



Southeastern Michigan Environmental Scan:

Developing a Community Information Exchange (CIE)™

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In Southeastern Michigan, almost 40 percent of households struggle to meet their basic needs like housing, food, and health care. Individual and community health and well-being are profoundly influenced by the availability, accessibility, and performance both of health care systems and other social resources such as housing, food, utilities, safety, and transportation.

Health and human service organizations struggle to effectively address health-related social needs due to a lack of collaboration and information-sharing at a systems level. To address this fragmentation, United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) has taken a leadership role in creating a Community Information Exchange (CIE).

A CIE has been defined as, “A community-led ecosystem comprised of multidisciplinary network partners who use a shared language, resource database, and integrated technology platforms to deliver enhanced community care planning.”





UWSEM has undertaken efforts to pilot CIE use-cases including the “Closing the Loop Together in Southeast Michigan” initiative, which includes partners in emergency food assistance and health care. This study builds upon UWSEM’s efforts by providing an in-depth understanding of the social service landscape in Southeastern Michigan.

Study Overview

Between November 2022 and February 2023, Public Policy Associates (PPA) conducted 37 interviews and 5 roundtable discussions with 74 people representing 52 health and human service organizations that operate in Southeastern Michigan. The purpose of these discussions was to inform the development of a CIE and assess the readiness and willingness of organizations to participate.

The findings and recommendations from this study align with a **Collective Impact (CI) framework**. A CI framework involves cross-sector coordination through an initiative-specific collaborative infrastructure that entails a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communications, and backbone support organizations—with an overarching focus on equity. A CIE’s key features are well aligned with the elements of a CI model

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KEY FINDINGS: Social Service Landscape

Key findings follow about the social service landscape and organizational practices related to collaboration, care coordination, data collection and sharing, and centering equity.

COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Organizations collaborate and coordinate the services they provide, but less often coordinate care for individuals.
- Capacity is a common barrier to collaboration.
- Trust is a major help—and lack of trust a major barrier—to collaboration.
- Most organizations have experience with partnership agreements and specifically data-sharing agreements.

“As a service provider...having those positive relationships and trust already built helps me feel comfortable sending [referring] my family [client] who I know is already nervous about systems and meeting new providers.

DATA COLLECTION, USE, AND SHARING

- Organizations focus data collection and sharing on individual client information and organization activity.
- Referrals, and related data sharing, are common but few organizations use a closed-loop referral system.
- Funder regulations and requirements significantly influence data-collection and data-sharing practices.
- Numerous technology systems are in use and organizations often use multiple systems and processes to collect, store, and share data.
- Having multiple data systems, legal regulations, and available resources are top data-sharing challenges.
- Many agencies are hesitant to share data due to distrust, risk, and uncertainty.



“...concerns that our community has about confidentiality... We’re trying to figure out what that balance is and how we can collect information with not overburdening them or making them feel unsafe in the process.”

CENTERING OF EQUITY

An intentional, proactive, and sustained focus on equity will be crucial to the success of a CIE effort based on Collective Impact principles. Key findings are that organizations are:

- Centering equity in their strategy, programming, and services.
- Gathering input from their constituencies and using it to make their work more effective and equitable.
- Prioritizing equity as a goal of their collaboration efforts.

KEY FINDINGS: CIE Interest and Impacts

Key findings on organizations’ perceptions of the impacts, benefits, reservations, and supports needed to participate in a CIE follow.

- Organizations perceive significant benefits of a CIE for individuals in need—mainly flowing from improvements in organization operations, such as:
 - Faster, more accurate referrals.
 - Greater organization awareness and dissemination of program and service resources.
 - Closer match of client need in context to available programs and services.
 - Improved resource allocation and service delivery at the collective, system level.
 - Other benefits from organizational learning.



- While usually acknowledging potential benefits, some agencies hedged their interest pending more information and assurances. Organizations would like:
 - Some assurance that a CIE’s value is commensurate with the level of effort.
 - Specific information about the anticipated structure, partners, and benefits of a CIE.
- Key reservations to participating in a CIE include concerns with capacity, data sharing, and technology systems.
- Training and technical assistance are the most prevalent anticipated support needs to implement a CIE. Financial support and staffing are other key needs.

“So, if we could just focus on what we’re all really good at, that would be helpful, instead of us spreading the resources thin and thinking we have to do everything.”

Recommendations

The following section includes recommendations for UWSEM to move forward with a CIE.

FOUNDATIONAL AND BACKBONE SUPPORT

Recommendation: Build and communicate a shared vision and shared language.

Findings from the study imply a degree of missing or incomplete knowledge about a CIE and how it could address shared challenges. Specifically, messaging about a CIE should focus on:

- How a CIE addresses challenges held in common by providers that work in different domains of need.
- What a CIE is and is not and what it does and does not do—emphasizing that a CIE involves more than data collection and sharing.
- Emphasizing the close alignment between an organization’s commitment to equity and their engagement in collaborative efforts, such as a CIE, to better serve people in need.
- Defining the terms and parameters of integrated technology, care coordination, and backbone support.
- Clarifying the commitment and role of UWSEM in a CIE
- How this CIE solution would be co-created based on a shared vision across partners.



Recommendation: Expediently investigate a backbone-support model.

UWSEM is well positioned to engage in the collaboration necessary to investigate and deliberate on the backbone-support model—including its structure, staffing, and funding—best suited for a CIE in Southeastern Michigan.

The Collective Impact framework encompasses at least six types of backbones that each has advantages and disadvantages depending on the context for the work. One key consideration is the implications on equity of the backbone model and role. The backbone should have a commitment to equity and addressing structural racism and be trusted in diverse communities.

NETWORK PARTNERS

A CIE is made up of partners committed to a collective approach of caring for their clients. Network partners may participate at tiered levels of involvement, such as accepting direct referrals or participating in integrated technology. Partners may also participate in the governance of a CIE, such as in an advisory group.

Recommendation: Engage organizations with the following characteristics:

- *Work across sectors, have positive views of a CIE, and have robust data practices.* This includes individual organizations that meet these characteristics, as well as existing networks that have shared technology and participate in care coordination or data sharing. These organizations may be particularly well suited to participate in a CIE, whether a “new” use-case or building on existing initiatives.
- *Could readily be incorporated into the existing Closing the Loop Together in Southeast Michigan initiative.* Characteristics that would indicate an organization may be readily incorporated into this initiative include being in the food or health sector, having relatively robust data practices, and having experience with the technology in use in the initiative.
- *Housing sector partners.* Engaging housing partners, such as through a working group, should be prioritized because: (1) there is a high level of need for housing support in the region, and (2) there are substantial barriers to them integrating technology to support broader data sharing. Start with engaging housing partners that have positive views of a CIE or are involved with existing initiatives aimed at cross-sector data sharing.

Recommended activities include:

- Seek funder input, assistance, and cooperation to ease and incentivize partner participation.
- Vet network partners prior to onboarding into a CIE.



TECHNOLOGY

Integrated technology and a resource database are two key features of a CIE. These features support continuous communication of partners and the integration of partner activities toward an end goal, i.e., mutually reinforcing activities—core components of a CI framework.

Recommendation: Maintain 2-1-1 and related resource directory with added information and functionality, such as:

- Current availability of services, e.g., “real-time” data on number of shelter beds available.
- Closed-loop referral functionality (such as UWSEM is pursuing as a pilot).
- Flag organizations best equipped to provide specialized services or serve specific populations, e.g., including information on languages spoken or the provision of gender affirming or trauma-informed care.

Recommended activities include:

- Engage other organizations that manage call centers or have relatively large referral networks to assess opportunities for collaboration on maintaining a resource database.
- Obtain feedback from organizations on awareness, use, and satisfaction, with UWSEM’s 2 1 1 and resource databases.

Recommendation: Aim to streamline and connect technology systems

We recommend that any technology system implemented as part of a CIE build up bridges to (at least partially) integrate and grow existing systems. Additionally, data safety and privacy must be of top concern. An integrated technology system will only be taken up if partners trust that their clients’ data is secure and only shared as permitted.



PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Representatives from the following organizations participated in the interviews or roundtables.

- Affirmations LGBTQ+ Community Center (Affirmations)
- Alliance for Housing
- Alternatives For Girls
- Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
- Birth Detroit
- Black Family Development, Inc. (BFDI)
- CARE of Southeastern Michigan
- Cass Community Social Services (CCSS)
- Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan (CCSEM)
- Chaldean Community Foundation
- City of Detroit, Office of Early Learning
- Coalition on Temporary Shelter (COTS)
- Community & Home Supports, Inc. (CHS)
- Community Health Corps, City of Detroit
- Community Housing Network (CHN)
- Corktown Health
- Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA)
- Detroit Association of Black Organizations (DABO)
- Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries (DRMM)
- Developing K.I.D.S.
- Fair Food Network (FFN)
- Family Assistance for Renaissance Men (FARM)
- Forgotten Harvest
- HAVEN
- Help Me Grow Michigan
- Homeless Action Network of Detroit (HAND)
- Jewish Family Service of Metropolitan Detroit (JFS Detroit)
- Kids' Health Connections (KHC)
- Lakeshore Legal Aid
- Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development, Inc. (LA SED)
- Leaders Advancing and Helping Communities (LAHC)
- Lighthouse
- Macomb Community Action, Macomb County
- Macomb Family Services, Inc.
- Matrix Human Services
- Michigan Hispanic Collaborative (MiHC)
- National Kidney Foundation of Michigan (NKFM)
- Neighborhood Service Organization (NSO)
- Oakland County Health Division
- Oakland Family Services
- Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA)
- Pope Francis Center
- River Rouge School District
- SER Metro-Detroit
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul Detroit
- Southwest Economic Solutions Corporation (SWES)
- Starfish Family Services
- Turning Point
- United Community Family Services (UCFS)
- Urban Neighborhood Initiatives
- Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency (Wayne Metro)
- Zaman International



1. Based on authors' calculation of data from 2021 of households below the federal poverty line and that are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties; data was accessed May 7, 2023 at <https://www.unitedforalice.org/Michigan>; See also ALICE in the Crosscurrents: Covid and Financial Hardship in Michigan (Lansing, MI: Michigan Association of United Ways, 2023), accessed May 4, 2023, <https://michiganassociationofunited.app.box.com/s/0djoyw0f1pissx258i025vsnhgqyai8sx>.
2. Nancy McCrohan and Anna Colby, Emerging Cross-Sector Solution for Health-Related Social Needs (Lansing, MI: Public Policy Associates, November 2020), accessed August 23, 2022, <https://publicpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Emerging-Cross-Sector-Solution-for-Health-Related-Social-Needs.pdf>; see also Karis Grounds, Beth Johnson, and Sheena Nahm McKinlay, Leveraging CIE for Public Health Needs and Response (CIE San Diego, March 2022), accessed August 22, 2022, <https://ciesandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Public-Health-Needs-and-Response-FINAL.pdf>.
3. Karis Grounds and Beth Johnson, Leveraging Community Information Exchanges (CIEs) for Equitable and Inclusive Data: A Vision for the Future (San Diego, CA: 2-11/CIE San Diego, October 2021), 7.
4. See John Kania, Junious Williams, Paul Schmitz, Sheri Brady, Mark Kramer, and Jennifer Splansky Juster, "Centering Equity in Collective Impact," *Stanford Innovation Review* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2022): 38-45, accessed August 23, 2022, [Centering Equity in Collective Impact \(ssir.org\)](https://centeringequity.org); see also Jewlya Lynn et al., When Collective Impact Has An Impact: A Cross-Site Study of 25 Collective Impact Initiatives (ORS Impact and Spark Policy Institute, 2018), accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.orsimpact.com/directory/ci-study-report.htm>. For an example of a recent literature review tracing the development of the CI framework, see Maria Rodrigues and Steve Fisher, *Collective Impact: A Literature Review* (Ninti One, December, 2019), accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.nintione.com.au/resources/nol/collective-impact-a-literature-review/>.
5. John Kania et al., "Centering Equity in Collective Impact."
6. For guidance, see Jessica Smart, *Collective Impact: Evidence and Implications for Practice* (Southbank, Victoria, Australia: Child Family Community Australia, CFCA paper no. 45, 2017); Kania et al., "Centering Equity"; "Collective Impact Principles of Practice: Putting Collective Impact into Action." Sheri Brady and Jennifer Splansky Juster, *Collective Impact Forum*, April 17, 2016, accessed February 9, 2023, <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/blogs/1301/collective-impact-principles-practice-putting-collective-impact-action>.
7. Fay Hanleybrown, John Kania, and Mark Kramer, "Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (online), January 26, 2012, accessed May 6, 2023, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work.
8. Jessica Smart, *Collective Impact*; Kania et al., "Centering Equity"; "Collective Impact Principles of Practice."