



A Community Backbone Organization's
THEORY OF CHANGE

Many voices can be heard echoed throughout this document.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed and especially those who gave of their time, talent and wisdom over the past few years as we developed this Theory of Change. We couldn't have done it without you!

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THEORY OF CHANGE

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Dear Reader

I'm so glad you are interested in learning more about the Connected Community Approach (CCA). This document, adapted from the original East Scarborough Storefront Theory of Change, provides an in depth look at the hypotheses and assumptions that underpin this innovative way of thinking about community work.

The Connected Community Approach (CCA) is a set of principles and practices for community development. CCA posits that by intentionally focusing on and strengthening social networks between and among people and organizations, a community backbone organization can be a catalyst that fosters improvement to the community's social fabric.

In CCA, the role of **a community backbone organization** is to leverage local assets, skills, aspirations, talents and resources from a wide range of actors in order that they can effectively mobilize to action.

This document demonstrates how a community backbone organization adds value to place based interventions and initiatives by strengthening social fabric. A Community Backbone Organization convenes, facilitates and shares knowledge across sectors in a neighbourhood context.

Our aim in creating this document is that it will inspire new insights into the way that we think about, invest in and support our most marginalized communities.

DEFINING SOCIAL FABRIC

Social fabric is a metaphor for how well community members (residents, business owners, organizations, civil servants etc.) interact amongst themselves. If you consider all the individual members as threads, the "social fabric" is made when those members interact, thus weaving the threads together. The tighter the weave (the more frequently and positively the members interact with each other), the stronger the fabric is; the looser the weave, the weaker the fabric, and the more likely to tear (have conflicts that pit one group against another), fray (lose members), develop loose threads and otherwise suffer.

While CCA itself is a new way of thinking about neighbourhoods, CCA was not created in a vacuum.

Originally pioneered by the East Scarborough Storefront in Toronto, Canada*, CCA was developed by hundreds of people and dozens of organizations. It was these innovative community builders and thinkers who conceived of, tested and iterated CCA. They drew on their own experience, grassroots wisdom from around the world and various relevant community development theories and practices including Asset Based Community Development, Systems Theory, Complexity Theory and Collective Impact.

*Unbeknownst to The Storefront, another version of "Connected Community Approach" was simultaneously being researched in England. Insights from this 5 year study by David Morris have been integrated into this document, lending a research lens to CCA.

At The Storefront, the Connected Community Approach evolved over a span of 15 years... and is evolving still. While CCA offers a framework and a way of thinking about place based systems change, it is neither a formula, nor will it look the same in any two communities. The true value of CCA is that it guides rather than instructs and it encourages each person and organization engaging with it to dig deeply into their own values and to approach each relationship with openness, curiosity and optimism.

The Centre for Connected Communities (C3) published this booklet with an aim to support others to engage in place based systems change through the principles and practices found in CCA.

I hope that you find this Theory of Change document useful and inspiring.



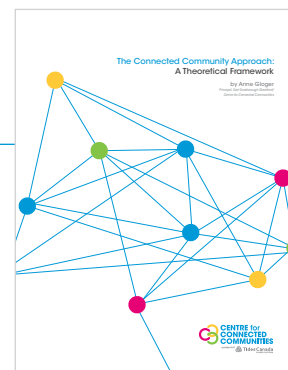
Anne Gloger
principal, Centre for Connected Communities

**Documents for further reading can be found at the
Centre for Connected Communities:
www.connectedcommunities.ca**

The Little Community That Could
chronicles the development and work of the
East Scarborough Storefront

CCA: What it is and Why it Matters
outlines the possibilities of CCA

CCA: a Theoretical Framework
describes how CCA builds on
community development theory and practice



Why Place

The Connected Community Approach provides a framework for complex community based change efforts like those described by Silberberg, Disbrow and Muessig in their 2013 article Places in the Making as:

“efforts to improve outcomes that focus on a defined geography; work comprehensively across multiple areas and at multiple levels; and value community building”

There is a growing body of research that supports “place” as one of the key lenses with which to design health equity, economic and social interventions.

The United Way Toronto compiled research evidence for place based work in their 2012 document Evidence Review of Place Based Approaches. This evidence suggests that:

- Integrating existing local services & coordinating gov’t policy with local goals will improve the efficiency of development.
- Building on the skills & assets of a community can enable people to more effectively deploy local resources & access external resources for community benefit.
- Place-based approaches can & do facilitate better outcomes in employment, income, health & education – but not independently of the wider social economy. To achieve full benefits, place-based approaches need to be coordinated with a people-based approach.
- Ensuring local institutions are strong will improve the likelihood of successful sustainable development (includes, local governments, nonprofits, quasi-autonomous NGOs).

The impact proposed in this theory of change is the creation of strong social fabric. The theory suggests that strong social fabric is a goal in and of itself.

Social fabric is a metaphor for how well community members (residents, business owners, civil servants etc) interact amongst themselves. If you consider all the individual members as threads, the “social fabric” is made when those members interact, thus weaving the threads together. The tighter the weave (the more frequently and positively the members interact with each other), the stronger the fabric is; the looser the weave, the weaker the fabric, and the more likely to tear (have conflicts that pit one group against another), fray (lose members), develop loose threads and otherwise suffer.

Weaving the threads of social fabric is a complex undertaking. Complexity theory offers a framework that is critical to the understanding of place-based work.

The idea of communities as Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) is a cornerstone of complexity theory. Patricia Auspos and Mark Cabaj highlight how communities behave as complex adaptive systems:

“Agents interact with each other in dynamic, evolving and unpredictable ways (biological, ecological, social; small to large scale; variety of domain-specific systems). The well-being of a place is shaped by characteristics of local CAS’s.”

The Connected Community Approach offers a practical approach to working in place that supports positive outcomes and helps players thrive in the complex environment of a community.

Why Collaboration

Collaboration has long been at the core of community change efforts. Ana Skinner sums it up in the Laidlaw Foundation's seminal work on Youth Led Organizing when she says:

"At the core of collaborative efforts are the people involved in and driving them. Being in trusting relationships is essential to taking collective actions"

There continues to be wide spread support for collaborative models, especially within the nonprofit/social service sector. As recently as 2015, the Ontario Non-profit Network undertook an analysis of the state of the non-profit (or voluntary) sector and concluded that:

"Non-profit organizations are finding that working with others often provides better experiences for community members & provides more organizational capacity to adapt during changing times – these alliances also strengthen the capacity of the sector to influence public policy & sector regulation"

Examples of more traditional approaches to collaboration often focus on service delivery, i.e. more effectively supporting people in need – which is, of course important, but should not be the focus of all our efforts.

Significantly, in analysing the role of community based collaborations, the Ontario Nonprofit Network, in its publication *Leadership in Changing Times*, discovered that:

"Historical approaches resulted in significant benefits for some residents/ neighbourhoods but did not transform distressed communities. The efforts to be comprehensive often create fragmentation & can produce an assortment of disconnected programmatic activities, with thinly spread resources. Anticipated synergies rarely occur."

CCA, then, combines what is good and valuable about traditional types of collaboration with a focus on place as a Complex Adaptive System



The Traditional Approach to Collaboration

Organizations start initiatives, and run independently of other sectors to create change with a single focus. Emphasis often on a single event or program designed to raise awareness, impart information or align services

EXAMPLES

Funder Collaboratives are groups of funders interested in supporting the same issue who pool their resources. Generally, participants do not engage stakeholders from other sectors.*

Resident groups collaborate to put on an event.

Social services organizations collaborate on a new program that draws on the expertise of each of the collaborators.

**From "Collective Impact" in The Stanford Social Innovation Review by John Kania & Mark Kramer*



An Integrated Approach

Organizations work directly with each other in specific capacities, usually with one sector playing the lead organizational role. Interventions are usually designed to create something new by working together. Initiatives are not often designed to change the collaborators themselves

EXAMPLES

Partnerships are formed between government and private sector organizations to deliver specific services or benefits.*

Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives are voluntary activities by stakeholders from different sectors around a common theme.*

Social Sector Networks are groups of individuals or organizations fluidly connected through purposeful relationships, whether formal or informal.*

**From "Collective Impact" in The Stanford Social Innovation Review by John Kania & Mark Kramer*

Collective Impact

Collaboration as a key approach to creating change has seen some new structures and innovations emerging in the relatively new framework known as Collective Impact. Collective Impact seeks to unite players from various sectors and groups to work through a complex array of activities all striving to achieve one measurable population level outcome (for example, reducing homelessness by 10% in a particular city or increasing literacy by 5% in a specific set of grade 9 classes).

CCA's theory of change borrows much of the innovative thinking behind Collective Impact. It is important to note that the Connected Community Approach and Collective Impact use some of the same approaches for quite different goals: Rather than focusing on one measurable outcome, as is the case with Collective Impact, the goal of CCA is to build strong social fabric: an approach that in and of itself is designed to improve wellbeing, but also a foundation upon which various domain specific strategies (including Collective Impact work) can flourish.

Collective Impact strategies seem to apply best to produce outcomes on a specific issue rather than more comprehensive efforts. (Auspos, P. & Cabaj, M. (September 2014). Complexity and Community Change)



A Collective Impact Approach

Organizations work with each other, but supported by a coordinated staff with a clear vision, mission, and set of guiding principles

- Common Agenda
- Shared Measurement Systems
- Mutually Reinforcing Activities
- Continuous Communication
- Backbone Support

EXAMPLE*

Collective Impact Initiatives are long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication, and are staffed by an independent backbone organization.

**From "Collective Impact" in The Stanford Social Innovation Review by John Kania & Mark Kramer*

Why CCA

To address 21st century problems we need 21st century solutions – new, intentionally designed civic infrastructure – one where fairness, justice, economic and educational opportunity prevail and where all people are engaged as stakeholders in civic and community life. (Patrick, S. & Brady, S. (August 2015). *Building an Intentional and Inclusive Civic Infrastructure.*)

CCA proposes that when we talk about all people, we are talking about the complex interplay of people who work, live and engage in efforts to improve their community. Thus, by people, we mean individuals who live in the community, people who participate in community based groups and associations, people who work in nonprofit/social sector organizations, civil employees, people who work in academic institutions and private business...they are “all people engaged as stakeholders in civic and community life”

It is becoming more and more evident that in order for a “place” or “neighbourhood” to have a positive influence on the people who live there, there needs to be an intentional focus placed on understanding this complex interplay of people:

One of the key findings of United Way Toronto’s 2012 evidence review holds that:

Multilayered challenges require multisectoral responses, integrating partnerships between funders, local institutions, community leaders & broader networks. – complex issues require complex responses.

The study goes on to say that:

Communities often already have CD (community development) objectives – having an **anchor** organization that can coordinate local services & community goals with funder priorities can have a huge impact on the success of a place-based approach. Often a coordinating organization is required to effectively mobilize all the different entities & individuals that get involved in CD

The value of a neighbourhood broker or intermediary is further supported by Stephen Patrick and Sheri Brady in their 2015 work *Building an Intentional and Inclusive Civic Infrastructure*:

we need to reinvent the concept & construct of intermediary organizations – those that build connections, marshal resources, and share knowledge. Blair & Kopell...call on intermediaries to bridge the differences between sectors, populations that the social sector must engage, and others who have the skill to move and collect knowledge and practice so that we exponentially grow the value of our efforts by their ready, adaptation and adoption.

Professor of Mental Health, Inclusion and Community, University of Central Lancashire, David Morris published a study in 2015, that provides an evidence base for why the social sector should think about the nature of interventions from a place based systems lens:

A challenge can be how the social investment sector can move beyond its sometimes narrow focus on particular objectives, and towards a model that provokes a broader community impact which builds individual & community resilience in a way that is led & defined by the communities affected.

He goes on to argue that

...investing in interventions to build & strengthen social networks will have 4 kinds of social value:

- A wellbeing dividend
- An economic dividend
- A citizenship dividend
- A capacity dividend

The research suggests that social connectedness may correlate more strongly with wellbeing than social or economic characteristics such as unemployment.

He concludes by agreeing with both the United Way Toronto and with Patrick & Brady about the need to place more emphasis on the role of intermediary, broker, anchor or network weavers:

A new way of working in public services: this may entail a re-shaping of public servant roles to include a greater emphasis on being weavers and enablers of social networks to support inclusion & wellbeing

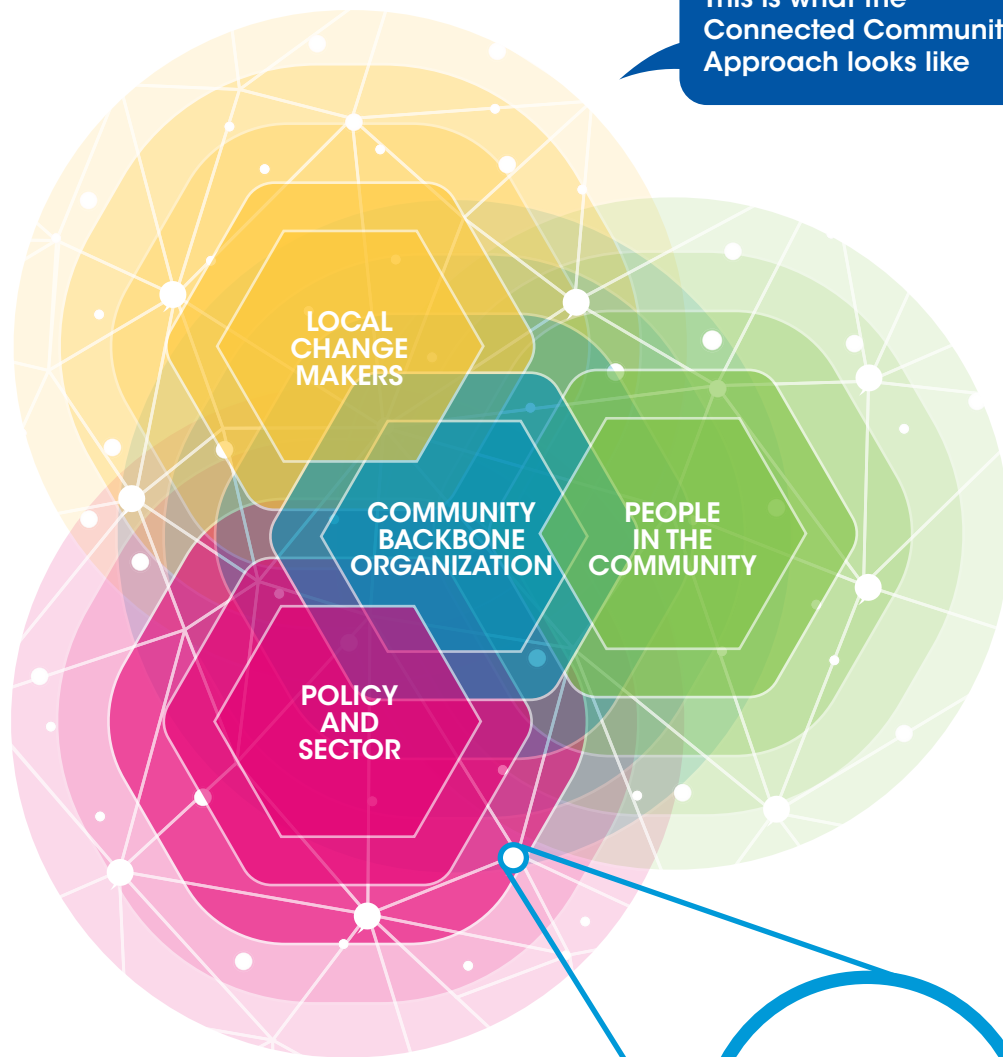
A role that the Connected Community Approach refers to as a Community Backbone Organization.

CCA looks different in each neighbourhood where it is applied. Most communities informally employ some aspects of CCA whether it be the way communication flows, the level of collaboration present, or the way residents engage with each other to affect change. What is important and unique about CCA is its intentionality and its inclusiveness. CCA does not exclude or seek to replace projects, programs or other approaches in a community, it rather builds on them, and does so, using the following foundational principles:

CCA Principles

- No community improvement activity acts in isolation; good community development builds on what has gone before and takes place within the current context: local, regional, national and global
- Working collaboratively is both a skill and an art. Working collaboratively for place-based change requires working on multiple levels and in various ways with a wide variety of people, including those who live, work and invest in a given community.
- Effective community work is meaningful to large numbers of people; it offers a sense of belonging, a sense of accomplishment, is inclusive and recognizes the worth, dignity and contribution of everyone
- Inclusive and meaningful community based processes focus on assets, build on strengths and take a solutions based approach: CCA focuses on what we have to build on, rather than what is wrong or lacking
- Local residents are key players in building strong communities and hold a great deal of the wisdom necessary for success
- Organizations, businesses and institutions located in a community receive benefits from and have responsibilities for that community: they, as much as the social sector, are active players in influencing a community's social fabric
- Learning is a constant and learning comes from a wide range of sources
- In pursuit of thriving, just and equitable communities, each community is unique; CCA celebrates each community developing their own priorities and acting on their own initiatives, using their communities' collective strengths and aspirations in unique and exciting ways.

This is what the
Connected Community
Approach looks like



BURSTS OF COLLABORATIVE ENERGY

People meet to develop new ideas and initiatives, supported by the guiding principles of the community backbone organization

As can be seen on the following pages, the CCA Theory of Change holds that

IF...

a Community Backbone Organization uses a values based approach and employs CCA principles

and

creates mechanisms to share knowledge, resources, and talents across groups

and

provides strategic facilitation, planning and logistics support

then...

people will work together to increase strength of the community's social fabric and thus the capacity of the community to support the people who live, work and play there...

Side-by-side Comparison of Collaborative Approaches to Create Change

Each of the approaches that we've outlined on the previous pages have differences that go beyond the organization of people and positions. Below, we show some side-by-side comparisons for each approach under four separate categories.

	TRADITIONAL	INTEGRATED
WHO AND WHY THEY COME TOGETHER	Multiple players within policy, change maker or resident groups	Policy, change maker and resident groups come together for specific programs
FACILITATION PROCESS	Facilitation happens within each separate group	One group (usually either policy, or local change maker) takes responsibility for facilitation for specific program
TYPES OF ASPIRATIONS	Specific independent interventions with direct outcomes	One group intervention with direct outcomes
ASSUMPTIONS	Change is made through specific, independent interventions (either at the policy or the neighbourhood level)	Change is complex and interventions need to be designed with and by multiple players

COLLECTIVE IMPACT	CONNECTED COMMUNITY APPROACH
Policy, change maker and resident groups come together to achieve a specific measurable outcome	Policy, local change maker and resident groups come together in a geographic area at multiple points and at multiple levels in order to improve the overall neighbourhood social fabric
A backbone organization has responsibility for overall facilitation across groups where they intersect in relationship to the aligned goals and outcome	A community backbone organization has responsibility for connecting players from across groups on an ongoing and regular basis on multiple issues, goals and outcomes
Multiple interventions by multiple players designed to culminate in one measurable outcome	Multiple interventions and systems put in place to improve the liveability of a neighbourhood on an ongoing basis
Change is complex and happens when we work both horizontally and vertically and relies on multiple, orchestrated interventions happening simultaneously and intentionally	Neighbourhoods are complex and can support change to greater or lesser extent depending on the strength of both horizontal and vertical connections. The role of a community backbone organization is to affect ongoing resilience as well as specific change interventions



CCA Theory of Change... The Storefront's example

EAST SCARBOROUGH STOREFRONT

The following pages illustrate the East Scarborough Storefront's Theory of Change...you may be able to use it in your community as is, or there may be aspects you wish to change to fit your specific context

When using the Connected Community Approach, we encourage each community to take this basic theory and dive more deeply into how it plays out in your specific context:

What are your values, what principles guide your work?

Who are your audiences...who is in your eco-system and how do you describe them in ways that make sense in your context?

What specific outcomes do you believe your strategic use of CCA will generate?

What kinds of mechanisms and facilitation strategies do you use to reach those outcomes?

Note: at the time of creation, The Storefront had a 13 year history as a Community Backbone Organization in Kingston Galloway Orton Park. The Storefront's proposed outcomes are wide ranging and ambitious. We have shaded the aspirational outcomes for each audience from dark to light...the darker the colour, the longer The Storefront has worked towards a specific outcome.

OUR IMPACT

People in KGO will have increased freedom, knowledge and opportunities to make meaningful choices concerning their own and their community's wellbeing

People and organizations inside and outside KGO will develop new ways of thinking about and working in communities

THE PROBLEM

WE ARE TRYING TO SOLVE:

People are often disconnected from the systems designed to support them

Organizations, interventions and systems are often disconnected from each other and from the people they are designed to support

Connected Community Approach

The Storefront works across boundaries so that people are connected to the systems that support them and those systems are better connected to each other and the people they support.

People and organizations are encouraged and supported to collaborate and co-create initiatives.

The Storefront facilitates interactions between and among three key audiences in order to amplify change:

- **People** in the Kingston Galloway/Orton Park neighbourhood (KGO) which includes people who live here (residents) or work here (businesses/entrepreneurs)
- **Local Change Makers** which include anyone and everyone intentionally working to make KGO a better place. This includes resident leaders, social service organizations, academics, designers, funders and corporate partners.
- **Policy and Sector Players:** The larger systems that are influenced by and influence The Storefront's work.

Using and learning from a Connected Community Approach, people and organizations in and outside the community can develop new ways of thinking about and working in communities.

The Storefront's Theory of Change

The Storefront has built upon the strengths of existing change models to create a dynamic environment with a spirit of collaboration.

When we interact, the following values and principles guide us

Values:

- Hope and Optimism
- Empathy
- Fairness, Integrity and transparency
- Enthusiasm and celebration
- Collective wisdom and diversity of thought and experience
- Mutual trust and respect

Principles:

- We are rooted in past learnings, grounded by today's context and inspired by future opportunities
- We put people and process before product
- We explore possibilities as they emerge
- We focus on people's strengths and aspirations
- We foster innovation that is meaningful and sustainable

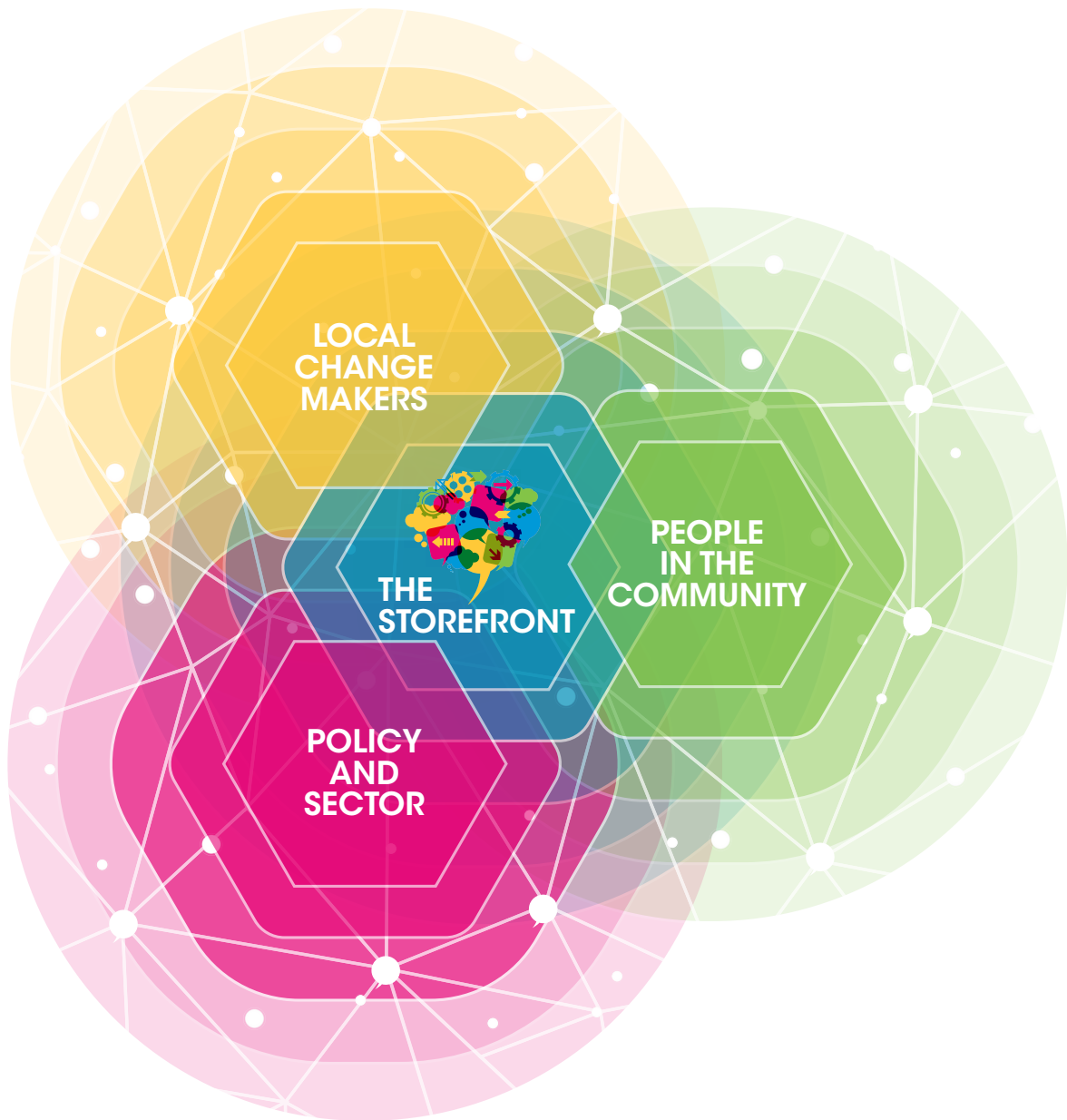


This symbol represents how we work with people using our principles and values based approach (above)

Much of The Storefront's success is due to our intentional use of these principles and our values in every relationship and every interaction.

This concept is represented throughout this document with the following image, where we:



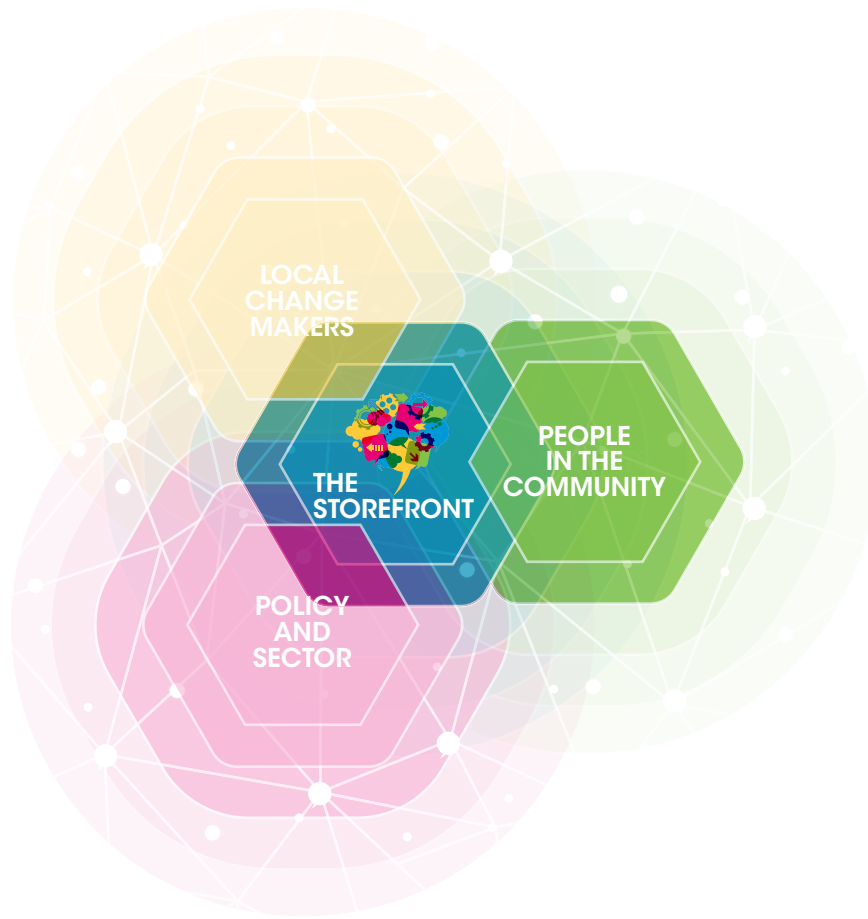


**The Storefront is a
Community Backbone Organization...
our role is:**

Convening
Catalyzing
Co-creating

Aligning
Facilitating
Building Capacity
Strengthening

Listening
Learning
Sharing



What we do and what gets better because of The Storefront's work with people in the community

We use our values and principles to connect people with each other:

So that new ideas can be generated, resources can be shared and more, better opportunities can be generated

We create a platform for social service agencies to work in the neighbourhood:

So that there is increased access to programs and services

We connect people in the local economic system:

So that there is increased participation in the local economy

We broker relationships between residents and academic and other learning institutions:

So that there is increased engagement in learning

We create platforms and capacity building for resident organizing:

So that there is increased civic participation

We align municipal, provincial and federal programs:

So that they make sense in a place based context for the people who use them

If we:

- Broker relationships between and among residents and supporters
- Create platforms for resident organizing
- Build capacity among residents
- Focus on our core values in all our work

and bring the Connected Community Approach to the relationship, it will result in:

- Learning opportunities
- Access to Programs and Services
- Economic opportunities
- Civic participation

Increased learning opportunities

Increased access to programs and Services

Increased economic opportunities

Increased civic participation



PERSON IN THE
COMMUNITY

WELCOME

This is how we believe
we affect change
for people in the
community



PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY STORIES



FROM A PARKING LOT TO A SPORTS COURT

Picture a parking lot, fenced off from the adjacent buildings. Picture too dozens of local youth “hanging out” and feeling alienated from their community.

As a Community Backbone Organization, The Storefront didn’t just give the kids a place to play, they engaged them in problem solving, planning and creating.

The Storefront connected more than 98 youth with architects and designers to re-imagine the parking lot as a community asset: it was the youth who designed Storefront courts.

More than that, the youth engaged with policy makers, urban planners and funders to help them to understand the potential of this space in their community.

And the role of local youth continues long after the finishing touches were made on Storefront Courts.

The Storefront contracts with local youth as stewards of the court, The Storefront facilitates training and mentorship to lead the activities that bring dozens of youth together to build community through play every day.

The youth are in leadership positions, making their community better by engaging with it.





YUMMY TUMMY'S

Yummy Tummy's breakfast club provides warm and nutritious breakfasts for children and youth who live in two subsidized housing apartments in the community. It was formed by four women who were determined to address the growing need for food access for families.

Over the course of developing this project and preparing to open, the women involved have met and overcome many barriers. They achieved this by keeping the needs of families in their neighbourhood in the forefront. "Agencies that are already providing food are overcapacity, and we knew lots of kids in our buildings were at risk of going hungry," says Paddy, project lead for Yummy Tummy's. "I don't want any kid to have problems concentrating in school because of hunger... it's about neighbours helping neighbours."

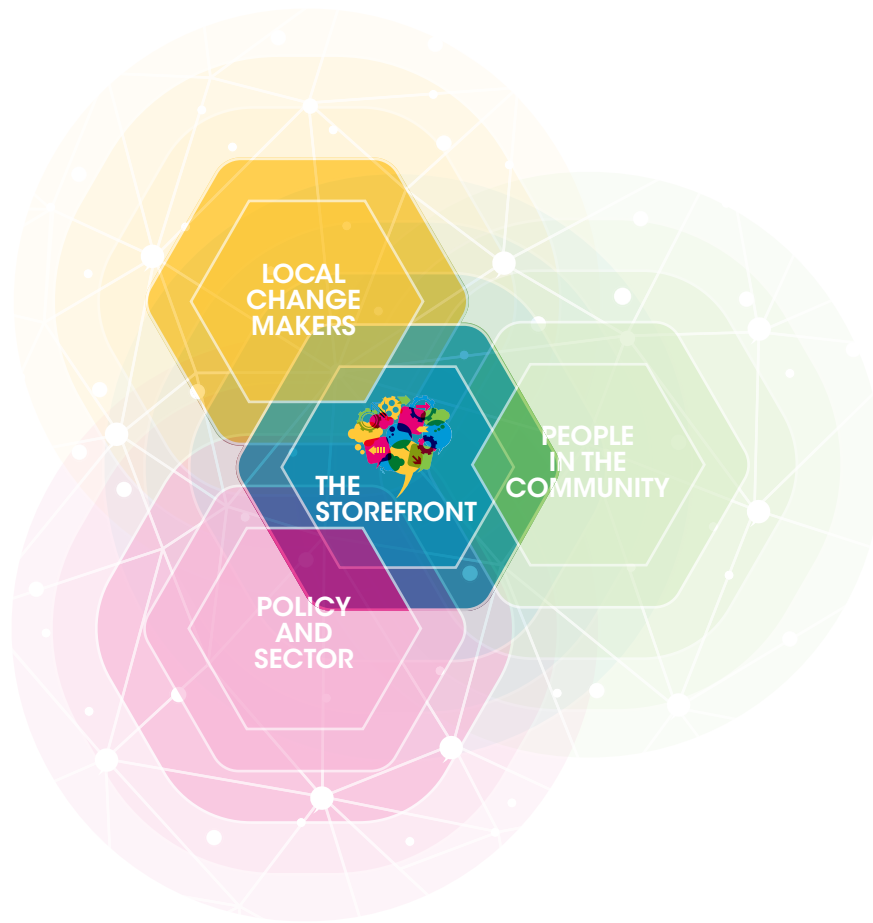
In two days, 50 children and youth joined the breakfast club. This is one of many emerging examples of how residents are taking a lead role in identifying and addressing needs in their community.

R.O.S.E. GARDEN

Roots of Scarborough East Community Garden opened its door in 2008. ROSE garden provides opportunities to the residents of Kingston-Galloway to grow fresh vegetables and share traditions between multicultural communities and generations. ROSE garden also encourages community members to create their own sustainable environment, and most importantly to build capacity and a sense of community.

Local community groups, church groups and community agencies came together to grow fresh produce for the local food bank. More than 30 plots have been allocated to community members living in the apartment buildings on Galloway, Kingston Road & Orton Park.

Benefits of ROSE garden extended far beyond original expectations. It became a natural habitat for community members to relax and enjoy, especially for those who live in the apartment buildings overlooking the garden!



What we do and what gets better because of The Storefront's work with local change-makers

We use our values and principles to connect people with each other:

So that new ideas can be generated, resources can be shared and more, better opportunities can be generated

We focus on our core values:

So that there is an increased sense of belonging and purpose

We build authentic relationships & connections among local change-makers with integrity:

So that there is increased alignment with one another,
Increased collaboration with one another, and
More innovative practice and projects

We provide backbone supports to local change efforts:

So that philanthropic and public funds are increasingly aligned with our work

We facilitate partners for the betterment of the community:

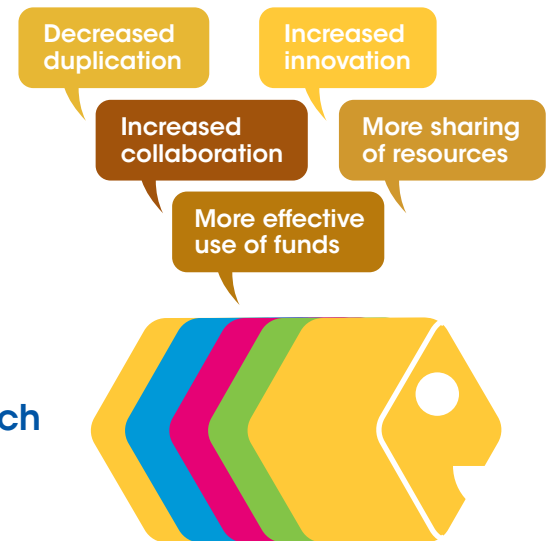
So that the effects and impact of resources are amplified

If we:

- Broker authentic relationships between and among local change makers and residents
- Offer community backbone support
- Facilitate links between partners
- Focus on our core values in all our work

and bring the Connected Community Approach to the relationship, it will result in:

- Decreased duplication
- Increased innovation
- Increased collaboration
- More sharing of resources
- More effective use of funds



This is how we think we affect change for anyone who wants to make the neighbourhood a better place

LOCAL CHANGE-MAKER STORIES



FROM A MALL TO A POLICE STATION

One week in 2005, while The Storefront was housed on the third floor of Morningside Mall, a number of things happened:

- 35 community partners showed up to deliver services to local residents
- youth tutored younger children to help them achieve academic success
- seniors gathered to go walking together, increasing their activity and making friends
- job seekers were able to use computers to work on resumes
- The Storefront found out that its funding was going to drastically reduced due to changes in government priorities
- The Storefront was informed that Morningside Mall was being torn down imminently and they needed to find another building to house their good work.

Quite a week, right?

Never discouraged by a challenge, the staff at The Storefront put the word out to community members and partners and two wonderful things happened:

- residents and partners organized the SOS or Save Our Storefront March and 300 community members carried signs and sang and chanted to draw attention to the importance of The Storefront
- funders came to the table to creatively problem-solve and figure out how they could use their resources to save The Storefront.

And the results were extraordinary:

- the SOS March garnered media attention in both print and television
- funders collaborated to ensure that services did not have to be decreased
- the City of Toronto came forward with a proposal for The Storefront to take over a disused police substation in the neighbourhood.

In 2006, we moved into that disused police station, which leads nicely into our next story.



FROM A POLICE STATION TO A COMMUNITY HUB

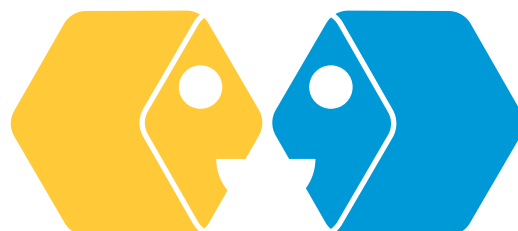
The first time Storefront staff stood in this building, we were introducing a group of local partners to the space. There was no electricity and no heat. It was the middle of winter and everyone wore coats, but 27 people showed up. The floors were concrete, and the walls were a weird grayish pink shade that can still be seen on the walls in the back hallway. Words that were used to describe the space were stark, institutional and depressing. Fast forward: through the work of our Community Design Initiative, in which local youth, mentored by architects, planners and designers, reimagined the space, and redeveloped it into what you see before you today: a thriving community hub in which local residents, community partners, staff and volunteers work together to make the neighbourhood great.

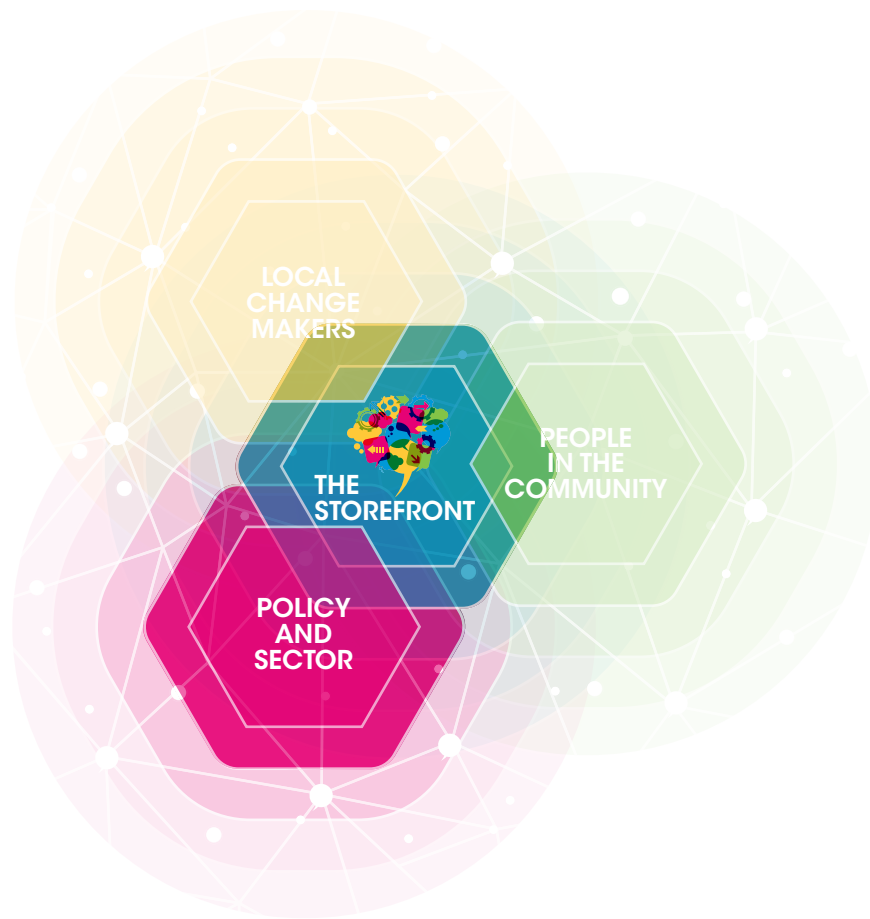
What this meant practically is that youth learned about engineering and architecture, developed their knowledge about functional design and made all practical decisions about the redevelopment of the space. They learned about things like load-bearing walls, foundational integrity and accessible design.

The way our founder tells the story "As long as the decisions were functionally sound and supportive of the work that gets done in the space, youth were given decision-making power."

As a Community Backbone Organization, The Storefront now uses this space as a "hub" to support the work of 35 agencies and 8 resident groups who bring programs, services and events to the community. Last year, local residents used this space to connect to services and supports more than 30,000 times.

The space contains a computer lab, an employment centre, a commercial grade kitchen that can be used by resident groups, partners and local entrepreneurs, meeting rooms and community offices.





What we do and what gets better because of The Storefront's work at the **systems/policy level**

We use our values and principles to connect people with each other:

So that new ideas can be generated, resources can be shared and more, better opportunities can be generated

We write about and teach our philosophy and practices:

So that there is adoption and adaptation of the values-based, neighbourhood eco-system model by other communities, organizations and institutions, and New mindsets and paradigm shifts occur in the sector

We help funders and donors to see our work from a different paradigm:

So that there is an increased number of champions for The Storefront's work/ way of working

We create platforms to pilot new ideas and solutions:

So that new research and policy initiatives are effectively tested and reflective of the people and the learnings generated in KGO. The Storefront brings relevant community voices to the conversation on research and policy making, resulting in the adoption of good practices in the sector.

We align programs and policies:

So that together they are more effective for the people who use them

If we:

- Reflect/learn/write/teach
- Help others see work from new paradigm
- Pilot opportunities
- Focus on our core values in all our work

and bring the Connected Community Approach to the relationship, it will result in:

- Integrated approaches to neighbourhood supports
- Grassroots influence on policy and practice in the sector
- Champions of model
- Research that engages community members
- Pilots successfully tested



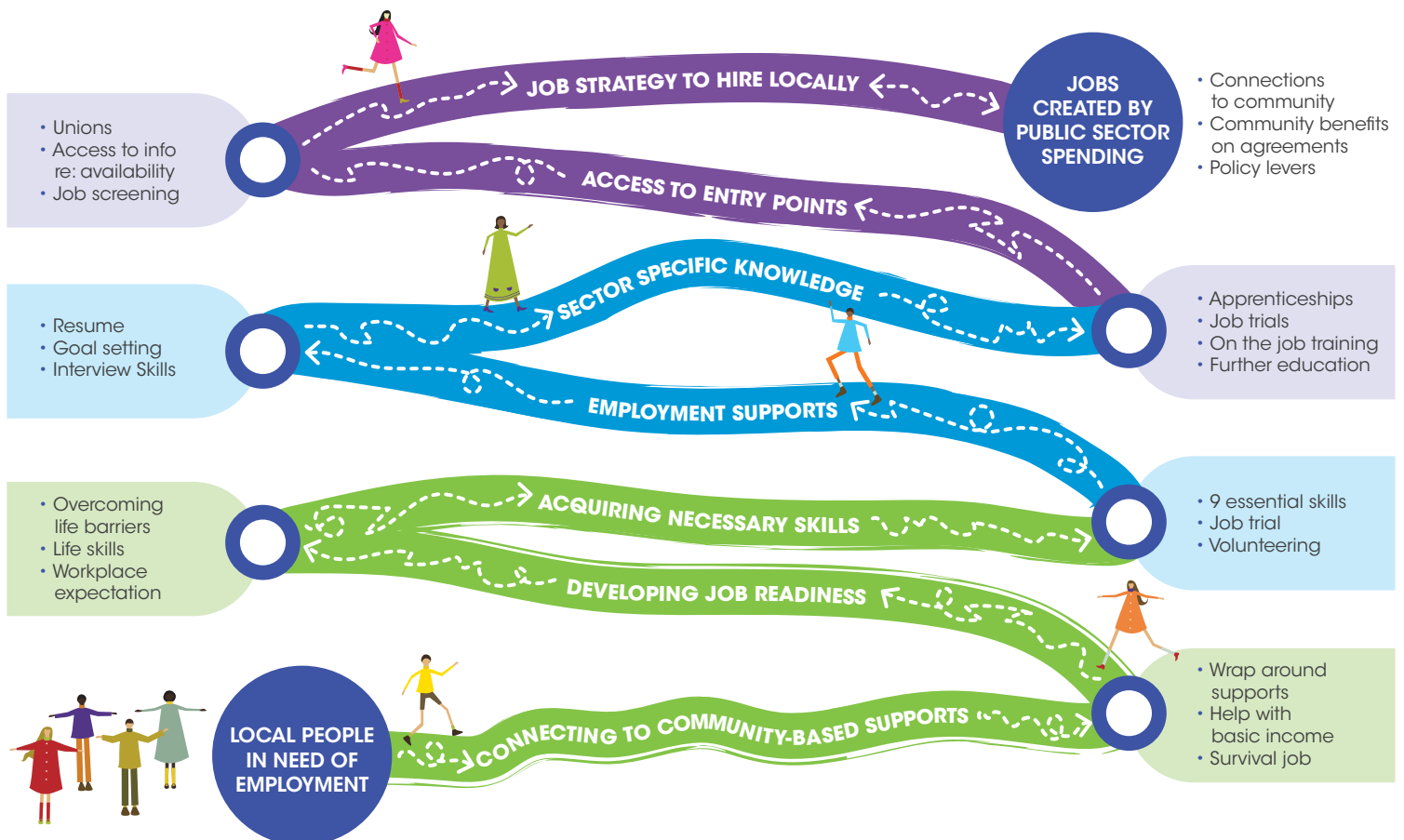
POLICY AND SECTOR STORY

EAST SCARBOROUGH WORKS: Developing a place-based workforce development strategy

In its role as a Community Backbone Organization, The Storefront works with all three audiences simultaneously. The following is an example from our Community Wealth Strategy, demonstrating how the Connected Community Approach is being used to create workforce development pathways between people living in poverty and public infrastructure and anchor institution spending.

The Issue in East Scarborough:

The geographic concentration of poverty



A Summary of Our Goals:

- Investment in Public Institutions and projects have direct and measurable economic benefit to the surrounding communities
- Local people are connected to local jobs as and when they are created
- People living in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas in East Scarborough have barrier free access to training, education, apprenticeships and supports that are directly applicable to the needs of the businesses and institutions creating local jobs
- Local businesses and institutions gain real value from hiring a trained and supported local workforce

Types of Jobs:

University of Toronto Scarborough Campus

- Construction Trade Apprenticeship jobs
- Maintenance and Operations jobs

Metrolinx Eglinton Crosstown

- Professional, Administration, Technical jobs
- Construction Apprenticeships

The Guild Inn

- Front of House, Back of House, Maintenance and Office

Working with Multiple Players in Interconnected Ways



People in the Community

Residents outreaching to communities

-
- Be connected to job opportunities with local anchor employers through their relationship with agencies
 - Connected to barrier free sector specific training and/or wrap around services



Local Change Makers

Employment Agencies
Employment Ontario supports and wage incentives
Training Agencies and Colleges
Skills Development Agencies
Wrap Around Supports

-
- Analyze local support systems
 - Share data
 - Cross referrals
 - Break down barriers within the system



Policy and Sector

Local institutions (e.g. University of Toronto Scarborough Campus)
Public infrastructure projects
Local Employers

-
- Community Benefit Agreements
 - We facilitate awareness of policy gaps
 - We unite various policy and government programs to work more collaboratively and effectively on the ground

How CCA Promotes Change and Wellbeing

CCA focuses on fostering social connectedness to strengthen social fabric.

Social connectedness is recognized to be an important component of wellbeing of both individuals and communities. A large body of research points to the value of connectedness for multiple consequential outcomes, ranging from employment (Granovetter, 1973), to health (Berkman & Syme, 1979; Holt-Lunstad & Birmingham, 2008), to instrumental support (Desmond, 2012; Small, 2010) to social cohesion at the community level (Sampson, 2012; Sampson et al. 1997). Scholars and practitioners interested in community development have placed great emphasis on the importance of social relationships for building secure, happy, and healthy communities (Auspos and Cabaj, 2014).

Bringing CCA to people in the community, local change makers, and policy and the sector players means building connections among the places, policies, programs and practices that enable us to define and address shared concerns, build community, and solve problems (policy, government and funder programs aligned and connected).

A community's social fabric is not the domain of the public, private or third sectors, rather, it is the place where these sectors intersect.

CCA promotes community connectedness both horizontally and vertically. In the context of CCA, horizontal alignment means supporting resident leadership, civic engagement while at the same time aligning aspirations, goals and mandates of organizations, institutions and other neighbourhood players so that change efforts are intentionally and strategically linked. In CCA, vertical alignment refers to the connection of the horizontal change efforts to broader systems, movements, policy development and funder priorities.

CCA works at multiple levels simultaneously. By working both horizontally and vertically, CCA seeks to not only empower individuals, but also to make changes in the structure of relationships. CCA focuses on transforming social relationships between individuals; between individuals and organizations/institutions/businesses; and between local players and larger scale systems.

Thus CCA works for and celebrates micro level change (a community festival, a garden, a self help group), weaves together micro change efforts to build stronger social fabric (gardens, linked to markets, businesses linked with local hiring) while at the same time, leveraging opportunities to connect local change efforts to broader systems change (local voices engaged in policy discussion and research).

Thinking about how a neighbourhood works at multiple levels simultaneously can be equated to eco-systems found in nature.

Tim Draimin in his 2013 Tamarack article identifies how, by supporting the place (i.e. neighbourhood) as an eco-system, we increase the impact of our investments and interventions

Understanding how elements within a system are connected allows you to identify places for intervention and transformation

He goes on to suggest that working in a neighbourhood eco-systems requires us to:

...support greater experimentation, expand rapid learning through open innovation platforms, greater transparency & more cross-sector collaboration, expand incubation support systems, target capacity-building, develop enabling conditions through funding instruments, regulation & legislation, grow networks to connect stakeholders & enable knowledge mobilization.

The Connected Community Approach combines a place-based approach to community development with a complexity theory/innovation lens and takes learning from a wide range of sources to propose a new theory of change: one that focuses on strengthening social fabric through connectedness.

The more people and organizations are connected in their social change efforts, the more potential there is for positive outcomes:

“Promoting social capital, social inclusion, collective efficacy & resiliency – combating social exclusion and building social capital can enhance collective efficacy & resiliency – are seen as predictors of positive neighbourhood outcomes.” (United Way Toronto, 2012)

How Do We Measure Change?

Strategy Development and Evaluation

In this section we turn our minds to how we will know we're being successful by measuring and learning along the way.

Traditional evaluation approaches help to answer questions such as, "Did it work?", "How do we improve it?". These approaches are useful in situations where there are standardized programs and models.

While the work of a community Backbone Organization can be evaluated using these methods, CCA's overarching approach needs to provide flexibility to answer questions such as, "What seems to work for this community, at this time, given these conditions?" and "What are we learning as we test new ways of working?"

Developmental evaluation is better suited to the complex work of community building, and helps to understand initiatives as they are being developed, to adapt and learn from them.

Developmental evaluation is a constant process that's embedded in how we work. It reviews both developed and emergent ideas to enhance our overall strategy for creating change.

This means being curious about our work, and regularly enquiring about successes, failures and unintended outcomes.

It also means there may be times when we include more traditional evaluation approaches, as we learn what is needed.

Summative Evaluation

A process that strives for the same result with the same steps and inputs (e.g. assembling a table)

Asks the question:
Did that work?



When the same inputs repeatedly provide a desired result, the initiative is determined a success and is replicated



When the same inputs produce an unexpected result, the initiative is determined a failure and is dismantled

Best suited for measuring established, mature or predictable activities

"We are sure from experience that doing X will produce Y impact. We will do 10 times more X and expect to see 10 times more Y impact. Come back in 6 months and evaluate to hold us accountable for what we said we'd do." From civicsystemslab.org

Formative Evaluation

A process that strives to find a variety of steps and inputs to reach the same result (e.g. making soup)

Asks the question:
What is working and
how do we improve it?



When a change in inputs provides the same desired result, the initiative is determined a success and is replicated



When a change in inputs provides an unexpected result, the initiative is determined a failure and is dismantled

Best suited for improving, enhancing or standardizing activities

"We've been doing X for a while now, and we're getting close to making Y impact. We'd like to make some alterations and we are sure that doing X + A will make Y impact. Come back in 3 months to check if we're made the right assumptions with these changes." From civicsystemslab.org

The Connected Community Approach uses an emergent framework to strengthen social fabric.

The East Scarborough Storefront defines emergence as
“where momentum meets opportunity”.

The role of the Community Backbone Organization involves paying attention where there is local momentum (enthusiasm, aspiration and mobilization) and where the opportunities are that might support that momentum (skill building opportunities, larger systems, funding, policy directions etc)

Working in emergence means that CCA relies heavily on continuous and strategic learning. A key tool for learning is evaluation. However, traditional evaluation methods are inadequate for this purpose.

Social fabric by its very nature is constantly changing. By working in emergence, CCA is a nimble approach, designed to be resilient and support the continual change inherent in grassroots community work.

The advent of Developmental Evaluation (DE) has been the foundation upon which CCA's evaluation framework has been built. Michael Quinn Paton, who developed DE explains why, we need new evaluation methods when working in complex systems (like neighbourhoods):

“Traditional evaluation approaches advocate clear, specific and measurable outcomes that are to be achieved through processes detailed in a linear logic model. Such traditional evaluation demands for upfront, preordained specificity that don't work under

conditions of high innovation, exploration, uncertainty, turbulence and emergence”

Others who work in emergence, support the idea that evaluation should reflect grassroots learning. 4th Quadrant Partners particularly stress the need for evaluation method specifically designed for emergent and complex systems:

“Localness is the core concept of emergent learning – the people who should participate are the ones doing the work & the framing question should be one they care about....(We) need to design evaluation in a way that informs rather than short-circuits emergent & adaptive strategy/action.” Practitioners must often work through a significant period of experimentation before they can develop baseline conditions for traditional evaluation

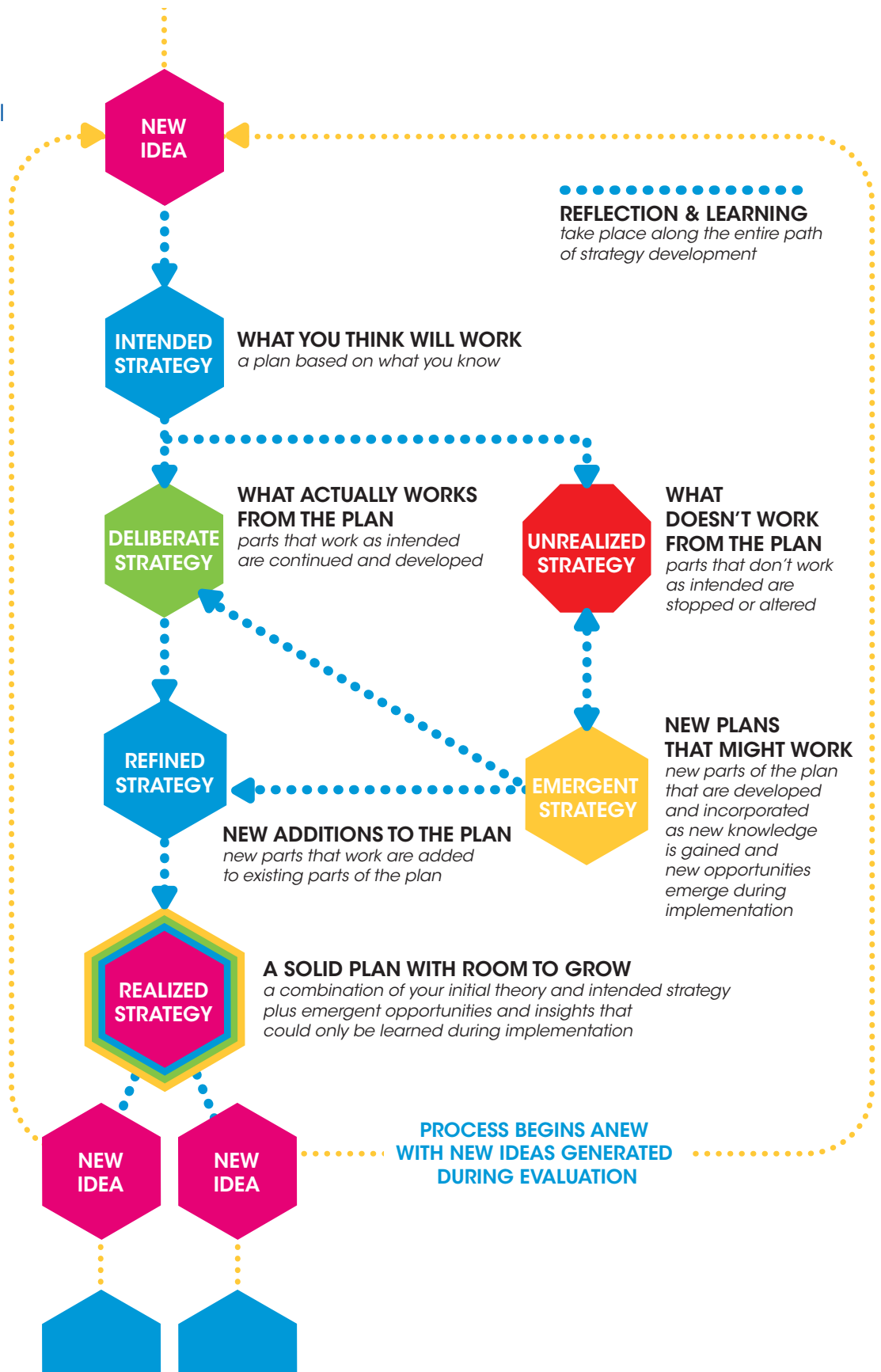
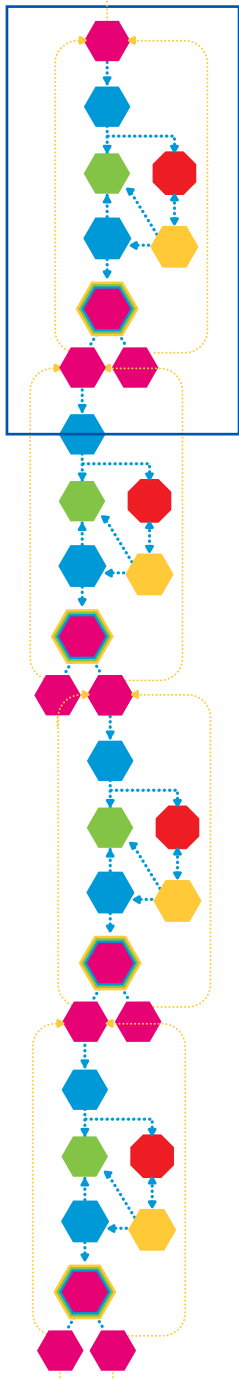
What Developmental Evaluation does is help community builders advance social change through learning. Developmental Evaluation, like the Connected Community Approach, needs to be customized to each context in order to be its most effective.

The following diagrams illustrate the Developmental Evaluation Framework found to be a useful method to evaluate emergent strategies designed using the Connected Community Approach

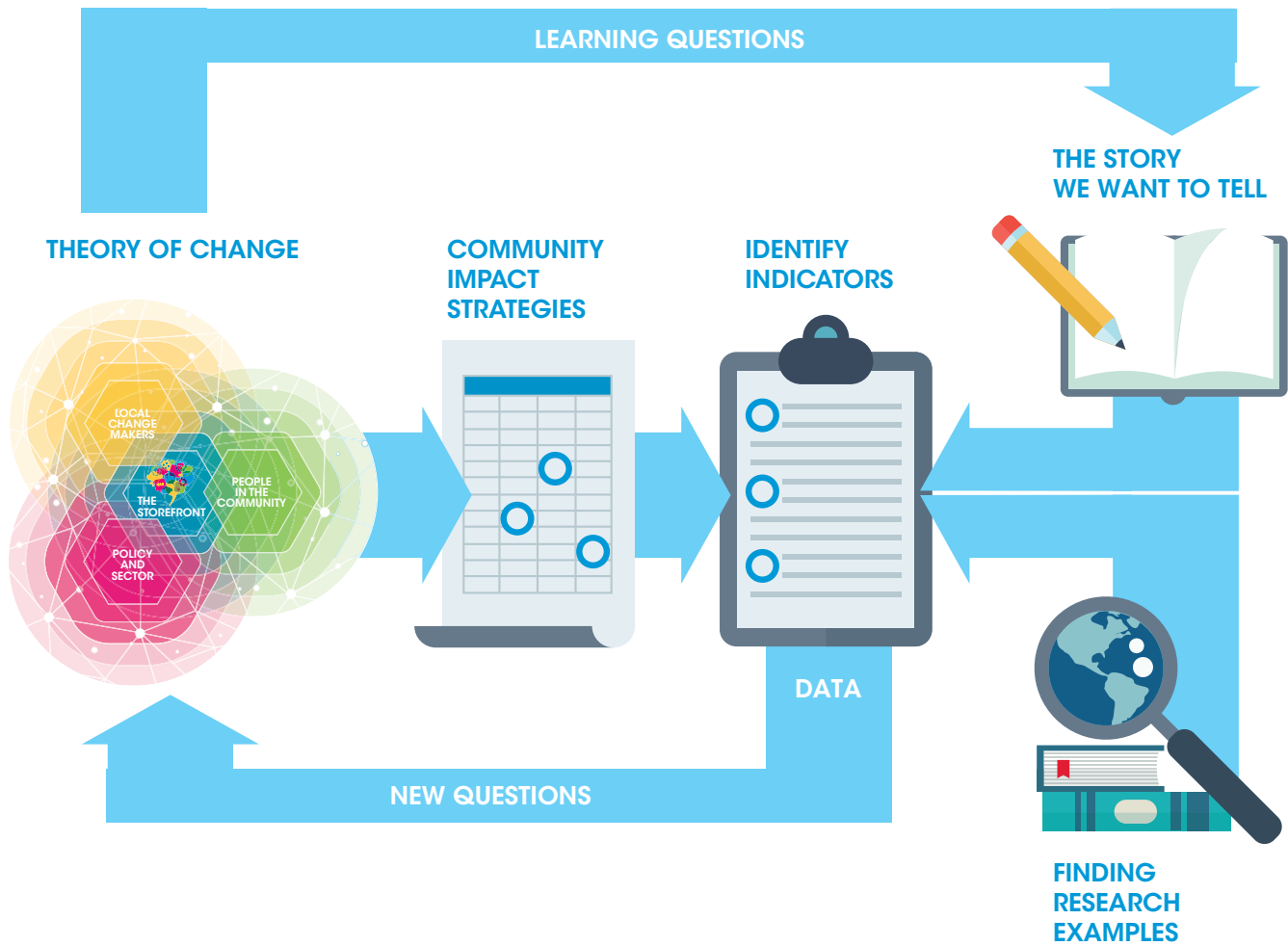
Many strategies & interventions never achieve the stability required by conventional assessment practices – as context/ actors shift, so do strategies – and asking practitioners to stick to rigidity (of traditional evaluation) discourages responsiveness & adaptability.

Using Evaluation to Design Emergent Strategy

This diagram is a close-up view of the overall iterative process (shown below)



Evaluation Methodology



The Storefront developed their evaluation framework using the following Developmental Evaluation methodology:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 Work collectively to first develop and then embed the theory of change as the foundation of all our work | 2 Use the theory of change to ask the key questions that will help us test the Theory of Change | 3 Establish what signs and signals will tell us how the theory is working over time (indicators) | 4 Determine what data we need to collect in order to fully understand the signs and signals or indication |
|---|--|---|--|

At the East Scarborough Storefront, this evaluation framework has led us to collect , analyse and learn from data in the following Community Impact Areas (note: each community using CCA will define its own impact areas based on their own community aspirations)

Community knowledge:

Increase information about and understanding of the forces that effect lives and aspirations

Community Wealth:

Increase economic wellbeing

Green Places and Spaces:

Increase capacity for the places in the community to be positive influences on wellbeing

Community Building Through Play:

Increase the capacity for people to get the most benefit from active/fun pursuits

Neighbours helping Neighbours:

Increase the capacity for residents to help each other

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**C3 offers courses and workshops
on the Connected Community Approach.**

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