



## 2016 Nelson Chair Roundtable On Examining Neighborhood-Based Change

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Honorable David S. Nelson  
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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 9<sup>th</sup> annual [Nelson Chair Roundtable](#) on Examining Neighborhood-Based Change: Demonstrating Collective Impact in the [Boston Promise Initiative](#) was held April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. The sessions were moderated by Dr. Anderson J. Franklin, [Honorable David S. Nelson Professor of Psychology & Education](#) in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College and Director of the Roundtable, and Sheena Collier, the Boston Promise Initiative Director at [Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative](#).



Boston  
Promise  
Initiative

The main theme of this year's Roundtable was "Demonstrating Collective Impact." Collective impact is the philosophy that community change is the result of strategic collaboration among partnering organizations within the community. The mission of the

Roundtable was to discuss how Boston Promise Initiative (BPI) is demonstrating collective impact within the Dudley Village Campus (areas surrounding The Dudley Triangle in Roxbury and North Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston) —one of twelve federally-funded [Promise Neighborhoods](#). The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) acts as the lead agency for BPI and has existed for over 30 years as a resident-led, non-profit group.



Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

There are five main components to collective impact that, when used in conjunction, can produce powerful results for the community and its residents. The first element is *common agenda*, or the need for all participating community organizations to have a common vision or understanding of the problems and actions that result in solutions. Next, *shared measurement* involves the ongoing collection and sharing of data among community organizations, allowing for continued transparency. *Mutual reinforcing activities* refer to the frequent collaboration organizations have with each other to achieve a common goal. In addition, it underscores the need for coordinated activities. *Continuous communication* refers to the open communication

used across organizations. Finally, *backbone organization* emphasizes the approach of using a specific agency, such as DSNI, to coordinate activities within the community by the collective initiative. The Roundtable's mission was to elicit from agency representatives about how elements of collective impact were bringing forth positive change for the community.

Roundtable attendees included nearly 100 participants from 48 partner organizations, as well as stakeholders and skilled advisors from the Greater Boston area, Washington, D.C., San Diego County, California, and Founder of The Esimaje Foundation, an NGO located in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The format of the two-day Roundtable included presentations from four key initiatives within BPI, breakout group discussions, an update on national Promise Neighborhoods from the U.S. Department of Education, and a presentation from BPI. In addition, representatives from the [Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood](#) in San Diego County, California, spoke about how they similarly achieved collective impact through partnering with neighborhood organizations to achieve their unique goals. Having speakers from both the east and west coast demonstrated the similarities and differences between achieving collective impact within a Promise Neighborhood.

### DAY 1: April 6, 2016



The first day began with introductions from Dr. Anderson J. Franklin, Sheena Collier, Dr. Maureen Kenny, Dean of the Lynch School of Education, and Juan Leyton, Executive Director of DSNI. Following this, representatives from the [Boston Teacher Residency](#) spoke about how their AmeriCorps service program collaborates directly with DSNI to ensure teachers understand the community in which they are teaching. The [Dudley Promise Corps](#), a neighborhood-based teaching initiative serving schools within the Dudley neighborhood, presented on how they strive to ensure students are on track to thrive in college and in their careers.

Following this, speakers from [Project Hope](#) spoke about their role of tackling homelessness in the community. Specifically, they discussed how their mission was viewed through the lens of family while DSNI saw change through the lens of community, yet they partnered through a shared vision to create the [No Child Goes Homeless](#) initiative. Both agencies working together were able to merge these views to understand homelessness through multiple perspectives.



In the afternoon, [Fair Chance for Family Success](#) discussed their mission to focus on family economic stability—ensuring local development is truly benefiting neighborhood residents. They shared the success of supporting residents to strive for family goals and encouraging families to create a supportive network with other families. During the presentation, Chrisaldi Vasquez from the [Family Independence Initiative](#) highlighted the cycle of instability for families whose

income falls at or below the federal poverty line. Her graph showed the spread of families in the U.S. from poverty (\$24,000 per year) to the median household income of \$50,000 and above. In three years 96% of families in poverty will rise above the poverty line; however 30% will become poor again within 3 years. The reason is that families do not have a savings, and so they are one emergency away from poverty. This is the motivation behind their program to create economic stability for families. In addition, many opportunities to grow wealth are available to families with higher income, and so the goal is to bridge the gap for families on the rise.

The [School Readiness Roundtable](#) shared their role as a cross-sector group of early childhood partners, parents, and other stakeholders ensuring children are entering school ready to learn. The presenters included representatives from [Vital Village](#), [Thrive in 5](#), and [Countdown to Kindergarten](#) who have all partnered with BPI on this initiative. They provided examples of multiple initiatives that helped students succeed, including informing schools around trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive classrooms.



The first day ended with small group discussions about collective impact, moderated by Dr. Franklin and Sheena Collier. Participants were assigned to a particular group reflecting an element of collective impact and asked to discuss these elements with each other. Below are some key takeaways from each group:

- **Common Agenda:** When asked whether there are other potential stakeholder groups that should be engaged around the shared vision of BPI and its partners, the group suggested including local colleges and universities, further targeting fathers and school age youth, and employers/local business owners.
- **Shared Measurement Systems:** When asked how it could be used by partners to make decisions, the group responded that a shared measurement system would help to identify gaps in the cradle to career continuum and to ensure that the work is indeed improving lives.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** When asked what collaborative structures are needed to support mutually reinforcing activities, the group suggested adding staff in schools to support partnerships, ensuring that school leaders understand these partnerships, and building upon resident and family leadership.
- **Continuous Communication:** This group identified a number of challenges to continuous communication including lack of bandwidth and space on the program side, and the challenge of reaching invisible populations such as families with special needs, housing instability, or lack of access to technology and online resources. The group members also suggested that BPI increase communication of positive counter narratives and community strengths, and create a community calendar for all BPI partners.
- **Backbone Organization:** This group suggested that DSNI can strengthen its role as a backbone organization by allowing residents, partners, and youth take the lead, using data as a learning tool with partners, continuing to promote partnerships and “connecting the dots”, and holding partners accountable.

## DAY 2: April 7, 2016

The second day started with a presentation by Elson Nash, Team Lead for [Promise Neighborhoods](#), U.S. Department of Education. In his talk, he described the benefits and challenges of Promise Neighborhoods and shared a Swahili quotation with the audience: "The area covered by your life is not as important as what you can build on it." This quotation set the stage for the remainder of the day's speakers and the topics they would cover. Mr. Nash spent the majority of his presentation

explaining the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) signed by President Obama in 2015, and its implications for current and future Promise Neighborhoods. Under ESSA, which reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) from 2001, competitive grant programs such as Promise Neighborhoods will continue to receive funding. Current Promise Neighborhoods will have the opportunity to apply for a 2 year extension with additional funds. Mr. Nash also emphasized the importance of evaluation and the new priority for evidence-based activities.



Kathryn Lembo, President & CEO of [South Bay Community Services](#), and Mauricio Torre, Director of Youth and Family Development for South Bay Community Services in California's San Diego County, gave an overview of the [Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood](#) and its 34 partners as well as integrating the Promise initiative into the scope of services provided by their back bone organization. Kathryn spoke of *promotoras*, or health educators, who play a vital role in the community. In addition, she described a preschool which caters to children exposed to domestic violence and child abuse, as well as how they prepare children in the community for college and track data on their progress.

Later in the day, Sheena Collier and Andrew Seeder, Data Systems Manager for DSNI, presented on how BPI is measuring data to demonstrate the positive effects of collective impact. Andrew discussed methods of data assessment in the school system and how a method of social network analysis is illuminating the complex connections organizations have with each other. Andrew also explained how BPI, along with all other nationwide Promise Neighborhoods, uses indicators called GPRAs ([Government Performance Result Act](#)) to assess outcomes across developmental periods. BPI has seen positive outcomes within several GPRAs such as increased exercise and access to Internet among Dudley neighborhood community members.

Finally, the day wrapped up with break-out groups discussing again how BPI and its partners can continue to demonstrate collective impact over the next year and a half. Below are some key takeaways from each group:

- **Common Agenda:** This group suggested working further with the neighborhood schools to ensure a shared vision from high school to college to career, and to develop links between schools and local colleges and universities to bridge the gap.
- **Shared Measurement Systems:** This group encouraged BPI to continue to elect what tools partners use for evaluating their work, and to help build capacity amongst partners and community residents for support.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Group members suggested working further with partners to help them understand how collecting, evaluating, and sharing data is a mutually reinforcing activity as related to BPI's mission, but which also has great internal benefit to the organization.
- **Continuous Communication:** This group suggested that BPI should work to explain data to the community in terms that are positive, keep community members informed on the future of BPI, find out what information community members most want/need to learn, and help partners communicate with community members in a more concise way, such as a community calendar.
- **Backbone Organization:** Group members expressed the need for leadership, shared responsibility, and partners' accountability in order to achieve sustainability. They also suggested that BPI as the backbone organization should convene partners and community members to discuss what actions are needed to improve education in the DVC.

