Convening Communities

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"I have a hypothesis that most, if not all, major challenges that we face for our country or for our planet are ones that require multi-sector action, both government, non-profit sector, and the private sector." Talia Milgrom-Elcott, Executive Director and Co-Founder, 100Kin10 [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.]

“For effective change in a complex system, you need to find ways to constructively involve everyone who is impacted. This is because in a complex environment if you are impacted, you exert influence.” Seth Kahan [Kahan, S., [The Power to Convene and Set Context](https://www.fastcompany.com/1061235/power-convene-and-set-context), Fast Company, October 2008].

## Overview

“The power to convene and the power of setting the right context are value generators. Together they are often far more powerful than the influence one person can exert. The robustness of multiple points-of-view is generally greater than what an individual can wield. And the field of impact grows much larger through the resulting expansion of the social network. For dealing with the most complex problems, we must involve stakeholders from every critical point in the system. Solutions, the good ones, are multi-dimensional. Therefore, we must bring together the most valuable players, helping them to work collaboratively – i.e., lend their enthusiastic engagement – using a framework that embraces their differing needs and unique perspectives. This is what the power to convene and the power of setting the context is all about.” Seth Kahan [Kahan, S., [The Power to Convene and Set Context](https://www.fastcompany.com/1061235/power-convene-and-set-context), Fast Company, October 2008]

### Introduction

Aligning public and private sector commitments is a specific iteration of collaboration between the Federal government and outside entities. While not rising to the level of formal partnership, commitment-generating devices like convenings and calls to action can spur an “all hands on deck” approach to catalyzing societal advancements. In particular, the Administration has a unique vantage point and the potent ability to act as an “impatient convener” [Chopra, A., *Innovative State,* Grove/Atlantic, Inc, 2016,p. 88]. A convening can be defined as leaders engaging with all sectors – public, private, non-profit, citizens, and others- to develop effective, lasting solutions to public problems that go beyond what any sector could achieve on its own.[“[Public Solutions](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/Public%20Solutions%20System.pdf),” Policy Consensus Initiative] By convening interested parties and innovative thinkers, it’s possible to launch high-impact multi-sector stakeholder collaborations involving companies, foundations, nonprofits, investors, researchers, regional initiatives, and skilled volunteers. [Collective impact](http://collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/collective-impact-principles-practice) principles are often employed by conveners to bring various stakeholders from multiple perspectives together at these gatherings, to broker partnerships, solicit pledges, and support a central call to action for which they have all been called together.

### Why

The Federal government is uniquely positioned to summon multiple stakeholders and put out calls to action on issues at inflection points for change, adoption, or scale in the country as well as elevate an issue’s national profile from talk to action. Through high-level engagement, public officials can align executive action with specific commitments offered up by the private sector. As former US CTO Aneesh Chopra sees it, it’s an approach that leads “through coordination and collaboration, rather than fiat.” [Chopra, A., *Innovative State,* Grove/Atlantic, Inc, 2016,p. 134]. Moreover, the Federal government has already used convening tools like calls to action and pledges to catalyze societal advancements and target specific issues like insourcing American jobs and solving the global refugee crisis.

### How

In this approach, the White House uses its platform to call for action and elevate the visibility of external efforts that are aligned with the Administration’s goals and interests – but there is no formal partnership mechanism. Instead, external organizations respond to the president’s call-to-action, organically building their own coalitions to make financial and in-kind commitments that are aligned with achieving the president’s goal. This has been successfully demonstrated by initiatives like [BRAIN](https://www.braininitiative.nih.gov/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1) and [100Kin10](https://100kin10.org/). Convenings can be used to bring together stakeholders, and encourage them to cooperate in deliberate acts of transformation. Convenings allow for agenda-setting and open conversation about the desired goal and objectives, among all participants. They create a space for open and transparent discussion and can build trust by creating a common understanding of goals and objectives all participants agree to work towards. External issue-focused organizations often also play an essential role in providing support for the implementation of commitments, complementing the role that the White House and agencies are able to play as convener.

**Five Conditions of Collective Impact** [Collective Impact Forum, [“Collective Impact Principles of Practice”](https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/collective-impact-principles-practice), FSG and the Aspen Institute]. 

* ***Common Agenda***: All participants have a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.
* ***Shared Measurement***: Agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported, with a short list of common indicators identified and used across all participating organizations for learning and improvement.
* ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***: Engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinating a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
* ***Continuous Communication***: Frequent and structured open communication across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
* ***Backbone Support***: Ongoing support by independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative, including guiding the initiative’s vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing funding. Backbone staff can all sit within a single organization, or they can have different roles housed in multiple organizations.

## Background

The credibility to elicit commitment and convene for meaningful collaboration is powerful, and “by virtue of their office, elected leaders have the power to convene people from a variety of sectors to work on public problems.” [“[Role of the Convener](https://web.archive.org/web/20150319030543/http:/www.policyconsensus.org/tools/practicalguide/docs/role_convener.pdf),” Policy Consensus Initiative] The White House can use its platform to call for action and elevate the visibility of external efforts that are aligned with the Administration’s goals and interests. In such cases, there is no formal partnership but external organizations respond to the president’s call-to-action, organically building their own coalitions to make financial and in-kind commitments that are aligned with national priorities.

**Benefits of Using Convening Power:**

* Multidisciplinary approaches can be deeply valuable for tackling our thorniest problems
* Unexpected coalitions can generate innovative solutions
* High-visibility commitment can spur public engagement and jumpstart new solutions
* Informal convening complements concurrent efforts in the legislative process
* Galvanize additional resources towards shared challenges

### Multidisciplinary approaches can be deeply valuable for tackling our thorniest problems

In many areas, further advancement is limited by the current tools at our disposal. In the instance of the BRAIN initiative [crosslink to case study], further development of scientific tools required that physical sciences and engineering fields collaborated deeply with neuroscience; the initiative created the framework necessary to bridge disciplines and bring experts together. A multidisciplinary approach can offer potential advances for complex social problems, as well. Working through a collective action framework – oriented by strategic guidance from public leadership or backbone organizations – can allow collaborative efforts to reach scale and scope, while also allowing individual participants to focus on their particular domain expertise and contributions.

### Unexpected coalitions can generate innovative solutions

The body of research demonstrates that solutions that emerge from collaborative governance processes are “better informed, stronger in concept and content, and more likely to be implemented,” according to Terry Amsler, Director of the Collaborative Governance Initiative. [“[Integrating Collaborative Activities: Public Deliberation with Stakeholder Processes”](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/integrating_activities.pdf), National Policy Consensus Center] Pledges are unique in that they mobilize stakeholders to align and act; influence them to mobilize and further be influencers in their networks; innovate new products and services through these stakeholders and partnerships for adoption and scale; and, develop foresight for future directions.

Read more: [How Diversity Makes us Smarter](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/)

### High-visibility commitment spurs public engagement and jumpstart new solutions

Professor [Rosabeth Moss Kanter](http://www.rosabethkanter.com/) explains that a convening model “stimulates more action by more groups in more places. It gets people who already have their fingers on the levers of change moving quickly” [Calmes, J., “[Obama Counts on Power of Convening People for Change,”](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/us/politics/obama-counts-on-power-of-convening-people-for-change.html) New York Times, January 2014]. Stakeholders also respond from a deep sense of civic responsibility; being directly asked to be part of an effort to advance the public good is a powerful appeal. “The sense was that this whole thing was bigger than itself,” explains Talia Milgrom-Elcott, co-founder of [100Kin10](https://100kin10.org/). [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.] When the goal is much bigger than any one person or organization could possibly achieve, collaborators are drawn by the promise of accomplishing something “big” together. [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016]

### Complements concurrent efforts in the legislative process

External collaboration does not replace the normal processes of government and the primacy of legislative efforts, but it can enable policymakers to focus on areas where legislation is truly essential. “One benefit of collaborative governance,” notes Roger Moe, former president of the Minnesota state senate, “is that it can keep issues out of the legal and legislative arena. When people can develop a solution that does not involve more red tape and regulation, everybody benefits”. [Carlson, C. and Wolf, G., “[The Power to Convene](https://web.archive.org/web/20120616103307/http://www.policyconsensus.org/publications/reports/docs/ThePowertoConvene.pdf)”, Council of State Governments, November/December 2005] Federal officials can observe a body of practice for this approach at the state and local level. Examples from the state level include the following, as drawn together by the Policy Consensus Initiative:

[Legislators at a Crossroads: Making Choices to Work Differently](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/Crossroads.pdf)

At the state and local levels, legislators have seen the virtue of cross-sector collaboration in a way that can be instructive for Federal agencies.

From Oregon: How Business, Government and Philanthropy Intersect to Solve Public Problems

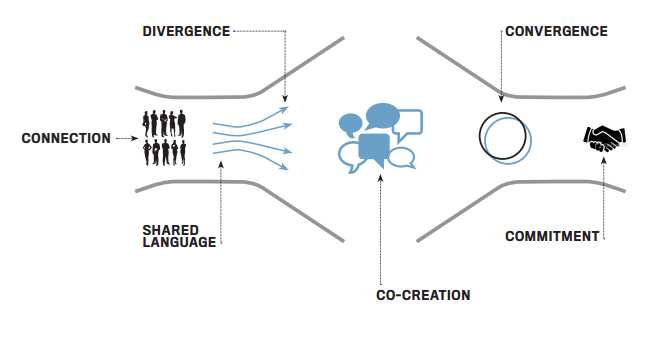
From Florida: [Florida Senator Leads Three-County Collaborative](https://web.archive.org/web/20160801095437/http:/policyconsensus.org/publications/news/PCI_Newsletter_Apr_05.html)

From Utah: [Finding Winning Solutions - The Art and Science of Good Governance](https://web.archive.org/web/20160328223925/http:/www.policyconsensus.org/publicsolutions/becker_article.pdf)

### Galvanize additional resources towards shared challenges

Another benefit of convening power, and a good measure of success for collaboration between the public and the private sectors, is whether such an effort brought additional resources to bear towards solving a shared challenge – whether by changing private sector practices, in-kind through volunteerism, resource allocation, or collectively towards a shared outcome.

## Considerations for Use



*[Image source: p. 51, http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/gather/GATHER\_The\_Art\_and\_Science\_of\_Effective\_Convening.pdf]*

### When to deploy

Calls to action can be used to draw attention to high priority challenges that appear to be at a tipping point, and where greater collaboration among stakeholders and greater visibility to potential funders would substantially advance progress. They can also be utilized to meet mounting pressure or be used following a major world event to galvanize domestic resources. Different “organizing principles” for selecting commitments include :

* **Place-based:** “In X cities or communities, IT employers and training providers will work together to help train Y workers.”
* **By type of organization:** 120 Engineering Deans agreed to scale programs such as the Grand Challenge Scholars Program to reach 20,000 undergraduate students. [crosslink GCSP case study - GCs]
* **By the goal**: A broad coalition of organizations has come together to prepare and recruit 100,000 high-quality math and science teachers over the next 10 years. [crosslink 100kin10 case study]
* **By maturity/level of evidence of the approach:** “This is a new idea worth trying,” vs. “This intervention has been rigorously evaluated and is ready to scale.”

### How to deploy

External collaborations that align public and private commitments can take shape in several ways. In some instances, Federal leadership may choose to set an audacious goal without full certainty that an external partner will actually step up and respond to the call; this can be feasible when there’s a budget strategy to help bring the goal to fruition, for example, by helping to create the implementing organization. Whether spurred by Federal guidance or arising as a wholly organic, external coalition, external backbone organizations can play critical roles in on-going implementation. Commitments aim to accomplish all of the purposes of convenings described: mobilizing stakeholders to align and act; influencing them to mobilize and further be influencers in their networks; innovating new products and services through these stakeholders and partnerships for adoption and scale; and, developing foresight for future directions.

External collaboration is frequently led by senior White House leadership, but agency leaders can also do vital work to engage with external sectoral leaders. For instance, as a precursor to a July 2014 White House Summit event, in June 2014, the Department of Labor convened six regional summits with key high-growth industry sectors to promote the apprenticeship model and to ensure future Federal investments meet business needs for skilled workers [[“Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and American Opportunity”](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/skills_report.pdf), The White House, July 2014] Other Departments have also used convenings to leverage commitments from the private sector, as well as each other, in order to increase their impact towards a specific. For example, the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, Feed the Future, FNIH, and PEPFAR show that while one organization may take the lead, other agroups can also participate and leverage their own funds and private sector relationships.

**USG**

**Universities**

**Donors**

**Investors**

**National**

**Governments**

**NGOs**

**Implementers**

**Religious**

**Organizations**

**Multinational**

**Businesses**

**Local/Regional**

**Businesses**

**Financial**

**Institutions**

**Foundations**

[Gupta, B. Personal communications , December 2016]

### Attributes of a well-designed commitment

* A good commitment achieves three criteria: It is new, specific, and measurable. (“New” does not mean “brand new,” but instead may represent an expansion of an existing effort.) [“[Commitments to Action](https://www.clintonfoundation.org/clinton-global-initiative/about-us/commitments-action)”, Clinton Global Initiative]
* An effective template for a commitment takes the following form:
  + “Over the next X years, organization A commits to take action B with the goal of achieving outcome C.”
* Commitments are powerful when framed as having cumulative impact and value:
  + “These commitments have a total financial and in-kind value of $X and will help Y students excel in STEM education.”
* Commitments should take advantage of the “core competencies” of the organizations that are making them. It is worth asking, which organization is in a unique position to accomplish X objective.
* The individuals and organizations involved should pass a White House vet. [Garg, K. Personal communication , December 20, 2016].

|  |
| --- |
| **Typology of Convenings**  The power to convene can be leveraged to pursue different commitments. Clarifying the purpose of the approach at the outset of planning can help structure more productive engagements with external stakeholders. The following typology is sourced from [*Gather: The Art & Science of Effective Convening*](http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/gather/GATHER_The_Art_and_Science_of_Effective_Convening.pdf), a research guidebook from the Monitor Institute:  ***Align and Act***  *Mobilize stakeholders in different parts of a system to act in concert. Help build a shared understanding of the system and the problem, develop consensus around a common vision, align strategies around it, and support one another in the execution.*  ***Influence***  *Shape the public conversation and the attitudes of key stakeholders by bringing together important actors and thought leaders to discuss, improve, and customize new concepts for their context.*  ***Innovate***  *Explore new approaches and enable creative disruption by reframing, reimagining, or recombining different elements and perspectives. Use these inputs to prototype transformational new processes or services and develop ideas for their adoption and scale.*  ***Develop Foresight***  *Anticipate potential challenges and identify new opportunities for intervention, by collecting indicators of how the world is evolving today and diverse perspectives about the directions that it could take in the future.”*  Directly sourced from: Rimland, N. and Muoio, A., “[*Gather: The Art & Science of Effective Convening*](http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/gather/GATHER_The_Art_and_Science_of_Effective_Convening.pdf), Monitor Institute, Deloitte, June 2013]. |

In recent years, the calls to action have spurred movement on a wide range of policy concerns, including:

* The global refugee crisis, from [initial call to action](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/30/fact-sheet-white-house-launches-call-action-private-sector-engagement-0) to [collective response](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/20/private-sector-participants-call-action)
* [Expansion of STEM education in K-12 schools](https://www.whitehouse.gov/webform/building-president-s-call-action-expand-computer-science-education-k-12-schools)
* [AIDS policy and response](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/10/02/a-call-action-office-national-aids-policy)
* [Soil erosion](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2016/08/01/call-action-save-one-americas-most-important-natural-resources)
* [Expanding college opportunity](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/16/fact-sheet-president-and-first-lady-s-call-action-college-opportunity)
* [Combatting long-term unemployment](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/31/fact-sheet-opportunity-all-president-s-call-action-give-long-term-unempl)
* [Insourcing American Jobs](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/11/president-obama-issues-call-action-invest-america-white-house-insourcing)

## Evidence of Impact

Case studies

1. BRAIN initiative
2. 100Kin10
3. USignite

### Case Study 1: [BRAIN Initiative](http://www.braininitiative.org/)

*[case derived from Kalil, T., phone interview , August 1, 2016 and Chun, M. and Martin, C., phone interview , August 11, 2016]*

**Summary:**

The [BRAIN Initiative](http://www.braininitiative.org/) -- Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies -- was unveiled in April 2013 as a multi-agency Grand Challenge [crosslink GC]. The main goal was “To accelerate development of new technologies that advance understanding of the brain, [thereby] enabling researchers to produce dynamic pictures of the brain that show how individual brain cells and complex neural circuits interact at the speed of thought” [“[A Strategy for American Innovation](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/strategy_for_american_innovation_october_2015.pdf)”, National Economic Council and Office of Science and Technology Policy, October 2015].The BRAIN Initiative brings the scientific community together with Federal and private funding partners to advance progress. The BRAIN Initiative exemplifies a complex, multi-pronged issue best addressed by a “whole-of-government” approach with widespread agency coordination in conjunction with significant private investment: Since its launch in April 2013, five Federal agencies have invested in the effort, with the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA) joining the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). [Kalil, T., phone interview , August 1, 2016]

**The call to action:**

The launch of the BRAIN Initiative began with a single question – “What do you believe are the moonshots of the 21st century?” -- that former Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) deputy director Tom Kalil asked of the [The Kavli Foundation](http://www.kavlifoundation.org/). [Kalil, T., phone interview , August 1, 2016] Neuroscience research is one of the foundation’s priorities. Having witnessed a two to three year lag time before comprehensive reports would reach their desks, White House leadership wanted to directly engage with the scientific community; “We needed to hear those voices as clearly as possible,” said Tom Kalil. [Kalil, T., phone interview , August 1, 2016] Dr. Miyoung Chun, Vice President of science programs at Kavli, was an enthusiastic collaborator, agreeing that “Science is very dynamic; the frontier of science is not two years ago; it’s today.” [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016]

**How the collaboration developed:**

After the initial conversation between Kalil and Kavli, the foundation kept an eye out for possible answers to the moonshot question. At a [September 2011 meeting](http://www.kavlifoundation.org/about-brain-activity-map-project) between the [Kavli Foundation, Allen Institute, and Gatsby Foundatio](http://www.braininitiative.org/milestones/)n, the seed of an idea emerged that Dr. Chun shared with OSTP. [Martin, C., Personal communication , December 20, 2016]. From there, a workshop was held to invite ideas from top scientists and scope out an initiative that would focus on brain research. Kavli convened top experts from a broad spectrum of physical sciences to identify the key obstacles preventing scientific advancement in areas of brain research. At the convening, a shared understanding emerged about key obstacles stalling progress. Neuroscientists observed how far they were from a theory about how a brain encodes and processes information, focusing on the idea of “missing middle” in what could be observed of the entire neural circuit in real-time. From reflecting on how the field had advanced in the past, it was clear that new tools and new methods had been essential for answering frontier challenges. [Kalil, T., phone interview , August 1, 2016]

Kavli reported back to the White House a strong, genuine interest in the research community for further exploration. “From a foundation’s perspective, we thought, ‘This is just so unbelievable that the White House is eager to hear actual voices of individual scientists,” recalled Dr. Chun. [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016]

It took over 18 months to align all the pieces necessary to realize the collaboration, culminating in Congressional approval for increased funding in December 2015 [Nather, D., “[It’s Official: The NIH Budget is Getting an Extra $2 Billion](https://www.statnews.com/2015/12/18/nih-increase-congress-vote/)”, STAT, December 2015] During the lengthy process, Kavli acted as the “constant convener and the glue” for the scientific community. [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016] Within government, OSTP coordinated prospective Federal funding agencies. Funding agencies worked together closely in the development and launch of the initiative, with NIH playing a key leadership role. [Kalil, T., phone interview , August 1, 2016] At the outset, expectations were clearly managed; the White House emphasized realism with clear communication that through the collaborative process, the articulation of the end goal could shift. Concerted effort went into conveying to outside partners how Federal processes worked. Clear lines were drawn for potential conflicts of interest, for example, between Federal funding agencies and scientists who would potentially benefit from funding decisions. [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016]

The scientific community – about 150 scientists – had its patience tested through the long process, particularly given the uncertain outcome. But they remain engaged in multiple gatherings during that time period because of a shared, collective belief in what could be achieved: “The initiative was possible because everyone believed, each one of them, that they were servicing their time and effort for something much greater than what they were doing individually,” Dr. Chun added. [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016]

**Impact:**

"BRAIN will generate revolutionary new tools to measure the brain activities in thousands to millions of neurons in order to produce a general theory of the brain," Dr. Chun asserts. "We want to understand how we reason, how we memorize, how we learn, how we move, how our emotions work. These abilities define us. And yet we hardly understand any of it” [Pontin, J., “[Interview with BRAIN Project Pioneer: Miyoung Chun](https://www.technologyreview.com/s/513476/interview-with-brain-project-pioneer-miyoung-chun/)”, MIT Technology Review, April 2013]. Three years into the initiative, there has been **“**an unbelievable rate of tangible scientific achievement,” Dr. Chun says. Hundreds of [papers](http://www.braininitiative.org/resources/) have already been published as a result, and new methods and tools have already been developed. In July 2016, researchers announced they had discovered nearly 100 previously unknown areas of the brain, and published a “spectacular” [new map of the brain](http://www.nature.com/articles/doi:10.1038/nature18933) hailed as “an unprecedented glimpse into the machinery of the human mind” [Zimmer, C., “[Updated Brain Map Identifies Nearly 100 New Regions](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/science/human-connectome-brain-map.html)”, New York Times, July 2016].

“The President’s 2016 Budget includes over $300 million to support the BRAIN Initiative, with investments from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity, and the Food and Drug Administration. The initiative also catalyzed additional funding across the network. The private sector is also making commitments of hundreds of millions of dollars to support the BRAIN Initiative” [“[A Strategy for American Innovation](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/strategy_for_american_innovation_october_2015.pdf)”, National Economic Council and Office of Science and Technology Policy, October 2015]. “Major foundations and private research institutions, including the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Allen Institute for Brain Science, and the Kavli Foundation, as well as patient advocacy organizations and universities have committed over $240 million to the BRAIN Initiative. In addition, members of the National Photonics Initiative and other companies such as GE, GlaxoSmithKline and Inscopix have joined this effort through commitments of more than $30 million in research and development investments” [“[Obama Administration Proposes Over $300 Million in Funding for The BRAIN Initiative](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/brain_initiative_fy16_fact_sheet_ostp.pdf)”, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, February 2015.]

**Key learning insights**:

* Choose the “right problem” at the “right time” [crosslink problem definition content]
* Strong leadership, combined with deep, genuine high-level engagement by members
* Inter-agency cooperation can be essential for fully activated engagement
* Convening is a shared power; sharing the credit augments that power

**Right problem, right time**

At the outset, problem definition is foundational for success. By selecting a problem that will resonate with a range of stakeholders, it inspires a wide range of engagement from individuals and organizations.

**Strong leadership, combined with deep, genuine high-level engagement by members**

Deep, sustained engagement from the White House was essential in realizing the collaboration, Kavli explains; “Tom Kalil really brought the right leaders at the right time,” Dr. Chun says. “Scientists could never have accomplished this on their own.” [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016] Kavli firmly emphasizes its own role as a neutral, independent mediator between government and the scientific community, noting that many collaborators were proactive in pushing the initiative forward: “Scientists stepped up. Funders stepped up. White House leadership stepped up. […] We like to think that we stepped up, in our own way -- but the fact is that everyone stepped up.” [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016] The NIH allocated $46 million in 2014 and $81.4 million in 2015, almost doubling its funding [“[About Us- Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN)](https://braininitiative.nih.gov/about/index.htm)”, National Institutes of Health, November 2015]. As previously stated, private-sector organizations including foundations, universities, and research institutions have already committed over $240 million.

**Inter-agency cooperation can be essential for fully activated engagement**

The BRAIN initiative began with the participation of three agencies (NIH, NSF, DARPA) and has since worked with several others, including IARPA and FDA. “What’s interesting is that because they have different missions, they were able to tackle different parts of the problem,” observes Tom Kalil. [Kalil, T., phone interview , August 1, 2016] NIH brought its expertise to bear on fundamental research and elements related to human health, whereas DARPA focused on its strength – high-risk, high-return research – to immediately respond to aspects of the BRAIN Initiative that might help veterans. The NSF, on the other hand, focuses its BRAIN initiative efforts on its own core competencies: integrative and interdisciplinary research; new theories, computation models, and analytical tools that will guide research questions and synthesize experimental data; and the development of innovative technologies and data infrastructure required to handle the large scale datasets resulting from this research [“[Obama Administration Proposes Over $300 Million in Funding for The BRAIN Initiative](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/brain_initiative_fy16_fact_sheet_ostp.pdf)”, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, February 2015.] By concentrating on agency-specific strengths, and facilitating communication amongst agencies, the BRAIN initiative efficiently promotes full participation and expansion.

**Sharing credit augments the power of convening**

“Spreading the credit around when something succeeds is very powerful,” observes Dr. Chun. [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016] The White House consciously attributed progress to partners in the collective group effort, making sure to involve scientists in announcement events. The Kavli Foundation notes that the continued credit-sharing after initial successes were “tremendously reassuring,” and continued to build trust within the collaborative partnership. . [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016]

**Read more**:

[The 2014 call to action](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/02/24/white-house-call-action-advance-brain-initiative)

[Interview with BRAIN project pioneer, Dr. Miyoung Chun](https://www.technologyreview.com/s/513476/interview-with-brain-project-pioneer-miyoung-chun/)

[February 2016 fact sheet on BRAIN Initiative activities](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/brain_initiative_fy16_fact_sheet_ostp.pdf)

[May 2016 report to the Committees on the activities of the Interagency Working Group on Neuroscience (IWGN)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/NSTC/iwgn_congressional_report_final.pdf)

[BRAIN Initiative milestone map: Key moments in brain research](http://www.braininitiative.org/milestones/)

### Case Study 2: [100Kin10](https://100kin10.org/)

**Summary:**

100Kin10 unites the nation's top academic institutions, nonprofits, foundations, companies, and government agencies to collectively tackle the goal of training and retaining 100,000 excellent STEM teachers to educate the next generation of innovators and problem solvers [100Kin10 [website](https://100kin10.org/)]. As a backbone organization, 100Kin10 represents a network approach to problem-solving. It facilitates opportunities for its partners to collectively address shared challenges larger than any one organization could tackle individually.

**The call to action:**

In the 2011 State of the Union address, President Obama set an audacious goal: Put 100,000 new science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers in American classrooms by 2021, in order “to equip a new generation of problem-solvers with the STEM skills they need to revitalize our economy, lead our nation, and solve the globe’s most pressing challenges [“[President Obama Celebrates Great Teachers and Our Nation’s Educational Progress](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/03/fact-sheet-and-report-president-obama-celebrates-great-teachers-and-our)”, The White House, May 2016].

“The Administration was uniquely positioned to put out this call and keep the drumbeat going,” says Talia Milgrom-Elcott, executive director and co-founder of 100Kin10, noting that the President continued to call attention to the issue after the initial announcement, whether in stump speeches or his second inaugural address. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.] The continued drumbeat, she says, put a high degree of emphasis and "oomph" behind the call – which increased the response by stakeholders. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.]

**How the collaboration developed:**

100Kin10 emerged directly as a response to the urgent presidential call to action. The White House helped set the Federal levers into motion – using their visibility to prioritize existing Federal funding streams towards STEM [crosslink i3 case study] and deploying its convening power to bring stakeholders together and create accountability. But, she notes, they couldn’t deliver the teachers: "There was no way they could set into motion what would be necessary to get to 100,000 excellent STEM teachers -- it truly required a private sector networked response. And so that's what we set out to do and to build." [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.]

Early efforts concentrated on securing private sector commitments, but the organization quickly realized that partners required further support to actualize their programs. 100Kin10 responded by adjusting its focus. The organization now emphasizes a [network approach](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/networked_impact_this_is_not_your_grandfathers_coalition) to problem solving so that each partner organization can improve its work while meeting its personal commitment to the goal of 100,000 teachers. This requires trust, explains Milgrom-Elcott. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.] At the outset, 100Kin10 emphasized the development of a strong trust base with partnering organizations. “Trust is the bedrock of learning. We developed trust [with our partners] before we invested in marketing or even funding,” explains Milgrom-Elcott. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.]

Partners have the opportunity to learn from and adapt the models of other partners as well as the support to innovate new approaches. 100Kin10 offers access to funding and implementation support that spans the spectrum, from small collaboration grants to support knowledge sharing to experimental pilots to catalyze innovation: “Depending on where you are, and what questions you’re working on, we support you in those different stages,” Milgrom-Elcott adds. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.]

**Impact:** [Milgrom-Elcott, T., Personal communication , December 14, 2016].

100Kin10 and its partners have promoted the importance of STEM as a cross-sector priority. Five years in, 100Kin10 partners have already trained more than 40,000 teachers. The network announced in spring 2016 that it was on track to deliver the full 100,000 STEM teachers on time [[President Obama Celebrates Great Teachers and Our Nation’s Educational Progress](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/03/fact-sheet-and-report-president-obama-celebrates-great-teachers-and-our)”, The White House, May 2016].

Having begun as 28 organizations responding to the State of the Union call, 100Kin10 now works with over 280 partners, including the nation’s top academic institutions, nonprofits, foundations, companies, and government agencies. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., Personal communication , December 14, 2016]. The Funders’ Collaborative is comprised of thirty-four funders, including national private foundations, community foundations, corporate sponsors and others, who have made pledges since 2011 totaling more than $90 million to support the goal of 100Kin10 [[100Kin10](https://100kin10.org/)]. Organized as a collection of pledges from funders, members of the collaborative each pledge a minimum of $500,000, to be dispersed over no more than 3 years, to one or more 100Kin10 partner organizations. In 2015, funders distributed over $14 million to 37 100Kin10 partners. [“[2015 Was a Great Year, and We’re Excited to Show You Why](http://file.100kin10.org/100Kin10AnnualReport2015.pdf)”, 100Kin10, 2016] Partners also have the opportunity to submit applications for funding via a 100Kin10 Challenge Grant.

**Key learning insights:**

* **Structure the collective framework thoughtfully in pursuit of a common goal**
* **Understand partners’ context to unleash collaboration**
* **Shift from symptoms to root causes**
* **Focus on quality over quantity when scaling a network**
* **Share learning through the network to accelerate progress**
* **Secure commitments in the presence of public or high authority figures**

**Structure the collective framework thoughtfully in pursuit of a common goal**

Talia Milgrom-Elcott recounted how at the very outset, 100Kin10 used a series of user-centered design exercises, like backwards mapping, to clarify their strategy. “We ran through a series of questions, asking what would need to have happened for us to have achieved our goal by 2021?” [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.] By mapping backwards the planning became oriented around what commitments to action each organization could make. As a result, 100Kin10 established, at the heart of its mission, a bias towards action. As Milgrom-Elcott explains, partners are pushed to articulate specific actions they plan to undertake; “We are not your grandfather’s coalition; you have to have a commitment to action to be a part of the network.” [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.]

Milgrom-Elcott adds, “Unlike other coalitions, we don’t require our partners to adhere to a set of principles. In fact, the opposite: We intentionally court organizations that disagree with each other or sit on opposite sides of the negotiating table but can agree and even work together on this goal.” [Milgrom-Elcott, T., Personal communication , December 14, 2016].

**Understand partners’ context to unleash collaboration**

For 100Kin10, a central focus was understanding the challenges faced by partner organizations and how they interact. By understanding partners’ particular context and investing the time to know them and their work well – including asking all partners to share their data, strengths, and struggles -- 100Kin10 was able to act as a matchmaker between partners. This spurred the formation of relevant cross-sector partnerships to enable organizations facing similar challenges to work together, or to learn from one another. Learning the strengths of each participant helped to ensure each partner’s comparative advantage was capitalized on.

**Shift from symptoms to root causes**

Working to understand partner organizations on a micro level led to a comprehensive understanding of the landscape, which 100Kin10 captured in a [map of the major challenges](http://file.100kin10.org/grand-challenges-v3.swf) and their root causes. Milgrom-Elcott explains the thought process for partners as, “’Where are you currently working? Where is your work a Band-Aid because you're in a triage emergency situation, but underlying there's something going on that if you could just get at, you wouldn't have so much bleeding?” [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.] She describes the collective learning process as “Moving people up the diagnosis chain, from dealing with a flesh wound, to understanding the cause of the bleeding, to understanding why so many people are coming in with bleeding.” [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.] The network is currently working with its partners to address the core issues that have made this moonshot goal so hard.

**Focus on quality over quantity when scaling a network**

100Kin10 initially focused on growing the number of partners involved in the collective effort, but later came to realize that simply “bringing more organizations on board didn’t help those organizations to succeed…Having commitments on paper that couldn’t be effectuated was only marginally or normally better than no commitment at all. So we have since focused on innovating different vehicles to support organizations to succeed.” [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.]

100Kin10 created a vehicle for growing the network organically. Existing partners could nominate new organizations, which then applied with commitments to action and evidence of prior successes. In addition to tapping the networks of all partners, this approach to growth created an inherent check on 100Kin10’s value proposition: If existing partners didn’t find it useful, they wouldn’t expend their social capital inviting their colleagues to join. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., Personal communication , December 14, 2016].

**Secure commitments in the presence of public or high authority figures**

Articulating concrete commitments helps to ensure follow-on action. Milgrom-Elcott recounts convening a meeting between partners and Arne Duncan, then Secretary of Education: “We used it as a carrot, knowing there would be no stick for accountability. We had no way to ensure what would happen, but [we thought] if we had people publicly commit in front of the Secretary, that would be a very powerful force and function.” [Milgrom-Elcott, T., phone interview , August 16, 2016.] It was an effective strategy. For all partners, 100Kin10 now publishes partner commitments publicly, and each partner shares its progress annually with the network. Successes are widely celebrated at events and in writings, to encourage high achievement.

**Share learning through the network to accelerate progress**

With annual partner surveys and “Steal This” sessions, the network advances the collective state of learning by encouraging knowledge-sharing. [Milgrom-Elcott, T., Personal communication , December 14, 2016]. This, in turn, accelerates the rate of collective progress. Through the 100Kin10 Fellowship, teams from partner organizations develop and test new tools, systems, and/or programs that help prepare and support instructors and their students, together achieving ambitious goals for STEM instruction that supports students’ active learning in grades P-3.

**Read more:**

[How to Count to 100,000 STEM Teachers in 10 Years](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/how-to-count-to-100000-stem-teachers-in-10-years-23095664/?no-ist)

[100Kin10’s Experiments in Networked Impact](https://medium.com/100kin10s-experiments-in-networked-impact)

### Case Study 3: [US Ignite](https://www.us-ignite.org/)

**Summary:**   
Launched in 2012, US Ignite is a 501c3 nonprofit organization fostering the development of next-generation networks. It creates demonstration projects that illustrate the transformative public benefit of new technologies like software-defined networking and cloud computing, with the ultimate goal is to transform through technology how we receive healthcare, educate our children, become more energy efficient, and manufacture goods. US Ignite creates the necessary tools for pilot applications, and brings together interested partners -- developers, entrepreneurs, innovators, academic researchers, municipal leaders and others -- looking for concrete examples. [Kochan, J., personal communication , December 21, 2016]

**The call to action**:

From 2010 to 2012, as part of the debate over economic stimulus, there was a “loud public conversation” about the role of Federal, state, and municipal governments in funding critical infrastructure like advanced broadband networks, recounts Joe Kochan, chief operating officer at US Ignite. “Whose job was it? Was it happening fast enough?” [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016] White House leadership convened meetings on the issue. Stakeholders didn’t necessarily agree on the economics or the theory of who was obligated to build it, but consensus emerged that it was urgent more be done – quickly -- to advance the state of broadband infrastructure. There was also agreement that almost all stakeholders, from corporations to public taxpayers, needed a better understanding of why investment in next-gen networks was critical. “US Ignite exists only because of a need for public private partnership” to effectively demonstrate the uses and benefits of next-gen networks, explains Kochan. [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016]

**How the collaboration developed:** [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016]

In the first several years of operation, the organization was primarily funded through corporate and philanthropic partners, using MOUs and formalized commitments. Primary Federal partners have included the National Science Foundation and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, with the National Institute of Standard and Technology under the Department of Commerce also collaborating. Private sector partners include Verizon, Comcast, AT&T, IBM, CISCO, Juniper, Avaya, Google and a few other telecom and tech companies. While US Ignite began with around fifteen commercial partners, today interested parties can submit inquiries via the website to join the partnership network. As the partnership network has evolved and Federal collaboration has grown, the mission has largely remained the same: Provide the public with tangible answers to the question “Why do we need a gigabit?” [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016]



[Directly sourced from: “[What We Do](https://www.us-ignite.org/about/what-we-do/)”, US Ignite]

In general, US Ignite follows a six-step process: [Kochan, J., personal communication , December 21, 2016]

1. Educate people on what is possible with next-gen networks through demonstrations of potential applications.
2. Source resources and innovators to make pilot applications possible, matching funding to need
3. Create prizes, incentives, and recognition for innovative ideas for next-generation applications
4. Secure agreement with network operators for testbeds where new applications can be demonstrated to the public
5. Scale up demonstration projects and connect them to more communities
6. Tell the story and explain the importance of advanced networks as the foundation of these new applications

Many people do not understand that the Internet is a 40 year-old technology, and it’s not a monolithic entity, explains Kochan. [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016]

Instead, it is a collection of 40,000 private networks operated independently, all on a specific set of agreements; “There's no one from the top-down to say, hey, the Internet is 40 years old, we’ve got to upgrade. It doesn't work that way.” Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016] Because of its decentralized nature, deliberate investment must be incentivized.

“When it comes down to it, if you talk to people outside of the technology arena and you challenge them, ‘What would you do with the better, faster broadband?’ They often can’t answer […] because people don’t know what these networks are capable of, and therefore don’t know how to answer that question,” says Joe Kochan. [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016] Most lay people are unfamiliar with concepts of latency and network jitter or with newer technologies like software-defined networks. US Ignite builds demonstration projects to address this knowledge gap. “We show people what is possible, and then we explain, ‘If you want this, you’ve got to invest in a network that can handle the following characteristics.’”[Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016] The result helps to catalyze the adoption of new technologies – which in turn lowers their cost, and encourages further adoption.

The organization is continuing to engage the academic research community, while also working with municipalities and corporations to encourage and foster deployment of ecosystems of next-generation networking. In June of 2016, US Ignite announced the creation of a national network of Smart Gigabit Communities. Each of the 15 communities involved made a significant commitment toward leveraging next-generation smart city and Internet technologies to keep pace with the world’s rapidly changing technology and economy [Kochan, J., “[US Ignite Announces 15 Smart Gigabit Communities](https://www.us-ignite.org/blog/2016/6/sgc/)”, US Ignite, June 2016]. ] [“[Administration Announces New “Smart Cities” Initiative to Help Communities Tackle Local Challenges and Improve City Services](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/14/fact-sheet-administration-announces-new-smart-cities-initiative-help)”, The White House, September 2015]. Kochan ultimately challenges cities to think broadly for the long-term: ‘OK, Chattanooga,you built a fiber network directly to your end users. Aside from the fact that your internet access is now cheaper, faster, and ubiquitous, […] you also have the following 100 benefits that you didn’t know about with this new technology. What are you going to use them for? What are you going to do with it? What do you think you can do?’” [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016]

**Impact:** With 35 sponsor and partners, in its first years US Ignite has developed and deployed a multitude of applications with diverse social impact. The National Science Foundation (NSF) reports that projects as a whole have “demonstrated the potential societal impact of broad use of ultra-fast, software-defined networks. For example, one NSF Early-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) project has resulted in operational improvements in emergency response communications. Another project has generated a commercial product addressing health and wellbeing” [“[US Ignite - Program Solicitation](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15508/nsf15508.htm)”, National Science Foundation, January 2015]. As of November 2016, there are 139 applications for this NSF US Ignite project: Eight have been commercialized, 39 have a completed idea, and 65 are currently in development. [Kochan, J., personal communication , December 21, 2016]

In the next five years, the ecosystem created by US Ignite plans to deliver:

* 60 next-generation applications;
* 200 community test beds where applications can be researched, developed, tested and deployed;
* A forum for collaboration between multi-sector partners. [“What is US Ignite?” USIgnite.]

**Key learning insights:**

* **Balance stakeholder views, and engage sectors on their own terms**
* **Convey the timeline for working with Federal partners**
* **Formalize commitments**

**Balance stakeholder views, and engage sectors on their own terms**

Perhaps the most critical key for collaboration, says Kochan, is starting with a basis of agreement between public and private stakeholders. [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016] This can set an organizational context for setting a strategy with broad appeal. Ultimately, the balance of public and private partners and funding sources was important for establishing a broad, multi-sectoral perspective for the organization.

**Formalize Commitments**

It was also important to engage partners with context-appropriate framing**;** for example, when approaching private sector partners, commitments were designed around clearly defined value propositions (as opposed to a framing for public sector stakeholders). This helped to secure private sector buy-in early on. Commitments were then formalized with clear, specific, and measurable, goals and deliverables helped to sustain longer-term buy-in into the partnership.

**Convey the timeline for working with Federal partners**

This experience demonstrates how the agility of private funding sources can complement Federal efforts. The NSF issued Dear Colleague letters (DCLs) in 2012 and 2013, but projects only began receiving funds through DCLs in 2015. “The timeframe could have – and almost did – span an entire administration,” notes Joe Kochan. [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016]

Funding from private partners drove the effort for the first 3 years of the organization’s existence, with more than 80% of funding initially coming from private sources. OSTP was the primary governmental liaison/inspiration in early stages, while NIST joined in later as a partner.

**Read more:**

[Networking Research and Application Prototypes Leading to Smart & Connected Communities](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2016/nsf16553/nsf16553.pdf) - NSF 2016 solicitation

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Combining urgent calls to action with the power of convening can lead to extraordinary collaboration between public and private partners. Several common obstacles are worth noting:

**Common pitfalls to watch for when designing convenings and generating commitments**

* Failure to coordinate first with other key Federal stakeholders.
* Only one event on the initiative is held, which limits the opportunities for momentum and an expansion of the coalition of organizations that are involved.
* An organization makes a commitment, but doesn’t follow up.
* Commitment fatigue (e.g. Mayors and certain companies and foundations continually asked to make commitments)
* Appearance of favoritism, which can be avoided by making the opportunity available to a broad range of stakeholders, or appearance of quid pro quo.
* Managing expectations.

**Necessary ingredients for success**

* Choose the right issue for level and levers of influence
* Understand context before engagement
* Commit firmly – and communicate openly
* Funding
* Create accountability and feedback mechanisms

**Choose the right issue**

Convenings can’t just be a photo op; they have to be a genuine “collaboration opp.” [Source: p. 68, Innovative State]. Calls to action need to focus on substantive challenges, and leadership should beware a dilution effect from over-frequent or inappropriate use of the approach. Choosing the right issue is important for generating commitments and follow-through from CEOs, industry leaders, and organizational heads. Be wary of choosing an issue that relies overly on legislative or judicial changes for sufficient advancement, should the convening be seen as unsuccessful and decrease future participation from external stakeholders.

**Understand context before engagement**

Understand where potential partners are coming from; tailor calls to action to allow each individual respondent to respond with their full potential while also respecting the uniqueness of each actor’s goals and agendas. Understand that resource constraints can pose tension and act as a barrier for building the requisite trust to allow partner relationships to grow and mature. Typical partners in collaboration have different goals and agendas: Non-profits compete with one another for a finite number of resources; Foundations do not always value and award funding to support collaborative approaches; private sector contributors evaluate participation based on the bottom line and what collaboration can bring to shareholders and customers; and academic researchers may feel pressured to focus on research questions that are publishable. In these contexts, it can be difficult to ask collaborative partners to devote time to working together.

Clarifying what each contributing partner gains from the collaboration is key to bringing people to the table and gaining buy-in. Clearly articulate incentives for different partners; by involving them in the creation of the common agenda, participants recognize its value.

**Commit firmly – and communicate openly**

Deep engagement by Federal leadership and clear forms of communication that effectively manage expectations are essential, especially for larger collaborations which may unfold over months and years. Joe Kochan reflects that at the beginning, US Ignite struggled with a “slightly unrealistic” point of view regarding the timeline for working with Federal partners. [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016] The organization realized that each piece of collaboration involving external organizations – partnership announcements with agencies, White House events, developing fact sheets – could be time consuming, but are of “chicken and egg” nature to the engagement: “Companies really value being a part of [high visibility collaborations], so it’s important,” Kochan says, but getting Federal partners on board requires a certain threshold of company commitments. “You cannot have one without the other,” he explains. [Kochan, J., phone interview , August 16, 2016]

Trying to advance public and private efforts in parallel must be aligned with a realistic understanding of the mechanics and timeline for Federal processes. It is also important for strong relationship building to occur early on, as partnerships can be tested. For instance, budget cycle timelines do not always align easily, and approval processes may pose additional hurdles. Genuine embrace of a co-creative approach to partnering and a firm commitment to the goals and objectives outlined at the outset of the effort are important foundations when challenges arise.

**Funding**

Where Federal funding can achieve strong bipartisan support – as evidenced in the experience of the BRAIN initiative – the result is that private funding sources are often inspired to contribute even more. [Chun, M., phone interview , August 11, 2016] The value proposition needs to be worthwhile for commercial partners but often, Federal funding can be seen as a trade-off – if a new initiative requests funding, it may be at the expense of other programs and funding. Funders need to recognize the necessity of directly investing in cross-sector collaboration, and encourage partners to allocate the time and resources to working together. US Ignite has successfully helped leverage resources from other sectors, benefitting greatly from this cross-sector collaboration.

**Create accountability mechanisms**

Demonstrating the value of collaboration to multi-sector partners can be a significant challenge to sustainability. But over time, the challenge evolves toward maintaining and ensuring accountability of individual partners. Increase the odds of organization follow-through with accountability mechanisms, including:

* Quantify the impact of the collaboration and sharing credit equally with everyone involved;
* Getting partners to communicate commitment openly in public so a record is created;
* Maintain touch points and relationships – as trust grows within the partnerships, people want to remain committed to people they know and support;
* Define metrics for success at exit, at the beginning. Much like a private investment, defining early on what the group anticipates success for the partnership to look like, and how each will exit at that point, is important to set expectations for roles, communications, level of effort, etc.
* Appoint co-chairs, or coordinators, for the group –who share the management role, scheduling, delegation of tasks and accountability of members, and can ensure long-term sustainability
* Create a web-page for the initiative so that you can provide updates on the progress various stakeholders have made.
* If holding multiple events on the same initiative, devote some time to focusing on progress from past commitments.

At minimum, accountability involves consistent follow-ups to ensure that organizations have followed through on their commitments. Often, an outside organization is in the ideal position to execute this.

**Read more:**

* [Valuable lessons learned for cross-sector partnership](http://www.presidio.gov/institute/media/blog/five-lessons-in-cross-sector-leadership) from Presidio Institute.
* [GDI – Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives report, March 2016](http://2uqnr73tzny3sl15p2nqglls.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Making-MSIs-Work.pdf)

## Implementation Guidelines

* Ways to inform organizations about the opportunity for them to make commitments
* 5 C’s for convening and follow-on implementation
* Guidance on strategically structuring commitments
* Collective impact framework [textbox]
* Textbox on how to solicit public engagement

### Ways to inform organizations about the opportunity for them to make commitments

* Issue a “call to action” -- ideally from the senior leadership in a speech or op-ed. It is also possible to publish a blog post that has examples for how different types of organizations that can get involved, and that has an online form or e-mail address. [[Crosslink web form]]
* Organize a workshop devoted to brainstorming ideas for specific commitments, ideally with one or more senior Administration officials present to convey serious intent.
* Leverage associations or professional societies that can inform and mobilize their members – particularly if they have entrepreneurial and highly motivated staff.
* Create a deadline and sense of urgency by scheduling an event.
* Amplify a sense of momentum by identifying a few organizations that are willing to act.
* Show people and organizations past examples of commitments that are relevant.
* Hold one-on-one conversations.

[Derived from Garg, K. Personal communication , December 20, 2016].

### The 5 C’s for Convening and Collaborating:

The process for effective impact networks is directly relevant for Federal leaders to keep in mind when considering how to structure effective convenings and their follow-on implementation:

* Clarify purpose.
* Convene the right people.
* Cultivate trust.
* Coordinate actions.
* Collaborate generously.

[Quoted from: Ehrilchman, D., Sawyer, D. and Wei-Skillern, J.,“[Five Steps to Building an Effective Impact Network](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/five_steps_to_building_an_effective_impact_network)”, Stanford Social Innovation Review, November 2015]

**Guidance for Strategically Structuring Commitments**

* ***Select the problem by clearly defining concrete pieces of high-priority challenges.*** Use [backcasting](http://www.thenaturalstep.org/sustainability/backcasting/), or backwards mapping, to identify and segment dimensions of the policy challenge.
* ***Be open to co-creating the solution context.*** Achieve a clear purpose centered on outcome-driven goals, but empower partners to adapt and co-create the collective mission and specific responses. Senior leadership has found it effective to structure by saying, “‘Here’s the broad goal. What kinds of ideas or commitments do you have to meet it?’ One convening participant reported that White House leadership brought suggestions to the convening, “they made it very clear that these weren’t exclusive ideas” [Calmes, J., “[Obama Counts on Power of Convening People for Change,”](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/us/politics/obama-counts-on-power-of-convening-people-for-change.html) New York Times, January 2014].

“To keep the conversation most effective, practical, and focused on generating powerful breakthroughs, you must bring in other points-of-view, not to dominate the conversation, but to challenge it.” [Kahan, S., [The Power to Convene and Set Context](https://www.fastcompany.com/1061235/power-convene-and-set-context), Fast Company, October 2008]

* ***Structure convenings around action.*** Convey an explicit expectation that participants will produce “deliverables,” or commitments for their specific follow-on actions and investments. [Calmes, J., “[Obama Counts on Power of Convening People for Change,”](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/us/politics/obama-counts-on-power-of-convening-people-for-change.html) New York Times, January 2014].
* ***Build trust.***The Trust Equation is a simple but powerful framework for understanding the behavioral elements that build trust and enable collaboration. [[Source](http://trustedadvisor.com/why-trust-matters/understanding-trust/understanding-the-trust-equation)]

[Embed graphic from source above: *“Trustworthiness = (Credibility + Reliability + Intimacy)/Self-Orientation” ]*

* ***Keep the focus on realizing the shared outcome.***  BRAIN, for instance, has been a success because science was put first at every turn, reports Dr. Miyoung Chun of the Kavli Foundation.
* ***Include the public.*** Create a platform where citizens can also contribute new ideas. Input can be solicited through digital engagement tools like [webforms](https://www.whitehouse.gov/webform/white-house-call-action-closing-digital-divide). [Click here to download guidance on how to structure webforms.] [crosslink with crowdsourcing toolkit]

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| **Elements of Collective Impact**  Five key ingredients underline a collective impact approach:   * ***Common Agenda****: successful partnerships start by coming together to collectively define the problem and create a shared vision to solve it. All participants are brought together to craft a shared vision for how things will look different as a result of the collaboration, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.* * ***Backbone organization:*** *a dedicated team within or outside of government orchestrating the work of the group, working behind the scenes to make sure that the collaboration is moving in the right direction. Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization and staff with a very specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. Coordination takes time, and none of the implementing partners has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why partnerships fail.* * ***Shared metrics:*** *shared metrics establish an agreed upon series of measurement that enables all participants to track progress in the same way. This improves the collective understanding of whether the partnership is achieving its goals and allows for continuous improvement.* * ***Continuous communication:*** *building trust and relationships across all partners and participants is critical to the sustained success of collaboration. Instituting a strategic approach to communication across partners has demonstrated to be key for addressing complex challenges through collaboration.* * ***Mutually reinforcing activities:*** *this means coordinating collective efforts to maximize the end result. This feeds on the trust and relationships across the partners and is supported by continuous communication. Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring that all participants do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.*   ***[Directly sourced from: “Kania, J. and Kramer, M., “***[***Collective Impact***](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)***,” Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011]*** |

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| **Example of how to solicit feedback and incorporate public engagement into the stakeholder process**  General suggested structure for public engagement:   * Articulate problem statement * Appeal directly: “We want to hear from you” * Ask for specifics: “Tell us about the specific, measurable new steps your organization is taking to help”   **An example webform follows below:**  **Organization Information**  Organization  Primary Contact Name \*  Title  Phone  Email \*  City  State  Media POC \*  **Announcement Summary**    In the space above, please provide a summary of any new announcements(s) or actions your organization will make that are contributing to [addressing the challenge highlighted by the Call to Action] These commitments may reflect a potential scope of work for the coming year. Please quantify each commitment to the extent you are able to do so; in terms of time line, resources required, people potentially impacted. Please limit your response to no more than six lines of text per commitment. This information may inform a fact sheet, report, or similar document released publicly related to this initiative.  **Announcement Details**    Please provide as much additional detail as you would like for each of the announcements/actions you described above. You are invited to expand upon the information above, provide background, and note any other information you believe is relevant to the commitment. Note: The subsequent section provides space to describe pre-existing efforts.  **Ongoing Efforts to Address [Challenge]**  If you are interested in describing existing efforts that your new commitment is building on, please do so above. Please limit a summary description to no more than four lines.  **Other**    Please feel to share, in succinct format, any other information that you believe would contribute to the success of this work going forward. This can include, for example, key facts and research findings, compelling examples, or ideas for increasing public awareness of this topic.  Source: “[White House Call to Action on Closing the Digital Divide](https://www.whitehouse.gov/webform/white-house-call-action-closing-digital-divide)”, The White House |

## Future Directions

Twenty-first century government must be participatory and inclusive, open to sourcing good ideas from anywhere. Leveraging convening power to align public and private sector commitments is an approach that tracks with an evolution towards collaborative governance. “As leadership shifts away from hierarchical decisions-at-the-top-slowly-cascading-downward, to social networks and self-organizing, knowing how to use convening power becomes critical, writes Harvard professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter Kanter, R., “[How to Use Convening Power](https://hbr.org/2011/09/bill-clinton-and-how-to-use-co)”, Harvard Business Review, September 2011].

Beyond assessing which other issue areas would benefit from the spotlight of a call to action, senior leadership should reflect strategically on the further potential for change as they structure future convenings. For instance:

How could we further capitalize on the potential for change from multi-stakeholder collaborations?

How could we encourage the development of more collaborative, synergistic relationships among the stakeholders that respond to our call to action?

How can we better utilize technology through backbone organizations to build more collaborative partnerships, assess on shared goals and metrics, and better understand indicators for success or failure?

What more can be done to encourage respondents to achieve scale and scope around more carefully tailored goals and metrics?

How to crowd in private investment into multi-stakeholder initiatives launched by the Federal government?

How to develop multi-stakeholder initiatives that are sustainable independently once incubated or encouraged by government?

**Read more:** [Understanding New Power](https://hbr.org/2014/12/understanding-new-power), Harvard Business Review, December 2014.

## Supporting Policies

Because aligned strategic commitments explicitly do not rise to the level of formalized partnerships, they are not bound by the same legal considerations for more formal public-private partnerships. However, calls to action and aligned commitments are consistent with recent efforts to expand public and civil society participation and to create more open, participatory, and collaborative government:

“[2016 Agency Open Government Plans](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2016/m-16-16.pdf).” OMB M-16-16. July 14 2016

“[President’s Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government - Interagency Collaboration](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/memoranda_fy2009/m09-12.pdf).” OSTP, OMB, GSA M-09-12. Feb 24 2009

[The Open Government Partnership: Third Open Government National Action Plan for the United States of America](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/final_us_open_government_national_action_plan_3_0.pdf), October 27, 2015: Third plan of efforts to promote transparency and accountability after consultation with partners

[The Open Government Partnership: Second Open Government National Action Plan for the United States of America,](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/us_national_action_plan_6p.pdf) December 5, 2013: Second plan of efforts to promote transparency and accountability

[The Open Government Partnership: National Action Plan for the United States of America](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/us_national_action_plan_final_2.pdf), September 20, 2011: Efforts to promote transparency and accountability

## Additional Resources

### Contact

Agencies interested in gaining more insight about crafting strategically aligned commitments and creating multi-sector collaborations are welcome to contact the following individuals:

* Talia Milgrom-Elcott at tme@100kin10.org
* Joe Kochan at joe.kochan@us-ignite.org

### Resources on Convening Power and Commitments

[*Gather: The Art & Science of Effective Convening*](http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/gather/GATHER_The_Art_and_Science_of_Effective_Convening.pdf)

Free digital guidebook for designing convenings, based on extensive research (both a survey of existing literature and interviews of practitioners). “While convening design is not a plug-and-play process, we discovered a set of critical steps and processes that can increase any convening’s chance of success.”

*Watch a* [*2 minute video summary*](https://youtu.be/47JLbrRoIvk) *on the key concepts surrounding effective convening.*

Borgman, S., “[The Power of Convening for Social Impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_power_of_convening_for_social_impact)”, Stanford Social Innovation Review, March 2016.

The powerful communication strategy of bringing people together

[“](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_power_of_convening_for_social_impact)[Understanding the Spectrum of Collaborative Governance Practices”](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/A-Practical-Guide-Excerpt.pdf), Kitchen Table Democracy (formerly Policy Consensus Initiative).

3 page excerpt covering principles of collaborative governance, misconceptions about consensus processes, and the stages of a collaborative process

“[The Role of Convener](https://web.archive.org/web/20150319030543/http:/www.policyconsensus.org/tools/practicalguide/docs/role_convener.pdf)”[,](http://policyconsensus.org/tools/practicalguide/docs/role_convener.pdf) Kitchen Table Democracy (formerly Policy Consensus Initiative)

3 page excerpt details best practices for a convening facilitator

Neal, C. and Neal, P., The Art of Convening, 2011.

Guidance for how to address emotional and psychological dimensions of participants’ experience

Calmes, J., “[Obama Counts on Power of Convening People for Change,”](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/us/politics/obama-counts-on-power-of-convening-people-for-change.html) New York Times, January 2014.

### Convening for collective Impact

Resources from the Collective Impact movement can help contextualize the convening approach, as well as provide actionable guidance for its implementation.

“[Collective Impact Toolkit](https://clearimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The-Collective-Impact-Toolkit.pdf)”[,](https://clearimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The-Collective-Impact-Toolkit.pdf) Clear Impact, 2016.

**Watch:**

Hanleybrown, F., Jesudason, S. and Kanyagia, A., [“Is Collective Impact the Right approach for you?](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/is-collective-impact-right-approach-for-you)”[,](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/is-collective-impact-right-approach-for-you) [F](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/is-collective-impact-right-approach-for-you)S[G.](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/is-collective-impact-right-approach-for-you)

72 minute webinar explains the collective impact framework and how to deploy it

Abbate, A., Kania, J. and Stevenson, A., “[Collaborating to create a common agenda”](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/collaborating-create-common-agenda),F[S](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/collaborating-create-common-agenda)G[.](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/collaborating-create-common-agenda)

90 min webinar which covers:

* “How to get to a common understanding of the problem being addressed—What is in? What is out?
* How to conduct research and identify potential indicators for progress
* How to establish ownership and buy-in from key stakeholders and implementers”

Kania, J., McCarver, C. and White, E., “[Setting the Scene for Collective Impact](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/setting-scene-collective-impact)”[,](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/setting-scene-collective-impact) [F](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/setting-scene-collective-impact)S[G](http://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/setting-scene-collective-impact).

88 min webinar which covers:

* How to identify champions and form a cross-sector group
* How to map the landscape and use data to define the problem and make the case for change
* How to include the voices of community members

### Resources for public engagement

[U.S. Public Participation Playbook](https://participation.usa.gov/)

Lukensmeyer, C., Goldman, Joe. and Stern, D., “[Assessing Public Participation in an Open Government Era: A Review of Federal Agency Plans](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Assessing%20Public%20Participation%20in%20an%20Open%20Government%20Era.pdf)”[,](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Assessing%20Public%20Participation%20in%20an%20Open%20Government%20Era.pdf)IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2011.

Research into what a more open and participatory government looks like.

Leighninger, M.,“[Using Online Tools to Engage – and be Engaged by – the Public](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/report/using-online-tools-engage-public)”[,](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/report/using-online-tools-engage-public) IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2011.

Describes ten different tactics public managers may find useful for engaging the public online, highlighting more than 40 different technologies in use today to support those kinds of engagements.

“[Integrating Collaborative Activities: Public Deliberation with Stakeholder Processes](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/integrating_activities.pdf)”[,](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/integrating_activities.pdf) National Policy Consensus Center.

This 38 page report examines how leaders can create even better solutions through collaborative governance processes, examining U.S. case studies where public deliberation and stakeholder processes have enhanced outcomes.

Holman, P. et al., The Change Handbook: The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006

Covers over 60 tools for facilitating group interactions; includes appreciative inquiry, community summits, dynamic planning, open space, and scenario planning.

### Resources for other collaborative stakeholders

**For implementing staff:**

Bingham, L. and O’Leary, R., “[A Manager's Guide to Resolving Conflicts in Collaborative Networks”,](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/BinghamOLearyManagersGuidetoResolvingConflict.pdf) Kitchen Table Democracy, 2007[.](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/BinghamOLearyManagersGuidetoResolvingConflict.pdf)

A 50 page report that addresses a critical set of skills— negotiation—needed by all managers involved in collaborative networks.

“[Guide To Taking Notes And Preparing Meeting Summaries](http://www.policyconsensus.org/uncg/docs/notetaking.pdf)” Center for Collaborative Policy, California State University Sacramento.

A 11 page guide that details best practices for documenting collaborative dialogue. It covers “how to listen, how to distill comments, and how to reframe comments with vocabulary that honors a concern yet takes off any potentially aggressive or offensive edge.”

**For universities:**

“[Finding Better Ways to Solve Public Problems:](http://www.kitchentable.org/sites/ktd/files/documents/UniversityReport.pdf) The Emerging Role of Universities as Neutral Forums for Collaborative Policymaking” Policy Consensus Initiative, June 2005.

A 20-page report on the emerging role of universities as forums for collaborative approaches to public policymaking.

**For funders:**

Scearce, D., “[Catalyzing Networks for Social Change: A Funder’s Guide”,](http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/catalyzing-networks/Catalyzing_Networks_for_Social_Change.pdf) Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2011.

Describes how convenings are integral to catalyzing networks and creating new opportunities.

**For philanthropy:**

Ferris, J. and Williams, N., “[Philanthropy and Government Working Together: The Role of Offices of Strategic Partnerships in Public Problem Solving](http://www.isgimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/PhilGovtWorkingTgthr.pdf)”Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy, University of Southern California, 2012.

How and why offices for public-private partnerships are created and how they function.

**For private sector partners:**

Kramer, M. and Porter, M., “[Creating Shared Value”](http://www.fsg.org/publications/creating-shared-value), FSG and Harvard Business Review, 2011.

Article and motion graphic on how success for business and society is interdependent.

White, D., “[Business Collaboration with Government: Does Reward Outweigh Risk?](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/business_collaboration_with_government_does_reward_outweigh_risk)”, Stanford Social Innovation Review, November 2016.

White argues that the challenges the world faces need both private and public sector participation.

### Further reading:

Leighninger, M., The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule is Giving Way to Shared Governance – and Why Politics Will Never Be the Same, Vanderbilt University Press, 2006.

Sawyer, D. and Ehrlichman, D., “[The Tactics of Trust](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_tactics_of_trust)”, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2016

Satish Nambisan, “[Transforming Government Through Collaborative Innovation](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/report/transforming-government-through-collaborative-innovation),” IBM Center for The Business of Government, 2008.