnership with an aligned and coordinated system in which to operate and collaborate. Below are my recommendations for ways The Partnership can deepen its implementation of the CI condition of a common agenda.

Recommendation 1: Include Diverse Voices. The Partnership should continue to include voices from multiple sectors and position levels. As the CI literature states, the power of diverse perspectives, rich dialog, and innovative solutions occurs when diverse stakeholders come together around a common cause (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Weaver, 2019). Arbor Glen School District, Brook Heights Community College, and Remarkable Outcomes each hold expertise on college access and success. However, a single stakeholder cannot solve the complex social problem of increasing matriculation rates in isolation. In addition to the existing organizations and individuals, The Partnership should remain open to adding other sectors and stakeholders who can meaningfully contribute. The Partnership should consider how other school districts, community

agencies, or specific individuals such as parents and teachers might enrich the collaborative work.

Recommendation 2: Leverage Student Voice. The interview and document analysis data showed that The Partnership's decision to add a student member was well received, but there is still work to do to leverage student voice. Siaca Curry and colleagues (2019) and Weaver (2019) state that it is critical to include the voice of persons with the lived experience the initiative is working to support. The Partnership should revisit the strategies to engage student members and determine the best ways to garner their valuable input to help define the problem and develop meaningful and effective solutions.

Recommendation 3: Articulate the Program History, Problem, Purpose, and Goals. I recommend that The Partnership collaboratively create a formal document for both internal and external audiences that articulates the history of The Partnership, the specific concerns The Partnership is working to address, an official purpose statement, and the specific goals of the initiative. The CI literature explains the critical nature of ensuring that all stakeholders agree to and are aware of the problem they are trying to address and the vision they hold for their community (Anthony et al., 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Lane, 2014). Documenting the program history, problem statement, purpose, and goals brings each organization and individual into agreement and builds a common commitment. It also supports new members to The Partnership ensuring they understand The Partnership's background and focus.

Shared Metrics

Discussion of Results. I determined that The Partnership partially implemented the second CI condition of establishing shared metrics with no evidence of The Partnership fully implementing any of the CI performance indicators. Evidence showed that participants could not identify common and agreed-upon outcomes to measure progress toward the initiative's goals, nor was data available to The Partnership in a timely manner. In addition, although participants believed The Partnership used data to make decisions, there was insufficient evidence to indicate that The Partnership consistently used agreed-upon data sources to make decisions.

Recommendations for Further Implementation of Shared Metrics. Further implementation of the CI condition of establishing shared metrics provides an important structure for The Partnership to measure progress toward achieving its goals. Below are my recommendations for ways The Partnership can deepen its implementation of the CI condition of shared metrics.

Recommendation 4: Develop Systems to Measure Progress. I recommend The Partnership collaboratively develop a common set of indicators to measure its progress toward achieving its goals. The CI literature states the important nature of these indicators as they ensure alignment of goals and strategies and let stakeholders know what is working and what is not (Cabaj, 2014; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Kramer et al., 2009; Preskill et al., 2014). In addition to developing the indicators, I recommend The Partnership identify the specific data collection methods, the organization/individual responsible for providing the data, and the timeframe in which the data will be collected

and reported to The Partnership. These systems will ensure alignment of efforts and support accountability.

Recommendation 5: Use Data for Decision-Making. The Partnership should utilize the progress indicator data for evidence-based decision-making. Preskill and colleagues (2014) state the importance of partners regularly analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing data in order to refine their plans and action steps and inform their practices. All data collected within The Partnership should be used for organizational learning and continuous improvement.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Discussion of Results. I determined that The Partnership partially implemented the third CI condition of developing mutually reinforcing activities and fully implemented two CI performance indicators for this condition. I identified evidence that The Partnership developed programming to address gaps in services to students. The Partnership was responsive to member feedback and data that indicated a new programming need. There was also evidence that each organization within The Partnership allocated human and financial resources to support the initiative. Despite losing grant funding, members rallied around their belief in the work and created a new financial model to sustain the initiative.

I concluded that The Partnership partially implemented two CI performance indicators under the mutually reinforcing activities CI condition. I determined there was a general understanding of the purpose of the work, but a specific plan of action to guide the work of The Partnership was not evident. I also identified that participants were

unclear if there was a duplication of efforts because they were unsure of each partner's role and activities within the initiative.

Recommendations for Further Implementation of Mutually Reinforcing Activities. Further implementation of the CI condition of establishing mutually reinforcing activities may assist The Partnership in its goal to increase college matriculation, persistence, and credential attainment. Below are my recommendations for ways The Partnership can deepen its implementation of the CI condition of mutually reinforcing activities.

Recommendation 6: Develop a Partnership Organization Chart. I recommend that The Partnership collaboratively develop an organization chart that identifies and describes each partner organization, the individual members' roles, and the responsibility each organization and member have for executing the goals of The Partnership. This organization chart should also reflect the allocation of resources (human and financial) each organization is contributing. Weaver (2019) states when multiple groups work on different aspects of the problem, it is critical to ensure all stakeholders understand what the other organizations are contributing toward the common agenda and the sustainability of the initiative.

Recommendation 7: Develop a Plan of Action. I recommend that The Partnership develop a plan of action that intentionally articulates and documents the strategies and activities used within the initiative. The plan of action will ensure alignment of the activities and that activities are not duplicated. While the plan of action helps communicate the strategies and activities to internal and external audiences,

Preskill and colleagues (2014) state that it's important to remain flexible and willing to adapt these strategies and actions as needed (Preskill et al., 2014). This plan of action will help The Partnership scale the activities that are working and identify new innovative strategies.

Continuous Communication

Discussion of Results. I determined that The Partnership partially implemented the fourth CI condition of continuous communication. There was partial evidence that The Partnership had communication structures in place, such as quarterly meetings to engage the members. However, the data reflected that some participants believed these meetings were unproductive. There was also concern that there was no official record-keeping for the meetings or The Partnership's progress as a whole. There was also partial evidence that The Partnership had communication systems for external stakeholders. Data reflected inconsistencies with understanding who external audiences were, and the communication structures and processes used to engage these stakeholders.

Recommendations for Further Implementation of Continuous Communication. Further implementation of the CI condition of establishing continuous communication systems may assist The Partnership in achieving its goals. Below are my recommendations for ways The Partnership can deepen the implementation of the CI condition of continuous communication.

Recommendation 8: Hold Regular Meetings. I recommend The Partnership continue hosting quarterly meetings where all organizations attend and actively discuss and advocate for the goals of the initiative. The Partnership should identify who is

responsible for developing clear meeting agendas, including individual organization reports and data sharing. The Partnership should identify who is responsible for taking meeting minutes that include clear follow-up tasks and expectations for future meetings.

Recommendation 9: Develop Annual Reports. To assist with communication and ensure internal and external stakeholders are aware of The Partnership's work, I recommend that The Partnership develop annual reports that include a summary of the year's activities, indicator data, progress toward goals, and highlights/celebrations from the year. Because of the additional focus on increasing student voice, I recommend that the annual report also include student success stories.

Recommendation 10: Develop an External Communication Plan. The Partnership should identify the external stakeholders they wish to communicate with and develop a plan to ensure information sharing via the appropriate channels. For example, if the external audience is students, The Partnership should develop a communication plan to ensure students receive the necessary information regarding activities and support services.

A Backbone Support Organization

Discussion of Results. I determined that The Partnership did not implement the fifth CI condition of a backbone support organization. The Partnership did not have a specific backbone organization at the helm of the initiative when it first started, nor at the time of this program evaluation, had The Partnership formally named a lead organization for the initiative. The Partnership is not able to have a traditional backbone organization that is external to the organizations within the initiative. As such, the data collected on

the CI performance indicators that measure the implementation of a backbone support organization did not accurately reflect the implementation of this CI condition.

Recommendations for Further Implementation of a Backbone Support Organization. Further implementation of the CI condition of establishing a backbone support role may provide The Partnership with a framework in which to operate. Below are recommendations for ways The Partnership can deepen its implementation of the CI condition of establishing a backbone support organization.

Recommendation 11: Explore the Backbone Role and Function. The Partnership should identify if a backbone role would benefit The Partnership's organizational and operational structure. If a backbone role is deemed appropriate, The Partnership should officially name and establish this responsibility for one of The Partnership's organizations. As the CI literature states, the backbone organization works in service of the group and is not focused on advancing their interests. The backbone role should ensure strategies and activities align with the initiative's goals, collect and review data, and monitor the progress of those goals. The backbone role should direct or align human and financial resources to ensure the sustainability of practices (Cabaj, 2014; (Preskill et al., 2014).

Revisiting Stewardship - Recommendation 12

As discussed in Chapter Two, Davis and colleagues (1997) defined a steward as someone "whose behavior is ordered such that pro-organizational, collectivist behaviors have higher utility than individualistic, self-serving behaviors" (p.24). More contemporary stewardship research centers on the long-term interests of a group and the

common good rather than personal goals and self-interest (Wellum, 2007; Hernandez, 2008; Bright & Goodwin, 2010). The interview findings certainly indicated that the organizations and individuals participating in The Partnership embraced these values. The members expressed their intrinsic motivation to center the needs of students and the community over any potential gain they or their organization may experience.

In addition to the 11 recommendations to further implement the five conditions of CI, I elevate the theme of stewardship that permeated the interview data. I found an ethos of stewardship in the creation of The Partnership as the three organizations joined together to address a common concern in their community. Stewardship was the underlying ideology that attracted members to the initiative in the first place, bonded them together as the initiative progressed, and bolstered their commitment to the work and the other organizations. Stewardship kept members engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic and allowed the members to develop a new financial model when grant funding was lost. The end of grant funding did not end the work of The Partnership. This ethos of stewardship allowed The Partnership to financially adapt and ensured the initiative survived. The evidence in this program evaluation allowed me to advance the definition of stewardship as a shared ethos focused on collective actions and contributions toward a common purpose greater than oneself.

My twelfth recommendation in this program evaluation is that The Partnership embrace the ethos of stewardship as part of the initiative's identity and core values. Let stewardship continue to serve as the moral compass in the decision-making and designing of activities. Let stewardship be the common thread that continues to tie the school

district, community college, and social enterprise together and builds trust and reciprocity. I recommend that The Partnership capitalize on this existing ethos of stewardship and leverage it as the driving force for innovation, accountability, and sustainability.

Summary of Recommendations

These 12 recommendations will be presented to The Partnership. It will be important for the members to collaboratively discuss and reflect on the recommendations together. Members will need to prioritize the recommendations based on feasibility and available resources. Whether The Partnership incorporates one or many of these 12 recommendations, the recommendations provide a deeper understanding of the systems and structures that support effective and collaborative community-based work. I provide a summary of the recommendations in Table 5.1 on page 155.

Table 5.1

Summary of Recommendations

CI Condition	Recommendation Number	Recommendation Action
Common Agenda	Recommendation 1	Include Diverse Voices
	Recommendation 2	Leverage Student Voice
	Recommendation 3	Articulate the Program History, Problem, Purpose, and Goals
Shared Metrics	Recommendation 4	Develop Systems to Measure Progress
	Recommendation 5	Use Data for Decision-Making
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Recommendation 6	Develop a Partnership Organization Chart
	Recommendation 7	Develop a Plan of Action
Continuous Communication	Recommendation 8	Hold Regular Meetings
	Recommendation 9	Develop Annual Reports
	Recommendation 10	Develop an External Communication Plan
Backbone Support Organization	Recommendation 11	Explore the Backbone Role and Function
Stewardship	Recommendation 12	Embrace the Ethos of Stewardship

These 12 recommendations allow The Partnership to consider how further implementation of the CI conditions and an ethos of stewardship may provide a formal, aligned, and coordinated system in which to operate and collaborate. The recommendations allow The Partnership to consider how CI might help to institutionalize the work and how stewardship might bolster the culture of the initiative. The recommendations offer The Partnership information that allows members to reflect on their current practices, celebrate their areas of strength, and consider ways they may need

to adapt. These recommendations facilitate organizational learning and strategic decision-making around the initiative's design and strategies.

Implications

Implications for The Partnership

This program evaluation has several implications for The Partnership's practices. First, this program evaluation provided The Partnership's members with detailed information on the CI model. Members will make interpretations and judgments on how CI aligns with the design and purpose of The Partnership. Members will reflect upon the current design of The Partnership and will need to consider how the further implementation of CI might support organization and operational decisions.

There are other implications for practice within The Partnership. The program evaluation serves as a mechanism for organizational learning. The Partnership can leverage this evaluation to create a culture of continuous improvement within the initiative. The continuous improvement cycle (American Society for Quality, 2023) supports organizations through the "plan, do, study, and act" phases of implementing a program. The Partnership has executed the "plan and do" phases through its college access activities. The results and findings of this program evaluation support the "study" phase of the cycle and allow members to explore the quantitative and qualitative results and reflect on their practices. This program evaluation's recommendations support the "act" phase and allow The Partnership to make informed decisions about how it might adapt. This program evaluation can demonstrate The Partnership's commitment to

continuous improvement and seeking opportunities to determine what is working and what is not.

Implications for College Access Programs

As discussed in Chapter Two, The Partnership is an example of a non-credit-based college access program. Whereas national credit-based college access programs, such as concurrent enrollment and Advanced Placement, and larger non-credit-based college access programs, such as AVID, I Have a Dream, and TRIO, are well-represented in the literature, research on local college access programs such as The Partnership are not as prevalent. This program evaluation contributes to that body of research and represents one of the over 540 college access programs in the United States (NACAC, 2023).

Several college access program evaluations focus on student outcomes such as college enrollment, financial aid allocations, and college completion rates. While these student outcomes are also important to The Partnership, this college access program evaluation was unique in that it focused on evaluating the organizational and operational structures of the program instead of student outcomes. This unique lens complements the existing research on college access principles and practices (as discussed in Chapter 2) while contributing a new perspective.

The program evaluation also contributes new research on college access programs that integrate the CI conditions. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are examples of CI college access programs; however, few CI program evaluations have been published. This program evaluation was one of the first.

The Partnership is a cross-sector college access program rather than a college access program operated by a single organization. The findings and results from this program evaluation provide insight and understanding into the cross-sector collaborative structure which may be helpful to other college access programs partnering with multiple organizations. The results and findings from this program are directly tied to the CI framework developed for this program evaluation consisting of the CI conditions and CI indicators. The CI framework may support and benefit other college access programs' organizational and operational practices such as program design, communication structures, and data tracking systems.

Finally, this program evaluation may have implications for college access state policies and grants. Because The Partnership was established under the COSI grant, state agencies may find the program evaluation results of interest. Recognizing that The Partnership sustained the work after state grant funding was lost, The Partnership may serve as a model for other cross-sector collaborations working to address low matriculation rates in their communities.

Implications for CI Theory and Research

Although Collective Impact is still in its infancy, there is a growing understanding of the power and promise that cross-sector collaborations hold for complex community change efforts. As previously mentioned in the literature review, few academic studies and program evaluations of CI college access programs have been published. This evaluation was one of the first to evaluate the CI conditions within a college access

program. As CI initiatives continue to emerge and evolve, this dissertation contributes to the body of research around CI, CI college access programs, and CI program evaluations.

This dissertation was not an evaluation of an initiative that had intentionally planned for and executed CI from day one of their program. Rather, this program evaluation adds to CI theory and research as a unique example of an existing community change initiative exploring how CI might bolster its organizational and operational structures. This evaluation illuminates current and past voices from The Partnership as members shared what was working and what was not working in their social change efforts, and in doing so, may inspire other initiatives to learn and improve.

Another implication of this program evaluation on CI research is the CI framework developed as part of the research design. The CI framework can serve as a useful formative evaluation tool for other initiatives engaged in the challenge of community change work. The CI framework may support a variety of stakeholders - those that are curious about CI and wish to learn more and those that seek to assess their implementation of CI conditions and indicators in order to improve their practices.

A final implication of this program evaluation on CI theory and research is the powerful theme of stewardship that became evident through the data analysis processes. Prior research on CI does not explicitly discuss stewardship; however, this program evaluation elevates the ethos of stewardship as the catalyst for initially bringing The Partnership together. Stewardship was a philosophical underpinning for its members' belief systems and practices. Stewardship maintained The Partnership's momentum and ensured sustainability during the COVID-19 pandemic years.

I concluded that the essential role of stewardship in collaborative change efforts is not unique to The Partnership and might also apply to other CI initiatives. Stewardship not only acts as the impetus for involvement and commitment to social change but also animates the CI conditions as the ideological driving force. I suggest that stewardship should be considered as the sixth condition of CI.

Suggestions for Future Research

The information gathered through this program evaluation might serve as a starting point for future research in three areas – further research within The Partnership, research around CI, and research around CI college access programs. In this section, I share my recommendations for further research in these areas.

Research within The Partnership

This developmental program evaluation focused on providing The Partnership with information on CI that could inform its organizational and operational model. I took a particular lens in evaluating how The Partnership implemented CI. There are several additional areas in which The Partnership could conduct further research.

First, the target population and participants for this program evaluation were those who led and managed the initiative. Further research for The Partnership could measure students' perceptions of the programming and its effectiveness through surveys, interviews, or focus groups. Understanding the lived experience of those the initiative serves will strengthen the program and make it more responsive to students' needs.

Second, this program evaluation focused on gathering formative data for learning and improvement. To complement this evaluation, The Partnership could conduct a

summative program evaluation in a few years to assess the changes in the initiative's CI implementation. This new summative evaluation could use a similar mixed methods research approach so that the methodologies between the two evaluations mirror one another.

Third, this program evaluation did not have a specific identity-based focus for the participants. Future research might incorporate a lens of feminism or critical race theory. Future research might explore how the identities and positionalities of The Partnership's members might affect the implementation of CI or the presence of stewardship.

Finally, The Partnership might conduct additional research to formally measure the longitudinal matriculation, retention, persistence, and credential completion results of the students who participated in the initiative. Tracking student outcomes over time could identify trends, areas of strength, and areas for growth in the activities used within the initiative. This type of longitudinal study could also assist The Partnership in assessing if it is meeting its overall goals.

Research on Collective Impact

Because research on CI is relatively new, there are several areas where future research is warranted. These suggestions for additional study might be accomplished through qualitative methods and quantitative surveys. Investigating these topics may lead to learning that could benefit all CI initiatives.

First, the implications of the COVID-19 global pandemic on The Partnership were significant. Further research on how CI initiatives adapted during the pandemic would be of interest. Case studies of CI initiatives might illuminate how CI strategies, activities,

and services adapted during this period. Did partners continue to participate, or did partner organizations change? How did the pandemic impact community priorities, funding models, and staffing? Did metrics shift during or after the pandemic shutdown?

A second area for future research is learning how successful CI initiatives intentionally design systems that promote sustainability over time. With staff turnover, how do successful CI initiatives build longevity independent of specific individuals? How do initiatives move from the implementation of the CI conditions to maintaining and institutionalizing the conditions?

A third area for investigation is digging further into the concept of stewardship within CI initiatives. Can current CI initiatives identify how stewardship played a role in forming the initiative? Does stewardship affect the stakeholders' motivation and engagement? What value might there be to adding stewardship to the current five-condition model?

Research on CI College Access Programs

As stated in Chapter Two, there are examples of CI college access programs. However, there are few published program evaluations. Additional program evaluations, whether qualitative or quantitative, are needed to understand how the CI approach supports successful post-secondary outcomes for students.

Further research might focus on comparing CI college access programs with programs managed by single organizations. A quantitative study could investigate how student outcomes, such as college admissions, postsecondary enrollment, retention, persistence, and credential completion, compare between the two types of programs.

Qualitative studies could explore whether a CI model is more effective at sustaining the initiative than those initiatives that do not use cross-sector collaboration.

Evaluation Conclusion

The COVID-19 global pandemic directly impacted The Partnership and its efforts to increase college matriculation, persistence, retention, and credential completion in its community. The loss of grant funding, changes in data reporting systems and the delivery method of its services to students, and significant staff turnover caused The Partnership's organizational structure, measurement systems, activities, and purpose to become less formalized and defined. While the members are still committed, The Partnership needs an aligned and coordinated framework in which to operate and collaborate in order to move the work forward.

I identified Collective Impact as a potential framework for The Partnership to operate, evolve, and sustain the work. Although not explicitly designed to be a CI initiative, The Partnership exhibited similarities to CI initiatives because it serves as a cross-sector community collaboration focused on solving a critical issue within the community. I conducted this program evaluation to explore the extent and ways in which The Partnership had already implemented CI and to offer recommendations for further implementation of the CI conditions.

The goal of this developmental program evaluation (Patton, 2010) was for the results to support learning, adaptation, and innovation. This program evaluation produced results indicating that The Partnership had partially implemented four of the five CI conditions and had yet to implement the fifth CI condition. These results, in turn,

generated 12 recommendations that facilitated reflection on The Partnership's current practices and informed decision-making to determine how CI and stewardship might enrich and enhance the college access program.

The evaluation results may drive change and help The Partnership move the needle in addressing the complex problem of increasing matriculation rates in the community. At a minimum, the results provide The Partnership with a deeper understanding of the systems and structures that support collaborative community-based work. At best, the results reinforce the ethos of stewardship that not only served as the catalyst for bringing The Partnership together in the first place but can serve as the fuel to maintain momentum and ensure sustainability. If capitalized upon, the program evaluation results provide The Partnership with an organizational and operational framework that can be leveraged to execute the initiative's critical college access purpose and scale efforts to serve Arbor Glen's students and improve postsecondary outcomes in the community.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

SUBJECT: Invitation to participate in a program evaluation of [redacted]

Dear [NAME]:

My name is Diana Zakhem, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Denver. I am also the [redacted] where I lead several initiatives pertaining to college and career readiness.

My doctoral dissertation is a program evaluation of the [redacted] initiative with [redacted]. My research project looks at the Collective Impact structures and practices used within [redacted].

I am inviting you to participate in this study. As someone who has participated in the [redacted] work, your opinions, experiences, and ideas are very important to this study. Data collected through this program evaluation will be used to inform future practices within the [redacted] initiative.

Participation will entail the completion of a short online survey and a 60-minute interview which will occur via Zoom. I understand how valuable your time is and that you are incredibly busy. I am grateful for your consideration of this request.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to complete a program evaluation of the [redacted] initiative, specifically exploring the Collective Impact structures and practices used within the initiative. The results from this research will be used to complete my doctoral research dissertation, and data will be shared with program leaders to inform practice.

RISKS & BENEFITS: I do not foresee any harm to participants. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. All audio files and transcriptions will be encrypted and password protected. Additionally, participant information will be anonymized, and the participating organizations will not be identified to further protect the identity of those participating.

You will not benefit directly from participating in this study; however, a potential benefit is the opportunity to reflect on the work of [redacted] and its efficacy. You will receive a $10 gift card at the conclusion of the interview as a token of appreciation for participating in this research project.

REPORT OF FINDINGS: When I am finished with this study, I will include findings and analysis in a final program evaluation report that will be shared with [redacted] stakeholders. Should any future presentations or publications come from this

study, your name or that of your institution will not be included and [redacted] will not be named.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. If you agree to participate and become uncomfortable at any point during the survey or interview, you are welcome to stop. You can also skip any of the questions you do not want to answer.

QUESTIONS: You can ask questions now or whenever you wish. If you want to, you may call or email me at [redacted]. If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researcher.

If you are willing to participate in this program evaluation, please click HERE to begin the survey. Should you indicate in the survey your willingness to participate in the interview, I will follow up with you to schedule a time at your convenience.

Diana Zakhem
EdD Candidate
University of Denver

APPENDIX B: METHODS MATRIX

Research Questions	Conditions of Collective Impact [2]	Collective Impact Indicators [1]	Mixed Methods Data Collection	Convergent Mixed Methods Data Analysis [3]
To what extent has The Partnership implemented CI? In what ways has The Partnership implemented CI? How might further implementation of the CI conditions support The Partnership's continued work and sustainability?	Create a common agenda for the initiative.	* Partners include a diverse set of voices and perspectives from multiple sectors to develop a common agenda. * Partners acquire a common understanding of the problem. * Partners commit to solving the problem using an adaptive approach with clearly articulated strategies and agreed up actions.	**Quantitative Data Collection:** **Survey:** measuring the participant's perception of the implementation level of the CI indicators. **Qualitative Data Collection:** **Interviews:** in-depth with semi-structured interview questions using predetermined interview protocols. **Document Review:** meeting agendas and notes, correspondence between partners, district performance framework, National Student Clearinghouse matriculation and persistence reports, grant application materials, grant end-of-year reports, program marketing materials, scholarship applications and grant budgets.	**Quantitative Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics of survey results **Qualitative Data Analysis:** Interview and Document Coding: The coding system will be based on the collective impact indicators and will allow me to identify recurring patterns and themes in the interviews and documents as well as sort out what is not meaningful to the study. **Integrated Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis:** Data merged and synthesized
	Identify and use shared metrics to measure, monitor and report progress.	* Partners agree to a common set of indicators and data collection methods that can provide timely evidence of progress toward (or lack of) the initiatives outcomes. * Partners use a transparent and collaborative process to design and manage the shared measurement system. * Partners have available to them a quality data set in a timely manner. * Partners use the data from the shared management system to make decisions.		
	Design mutually reinforcing activities for the initiative.	* An action plan clearly specifies the activities that different partners have committed to implementing. * Partners coordinate their activities to align with the plan of action. * Partners fill gaps and reduce duplication of efforts. * Partners allocate resources in support of the initiative.		
	Provide continuous communication that fosters trust between stakeholders and alignment of the work.	* Work groups (or other collaborative structures) have regular meetings. * Partners have structures and processes in place to engage all partners, keeping them informed and inspired. * Partners have structures and processes in place to engage external stakeholders, keeping them informed and inspired.		
	Provide a backbone organization to facilitate the work.	* Partners establish a backbone function. * The backbone and partners guide the initiative's vision and strategy. * The backbone and partners ensure alignment of activities and pursuit of new opportunities to achieve the goals. * The backbone and partners collect and use data for accountability, learning and improvement. * The backbone and partners help align sufficient funding to support the goals.		

1. Preskill, H., Parkhurst, M, & Splansky Juster, J. (2014). Guide to evaluating collective impact. Collective Impact Forum

2. Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review

3. Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). Designing and conducting mixed methods research. (3rd edition)

APPENDIX C: SURVEY

Appendix C: Survey

Collective Impact Practices within the [redacted]

You are being asked to participate in a doctoral dissertation research study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time.

This page contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully.

Study Purpose
The purpose of this study is to complete a program evaluation of [redacted], a collaborative initiative with [redacted]. This study specifically explores the Collective Impact structures and practices used within the initiative. The results from this research will be used to complete a doctoral research dissertation, and data will be shared with program leaders to inform practice.

Participants
You have been selected to participate in this study based on your experience with [redacted]. You are one of 18 individuals asked to participate.

Risks and Confidentiality
There are no expected risks to you as a result of participating in this study. Your responses on this survey are confidential, and the researcher will make all efforts to keep your information private. Although your name will be collected in the survey, your individual responses will only be used to identify trends and inform follow-up interview questions. Your name and your institution's name will not be used in any reports or publications that result from this research study. If you are quoted, the researcher will deidentify you and your organization. The data you provide will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected software.

Benefits
You will not benefit directly from participating in this study; however a potential benefit to participating is the opportunity to reflect on the work of [redacted] and its efficacy. Results from the study may be used to inform practice.

Procedures
The survey consists of 29 questions and should take you approximately 5-10 minutes. The final question will ask if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes, will occur via Zoom, and will be held at a time of mutual convenience. Those that choose to participate in the interview will receive a $10.00 gift card as a token of appreciation.

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to contact Diana Zakhem at [redacted] and [redacted] at any time.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you for supporting this doctoral research project and the program evaluation of the [redacted] initiative.

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

2. I am 18 years of age or older, and I agree to participate in this survey. *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No - If you select no, thank you for your time and consideration. You may end the survey here.

Participant Involvement with [redacted]

3. Your full name:

4. Please select the organization you most closely affiliate(d) with during your involvement with the [redacted] initiative.

Mark only one oval.

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

5. Are you currently participating in the [redacted] initiative.

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I am currently involved with the [redacted] initiative.
- No, I am no longer involved with the [redacted] initiative.

6. How long have you been/were you involved with the [redacted] initiative?

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5+ years

Please answer the following questions based on your experiences with the [redacted] work, implementation strategies, and organizational structures.

For participants who are not currently involved with the [redacted] initiative, answer the questions based on your past experience and recollections.

Terminology:
For the sake of brevity, [redacted] has been abbreviated to "[redacted]"

"Members" refers to the member organizations within the [redacted] initiative: [redacted]

Please use the scale below to represent your perceptions of the statements that follow:
Answer Scale:
1 - Strongly Disagree
2 - Somewhat Disagree
3 - Neutral
4 - Somewhat Agree
5 - Strongly Agree

7. [redacted] includes voices and perspectives from multiple sectors (For example, does the initiative include public, private, philanthropic, government, etc.)

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

8. [redacted] members ([redacted]) have a common understanding of the problem trying to be addressed.

Mark only one oval.

	Strong Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

9. [redacted] members agree on the goals of the initiative.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

10. [redacted] members use an adaptive/flexible approach to problem solving.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

11. [redacted] members have agreed upon clearly articulated strategies and actions.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

12. [redacted] members have an agreed upon common set of indicators to measure outcomes.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

13. [redacted] members have quality data available to them in a timely manner.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

14. [redacted] members use data to make decisions.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Agree

15. [redacted] members have developed and use a plan of action.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

16. [redacted] members coordinate their activities to align with the plan of action.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

17. [redacted] activities and strategies address gaps in programming/services.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	◯
2	◯
3	◯
4	◯
5	◯
	Strongly Agree

18. [redacted] activities reduce duplication of efforts between member organizations.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Agree

19. [redacted] members allocate resources (human and financial) in support of the initiative.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

20. [redacted] has structures and processes in place to engage INTERNAL member organizations ([redacted]), keeping them informed and inspired.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

21. [redacted] has structures and processes in place to engage EXTERNAL partners (the community, state departments, other agencies, etc.) keeping them informed and inspired.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

22. [redacted] has established a central management entity or a "backbone" organization that facilitates the work.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

23. The backbone organization guides the [redacted] vision and strategy in collaboration with all [redacted] members.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree	
1	◯
2	◯
3	◯
4	◯
5	◯
Strongly Agree	

24. The backbone organization works in collaboration with other [redacted] members to ensure alignment of activities and monitoring of progress.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

25. The backbone organization and other [redacted] members collect and use data for accountability, learning, and improvement.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
	Strongly Agree

26. The backbone organization and other [redacted] members help align funding to support the goals.

Mark only one oval.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	

27. Please add any thoughts or comments related to the survey questions.

Follow-up Interview

28. Are you willing to participate in an interview as part of this study?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

29. If you answered "yes," to which store would you prefer a $10.00 gift card as a token of appreciation?

Mark only one oval.

- Dunkin' Donuts
- Starbucks
- Target

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please share with me what drew you to the [redacted] work. What do you enjoy most?

2. Please share with me the goals of [redacted] as you understand them.

3. Tell me about the organizations involved in [redacted] and the contributions they make. Whose voices are missing from [redacted]?

4. What data have you seen used in [redacted]?

5. Tell me about the strategies and activities used in [redacted].

6. How has [redacted] used financial resources to achieve its goals?

7. Describe how communication occurs within [redacted]. What structures facilitate effective communication?

8. Who/what has provided the most important sources of support for this work?

9. From your perspective, what are two or three of [redacted] great successes?

10. What are some of the challenges, and how have they been addressed?

11. What advice do you have for other groups trying to do this work?

12. What else do you want to share?

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTION IN RESEARCH

Title of Research Study:	Collective Impact Practices Within A Pre-collegiate Program: A Program Evaluation
Principal Investigator:	Diana Zakhem, EdD Candidate University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Faculty Sponsor:	Cecilia Orphan, PhD. cecilia.orphan@du.edu
IRBNet Protocol #:	1701558-1

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any question during the interview for any reason without penalty or other benefits to which you are entitled. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision on whether or not to participate.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to complete a program evaluation of the [redacted] initiative, specifically exploring the collective impact structures and practices used within the initiative. The results from this research will be used to complete a doctoral research dissertation, and data will be shared with program leaders to inform practice.

Risks

There are no expected risks to you as a result of participating in this study. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications that result from this research study. If you are quoted, the researcher will be sure to protect your identity and that of your organization.

Benefits

You will not benefit directly from participating in this study; however, a potential benefit to participating is the opportunity to reflect on the work of [redacted] and its efficacy.

You will receive a $10 gift card at the conclusion of the interview as a token of appreciation for participating in this research project.

Procedures

If you consent to be part of this research study, you will be invited to participate in an interview that will take approximately 60 minutes of your time.

The interview will be audio/video recorded via Zoom to ensure accuracy in note-taking and data analysis. If you do not want to be audio/video recorded, please inform the researcher, and only hand-written notes will be taken during the interview.

The researcher will follow up with you throughout the writing of the report to ensure that your opinion, experiences, and ideas are accurately reflected. If you do not agree to quotes or other results arising from the study being included in the final report, even anonymously, please tell the researcher.

Confidentiality
The researcher will make all efforts to keep your information private. There will be no identifiable information used in this study. The data you provide will be encrypted and stored on password-protected software. Voices and/or images that will be recorded during the duration of this study will be accessed by the researcher for education purposes only. The researcher will destroy the original data once it has been transcribed and the study is completed.

Data Sharing
The results from this research will be used to complete a doctoral research dissertation. De-identified data from this study may be used for future presentation and or publication without additional consent. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or coded before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you or your organization from the shared information. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees that are responsible for protecting research participants.

Questions
If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact Diana Zakhem at [redacted] at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Denver's Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

The University of Denver Institutional Review Board has determined that this study is minimal risk and is exempt from full IRB oversight.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study. Please keep this form for your records.

At the beginning of the interview, I will ask for your verbal consent to participate in the study.

APPENDIX F: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

SUBJECT: Follow-up interview for [redacted] program evaluation

Dear [NAME]:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the follow-up interview for the program evaluation of [redacted]. The interview will be held via Zoom and should last about an hour.

Attached you will find an Informed Consent form for your review. You will also find a copy of the interview questions.

Zoom Link:
Meeting ID:
Passcode:

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at [redacted]. I look forward to talking with you on [ENTER DAY AND TIME].

Diana Zakhem
EdD Candidate
University of Denver

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL SCRIPT

"Hello, my name is Diana Zakhem, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Denver. I am working on my dissertation which is a program evaluation of [redacted]*. My research looks at the collective impact structures and practices used within the initiative. Your opinions, experiences, and ideas are very important in this study and may lead to improved practices within the* [redacted] *initiative."*

"In the email I sent you, I included Consent for Participation information. The information stated I will be recording our conversation so that I can ensure accuracy in note-taking for this study. Please know that my doctoral advisor Dr. Cecilia Orphan and I will be the only people who will have access to the information from today's conversation - both for the recording and the notes I will be taking. Additionally, I will destroy the recording after the interview has been transcribed and the research project is completed. Your name and the name of your organization will not be used in any reports or publications that may result from this research study. Do you have any concerns about me recording our interview or questions about the study?"
"*Great! Thank you for your cooperation! Once we start recording in just a moment, I will ask you for your verbal consent to participate in the study."*
"I sent you a copy of the interview questions ahead of time for your review. Would you like another copy to follow along?"

"It is my plan that this interview should take no longer than one hour. If at any time during our interview, you want to end the conversation, please feel free to do so. In order to respect your time commitment, I may need to interrupt our conversation if we are running short on time."

"Do you have any questions before we get started?"

"Are you ready for me to start recording?"

"Today is _____ and I'm interviewing _____. _____, are you over the age of 18 and do I have your verbal consent to participate in this study? Great. Thank you."

(Ask interview questions)

(Upon the conclusion of the interview)

"Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and experiences with [redacted]*. As a follow-up to this interview, I will send you a copy of the interview transcription so you can correct any inaccuracies. You will also receive a copy of the final program evaluation report at the end of the study.*

"As a token of my appreciation, please accept this $10.00 gift card to _____. I understand that you are incredibly busy, and I am grateful to you for taking the time to talk with me today."

"Do you have any final questions for me?"

APPENDIX H: MEMBER CHECKING EMAIL

SUBJECT: Interview Follow-up

Dear [NAME]:

I hope this email finds you well. I wanted to thank you again for allowing me to interview you this past spring regarding an evaluation of our [redacted] work. The interviews have been transcribed, and I have completed coding and analyzing all of the information. To ensure that my interpretation is accurate and that I represented your thoughts and opinions correctly, I am sharing two documents with you:

1. **Interview summary and interpretations:** This is a document where I gathered quotes from your interview and aligned them with the conditions of Collective Impact. The original interview questions were based on these same Collective Impact conditions, so your answers either validated that the condition was evident in the [redacted] work or identified that the condition was not present. Please note that I have removed filler words from your quotes such as "um," "uh," "like," and "you know" while trying to preserve the rhythm and authenticity of your voice. You can find this document linked HERE. It's pretty extensive, as you had so many rich moments in our discussion, but it is a bit easier to review than working through the full transcript.
2. **Full interview transcript:** You can find the full transcript from your interview linked HERE. Please note that these were transcribed using the Zoom transcription feature, so there may be errors. Any quotes taken from your interview have been cleaned up in the interview summary document and will be accurate in the final dissertation. There is no need to review the whole transcription, but I wanted you to have a copy for your personal records.

I appreciate you taking some time to review the Interview Summary, and of course, you are welcome to review the transcript as well. Should you have any concerns or corrections you'd like to see made, please email me and I'll make the appropriate revisions. I'm also happy to connect for a conversation if that is easier for you.

Please share any feedback by [INSERT DATE]. If I do not hear back from you, I will assume that you are satisfied with my interpretation.

Thanks again for participating in the interview process and for your support of my doctoral research.

Warmly,

Diana Zakhem
EdD Candidate
University of Denver

APPENDIX I: DATA USE AGREEMENT

This Data Use Agreement ("Agreement") is made and entered into by and between [redacted] (hereinafter "called the "*Data Provider*") and University of Denver, (hereinafter called the "*Data Receiver*").

This Agreement will become effective upon being signed by both parties and will remain effective through the June 30, 2022.

Definitions: For the purpose of this Agreement, "personal identifying information (PII)"/"identifying data" shall refer to any data elements that could potentially identify a member of the [redacted] initiative including but not limited to member name, employer, position, phone number, email address, mailing address.

Purpose: The purpose of data sharing under this Agreement is to carry out doctoral research conducted by Diana Zakhem ("Data Receiver Investigator") for a program evaluation of the [redacted] initiative.

Scope of Work: Data Provider agrees to allow the Data Receiver to use documents pertaining to [redacted] for program evaluation purposes.

Data: Documents used for program evaluation purposes include meeting agendas and notes, correspondence between partners, grant application materials, grant end-of-year reports excluding student-level data, and program and scholarship marketing materials. Student-level data will not be accessed or used for the program evaluation. Specific individual identifiers of [redacted] members will be removed and excluded from the review and analysis process in order to protect the identity of the participants. Organization names will be coded to ensure confidentiality.

Data Provider Obligations: The Data Provider maintains ownership of the data. The Data Receiver does not obtain any right, title or interest in any of the data furnished by the Data Provider.

Data Receiver Obligations/Other: The Data Receiver maintains a stewardship responsibility for the preservation and quality of the data. A data steward is responsible for the operational, technical, and informational management of the data.

a. Uses and disclosures as provided in this Agreement. Data Receiver may use and disclose the confidential information provided by the Data Provider only for the purposes described in this Agreement and only in a manner that does not violate local or federal privacy regulations. Only the Data Receiver and doctoral advising faculty from the University of Denver will have access to the data.

b. Nondisclosure Except as Provided in this Agreement. Data Receiver shall not use or further disclose the confidential data except as stated in this Agreement.

c. Safeguards. Data Receiver agrees to take appropriate administrative, technical and physical safeguards to protect the data from any unauthorized use or disclosure not

provided for in this Agreement. The Data Receiver agrees to abide by all federal regulations.

d. Reasonable Methods. Data Receiver agrees to use "reasonable methods" to ensure to the greatest extent practicable that Data Receiver and all parties accessing data protect the data from any unauthorized use or disclosure not provided for in this Agreement. Specifically, this means: 1. PII may only be used to carry out data analysis for doctoral research and program evaluation. 2. Data Receiver must protect PII from further disclosures or other uses, except as authorized by Data Provider. Approval to use PII for doctoral research and program evaluation does not confer approval to use it for another.

e. Confidentiality. Data Receiver agrees to protect data and information according to acceptable standards and no less rigorously then they protect their own confidential information. Identifiable level data will be not be reported or made public.

f. Reporting. Data Receiver shall report to Data Provider within 48 hours of Data Receiver becoming aware of any use or disclosure of the confidential information in violation of this Agreement or applicable law.

g. Public Release. No confidential information will be publicly released.

h. Data Retention/Destruction of Records at End of Activity. Records must be destroyed in a secure manner or returned to the Data Provider at the end of the work described in the Grant Agreement. However, any de-identified data may be retained for future use.

i. Proper Disposal Methods. In general, proper disposal methods may include, but are not limited to:

1. For PII in paper records, shredding, burning, pulping, or pulverizing the records so that PII is rendered essentially unreadable, indecipherable, and otherwise cannot be reconstructed.
2. For PII on electronic media, clearing (using software or hardware products to overwrite media with non-sensitive data), purging (degaussing or exposing the media to a strong magnetic field in order to disrupt the recorded magnetic domains), or destroying the media (disintegration, pulverization, melting, incinerating, or shredding).
3. Other methods of disposal may also be appropriate, depending on the circumstances. Organizations are encouraged to consider the steps that other data professionals are taking to protect student privacy in connection with record disposal.

j. Minimum Necessary. Data Receiver attests that the confidential information requested represents the minimum necessary information for the work as described in the Grant Agreement and that only relevant individuals will have access to the confidential information.

k. Publication/release requirements. If applicable, Data Receiver will notify Data Provider when a publication or presentation is available and provide a copy upon request.

l. Data Breach. In the event of a data breach, the Data Receiver will be responsible for contacting and informing any parties, including students, if and when required by law, which may have been affected by the security incident.

m. Non-Financial Understanding. This Agreement is a non-financial understanding between the Data Receiver and the Data Provider. No financial obligation by or on behalf of either of the parties is implied by a party's signature at the end of this Agreement.
n. Indemnity. The Data Receiver will be held harmless from all claims, liabilities, damages, or judgments involving a third party, including costs and attorney fees.

Data Provider Point of Contact/Data Custodian:

Date: 6/10/21
Printed Name: [redacted]
Title: [redacted]
Institution/Agency: [redacted]
Phone Number: [redacted]
Physical Address: [redacted]

Signed by Data Provider Designated Signatory:

Data Receiver:
Date: June 15, 2021
Printed Name: Jerry Mauck
Title: Executive Director, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Institution/Agency: University of Denver
Phone Number: 303-871-2121
Physical Address: 2601 E. Colorado Avenue, Denver, CO 80208

Signed by Data Receiver Designated Signatory:

Data Receiver Investigator:
Date: June 6, 2021
Printed Name: Diana Zakhem
Title: Doctoral Student and Principal Investigator
Institution/Agency: University of Denver
Phone Number: [redacted]
Physical Address: [redacted]
Signed by Data Receiver Investigator Signatory: