



October 2021

## Collective Impact

Using Collective Impact to advance birth equity

### California Preterm Birth Initiative

Preterm birth is a major public health concern, with noteworthy health inequities concentrated in Black and other birthing people of color. To reduce preterm birth and preterm birth inequities, the California Preterm Birth Initiative (PTBi-CA) engaged in cross-sector collaboration in two counties, San Francisco and Fresno, using the Collective Impact (CI) model.

CI is used to address complex social issues and to create large scale social change through the following five core conditions: common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support [1].

The PTBi-CA CI model encompasses collaboration between research institutions, community members, government agencies, and organizations to achieve birth equity at the population level. Through civic engagement and community mobilization, the initiative strives to create system-level changes that can turn the curve on preterm birth and address persistent disparities.

### Fresno

Starting in 2014, the Fresno County PTBi prioritized interventions across the reproductive life course to “serve all women and families in Fresno County, while also providing specific support and services to the communities that are at highest risk for premature birth,” including access to adolescent reproductive health services, and locally acceptable models of group prenatal care with wrap-around services. The initiative engaged community members through parent representatives, advisory councils, and community awareness events.

### San Francisco - Expecting Justice

Launched in 2017, Expecting Justice aims to improve maternal and infant health among Black and Pacific Islander people to reduce preterm births. Interventions include expanding access to community-based, racially concordant doula services, housing for pregnant women, and income supplementation during pregnancy for low-income persons. Additionally, Expecting Justice had parent representatives, mentorship for underrepresented staff and partners, presentations to researchers and partners, and community events to engage community members.





## Key Themes

Four key themes emerged from respondents in an evaluation conducted in both locations between 2017 and 2020. Some of these themes overlap with CI's core conditions, while others highlight distinct issues and priorities.

### Authentic Community Engagement

- Each location used different structures and processes to engage community partners.
- Respondents spoke positively about the commitment to authentically engage community members, including those with lived experiences of preterm birth.
- Several respondents noted that involving members of priority populations helped identify community needs and expectations, leading to increased ownership of the projects.
- Challenges included determining who should be involved, clarifying roles of engaged partners, and navigating bureaucracy to ensure community members were compensated in a timely manner.

### Decision-Making Process

- County-level data and community input were used to make decisions, develop priorities, and measure progress over time.
- Respondents spoke about the importance of local context and community leadership in decision-making and prioritization.
- There was at times a lack of clarity on specific activities, the priority populations(s), and who ultimately made these decisions.
- Respondents shared a desire for tangible results, sustainability of efforts, and a well-defined decision-making process.

**“...it is something new to see regular people who are affected by the issue be the ones who are providing the information.”**



**“I think true Collective Impact is taking your ego and throwing it out. And just keeping your eye on the prize, which is the women and the clients that we’re serving.”**





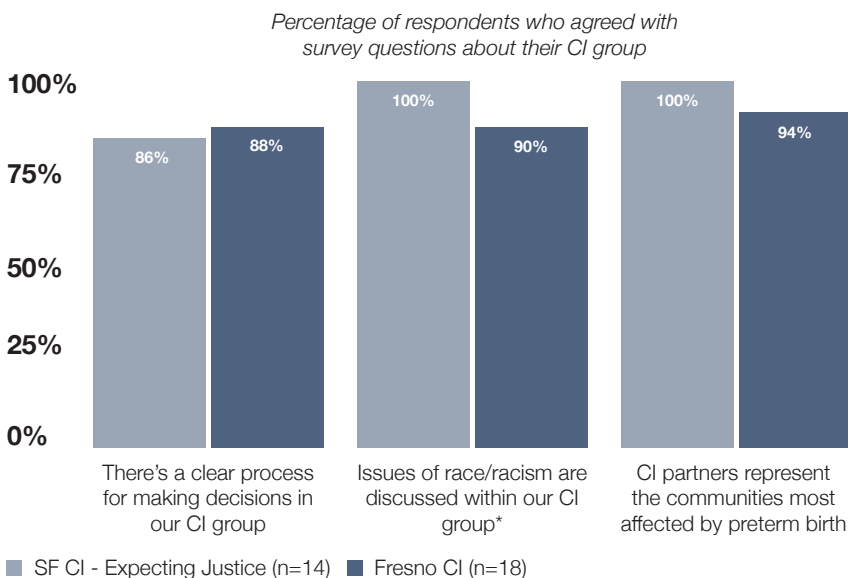
## Key Themes

### Addressing Race and Racism

- Respondents highlighted the role of racism and discrimination in preterm birth disparities, as well as the challenges in addressing racism within their organizations.
- In Fresno, challenges surfaced particularly during PTBi-CA's shift to exclusively focus on Black communities.
- In San Francisco, there were difficulties meaningfully involving the Pacific Islander community.
- Both locations made internal efforts to pursue racial equity, including trainings and explicit conversations.
- Respondents further identified the need for direct anti-racism actions and resources at the community-level.

### Candid Communication

- In both locations, respondents initially had positive perspectives about internal communications, but also described challenges later on.
- At the end of the Fresno effort, respondents felt communications from the PTBi-CA funder and leadership about changes in priorities and funding were insufficient.
- In San Francisco, respondents had conflicting opinions about communications when committee meetings were less frequent.



\*Data collected by Fresno CI; n=10.

**“We really can’t talk about preterm birth unless we’re talking about race and racism. But then there are some who struggled with that.”**



**“Ongoing communication is really hard and whoever is planning needs to really integrate people’s thoughts before the planning.”**



## Recommendation

Evaluation respondents offered recommendations within each of the four key themes:

### Authentic Community Engagement

- Value community members perspectives by increasing the capacity of partners to fully engage and placing significance on lived experiences in addition to academic and professional credentials.
- Ensure participants are adequately and efficiently compensated for their time and expertise.

### Decision-making Process

- Address local context early on and consider implications for decisions about priority populations and interventions.
- Increase community voice in decision-making with less influence from the university-based researchers and funders.

### Addressing Race and Racism

- Identify local actions that address structural racism and prioritize policy and systems changes that shift resources, power, and opportunities to marginalized groups.
- Create safe and supported environments for difficult conversations about racism.
- Ensure culturally-competent facilitation is in place to support anti-racist organizational change.

### Candid Communication

- Increase frequent, clear, and candid communication.
- Plan for proactive conversations prior to major changes that allow participants enough time to adjust and engage.

## Resources

- California Preterm Birth Initiative:  
<https://pretermbirthca.ucsf.edu/california-preterm-birth-initiative>
- Collective Impact PTBi-CA:  
<https://pretermbirthca.ucsf.edu/collective-impact>
- Expecting Justice:  
<https://www.expectingjustice.org>
- FSG Collective Impact:  
<https://www.fsg.org/areas-of-focus/collective-impact>
- West Fresno Family Resource Center - Best Baby Zone:  
<http://www.wfresnofrc.org/best-baby-zone>

## Methods

Findings in this brief were part of an evaluation by external partners at the University of California, San Francisco's Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies (IHPS). Evaluators used interviews (N=19), focus groups (3 groups; N=20), surveys, observations, and a materials review to collect data from April 2017 to August 2020. Results were shared annually with CI participants to gather feedback and interpretation.



## Reference

1. Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective Impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011. Retrieved from [http://cymcdn.com/sites/www.lano.org/resource/dynamic/blogs/20131007\\_093137\\_25993.pdf](http://cymcdn.com/sites/www.lano.org/resource/dynamic/blogs/20131007_093137_25993.pdf)

## Cite As

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