

Working Together to Break the Cycle

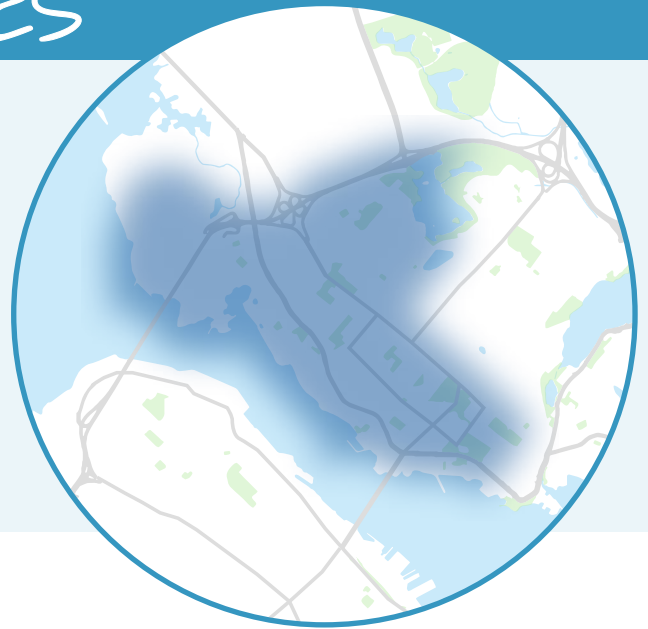
# SHARING PROGRESS AND LEARNING

2019

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# BETWEEN THE BRIDGES

**Between the Bridges** (BtB) is a community development initiative taking a **Collective Impact** approach to addressing complex social issues identified by the community of Dartmouth North. Collective Impact involves meaningful support and engagement of people with lived experience to work equitably with leaders from government, not for profit organizations and business. Their shared goal is to identify what needs to change and how they can work together, often in new ways, to generate solutions and take collective action. The complex social issues identified in Collective Impact require a long-term mindset for change and measurable impact.



## Collective Impact

The five core conditions of Collective Impact<sup>1</sup> are:



### BACKBONE INFRASTRUCTURE

Creating and managing Collective Impact requires a separate organization with skilled staff and resources to **serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating groups.**



### SHARED AGENDA

All participants have a **shared vision for change** including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.



### CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

**Consistent and open communication** is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and build common motivation.



### MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Participants lead **diverse activities that are coordinated** through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.



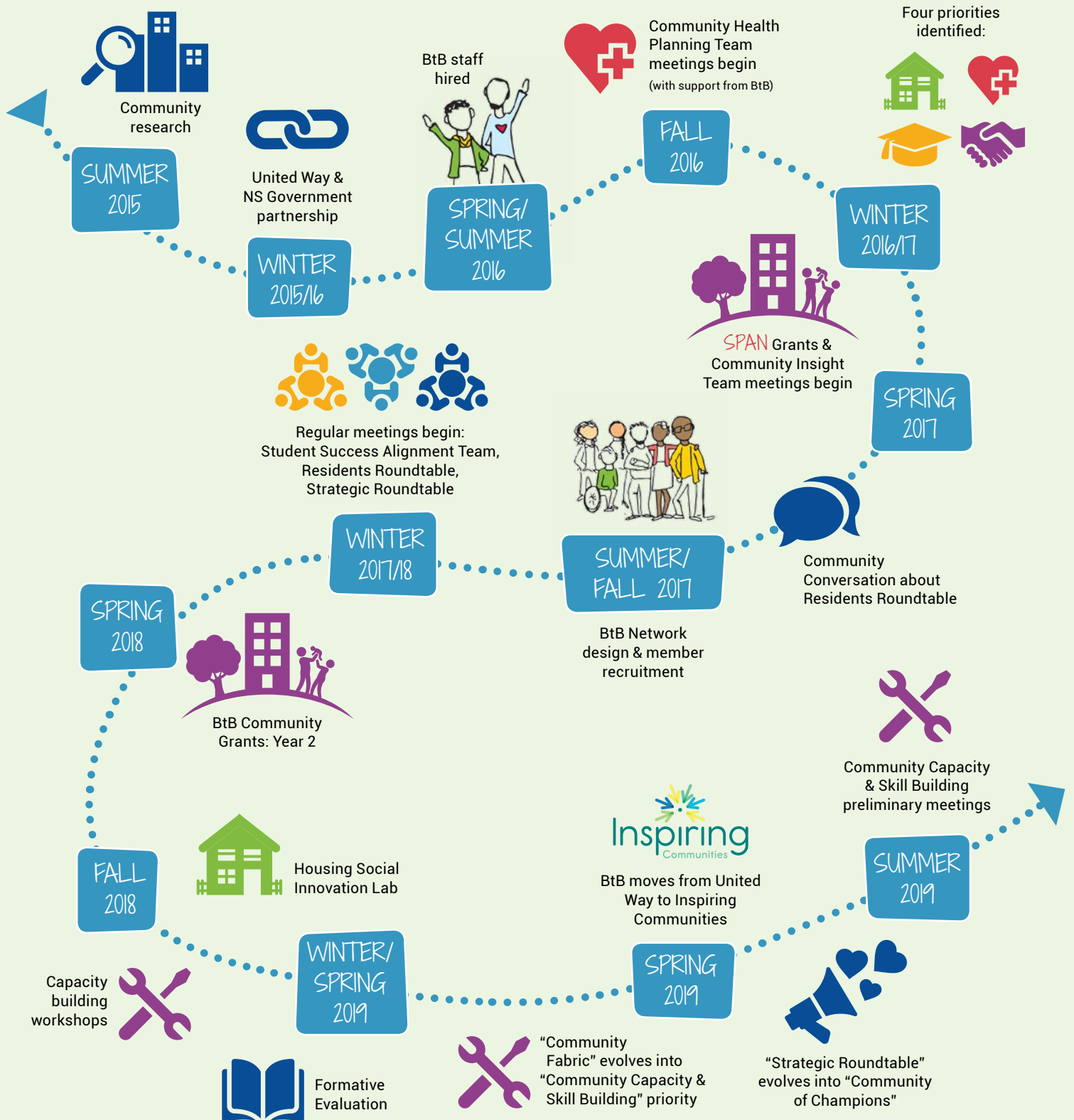
### SHARED MEASUREMENT

Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all activities **ensures ongoing learning, alignment of efforts and accountability.**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the work of **Tamarack** and **FSG**

# MILESTONES

This timeline is an overview of BtB's journey that sets the stage for the evaluation findings in this report.



# FORMATIVE<sup>2</sup> EVALUATION SUMMARY

## About The Evaluation

Between the Bridges requested a formative evaluation for three key purposes:

- 1** To evaluate the use of the Collective Impact framework during BtB's early-phase;
- 2** To highlight progress made and key learnings to be carried forward, scaled, and shared with other Collective Impact initiatives; and
- 3** To identify where to strengthen BtB as it moves into the mid-phase of Collective Impact.

A working group of the BtB Backbone staff and the **Inspiring Communities Evaluation Team** provided guidance, and drew on the **Inspiring Communities Evaluation Framework** to shape this evaluation process.



### Data collection methods included:

- Reviewing BtB documents and databases
- Observing BtB table/team meetings
- Conducting confidential interviews

### Between October 2018 and January 2019, evaluation staff conducted a total of 28 interviews with:

- Members of five BtB tables/teams **(23)**
- Provincial level allies associated with Inspiring Communities **(3)**
- BtB backbone staff **(2)**

### Interview participants represented the following tables/teams (some members are affiliated with more than one table/team):

- Residents' Roundtable **(12)**
- Strategic Roundtable **(8)**
- Student Success Alignment Team **(9)**
- Community Insight Team **(6)**
- Community Health Planning Team **(5)**



The following pages are a short summary of the Report findings. We invite you to keep in mind that summaries come at the cost of the rich contextual details that provide a deeper understanding of the issues. The full Formative Evaluation Report can be found on the **Inspiring Communities - Between the Bridges website**.

A note on language in this report: BtB network members = participants of the tables/teams, including backbone staff. Also referred to as 'table members' or simply 'members'.

<sup>2</sup> Formative evaluation supports program improvement. The emphasis is on forming, shaping, and improving. (**Evaluation Flashcards, Michael Quinn Patton**)

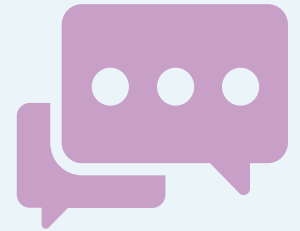
# HEARING THE VOICES of the BtB Network

## Key Strengths

Three key strengths from 2015-2019:

- Development of a shared agenda;
- The Strengths-People-Action-Neighbourhoods (SPAN) Grants; and
- Deep work on trust and relationship building.

“This group has deeply established norms... we are prepared to work through things; we are listening differently.”



### A MULTI-STEP PROCESS INFORMED THE SHARED AGENDA:



Community Level Data



Working Together Report (2015)



“What’s Already Happening” in Community



600 Voices in ‘16 Community Survey



Housing

With a focus on affordability and quality.



Accessible Healthcare

With a focus on increasing health services in Dartmouth North.



Student Success

With a focus on high standards, caring classrooms, and graduation rates.



Community Fabric

With a focus on safe neighbourhoods, social inclusion, and community pride.

## SPAN GRANTS

- Alignment to Community Fabric agenda
- Launched March 2017
- 6-12 month timeframe
- Community led and collectively implemented

### Successes include:

- Developing new relationships
- Engaging isolated area of community
- Supporting community events
- Increasing youth involvement
- Recruiting to the BtB Network
- Practicing/ demonstrating principles of collective work, consensus building, and relationships built on trust and respect

## TRUST AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Backbone staff facilitation and co-created group agreements have encouraged participation and helped BtB network members feel safe, comfortable, respected and heard. Themes from member interviews include:

- Appreciation for practices that build relationships and trust within the groups (e.g., check-ins and varied break-out groups at meetings so people get to know each other; consistently reviewing decision-making protocols);
- Feeling able to have difficult discussions productively;
- Feeling included in decisions pertaining to their table;
- Feeling a sense of collective responsibility; and
- Experiencing a solid culture and foundation established for future phases of BtB.

“...we use the consensus model. It’s intentional, thoughtful... everyone has a chance to share their views. If someone is not talking there’s a pause and the person is given a chance to contribute.”

# HEARING THE VOICES of the BtB Network

## Further Strengths

“As far as I know, I understand what I need to know about other parts of the Network.”

### CORE CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

SHARED AGENDA	BACKBONE INFRASTRUCTURE	MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES	CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION	SHARED MEASUREMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed 4 priority areas through community consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Backbone staff do well at: facilitating meetings, communicating meaningfully, encouraging participation, hearing and understanding members' views, and responding to feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaps and duplication of effort are reduced (e.g., supporting existing healthcare and housing initiatives).</li> <li>Activity snapshots of each group are shared with all tables.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings are held (monthly or quarterly) with some members connecting in between and/or contacting backbone staff.</li> <li>Members regularly participate in and feel engaged in their tables.</li> <li>There are ongoing communications about how broader community members can get involved in BtB.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA (Not yet established)</li> </ul>

“Whatever they [backbone staff] do is above and beyond what we need. They do exceptionally well at creating and sustaining teams – a phenomenal job.”

“When I've had ideas or suggestions, they've both been incredibly receptive.”



“We're all in the same boat; we all understand where we want to go; we want to see improvement.”

### OUR CULTURE & HOW WE WORK

INITIATIVE CAPACITY	EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	LEARNING & EVALUATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current funding meets the current needs and the stability and flexibility of funding is great.</li> <li>Respected champions and influencers are engaged, and they bring people and resources to the table.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A diversity matrix was developed that guides ongoing recruitment and awareness of missing voices.</li> <li>Barriers to participation are actively reduced: food is provided, as well as support for transportation and childcare; and attention is paid to plain language and reframing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information to support learning at the tables is collected, such as feedback forms after every meeting to identify and address concerns on an ongoing basis.</li> <li>Table members feel comfortable to contact backbone staff about concerns.</li> </ul>



“They do an exit survey every week – questions to support your participation and engagement. I appreciate the opportunity to engage that way.”

# HEARING THE VOICES of the BtB Network

## Areas for Learning + Adapting

Collective Impact is complex and challenging. There will always be points of tension and blindspots. The BtB Backbone Team is dedicated to continuously uncovering and addressing them through learning and experimentation.

“As we start to dig our teeth in.. we need... the right voices around the table – people with the experience; and if we don't have them we'll have to go out and get them.”

### CORE CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

SHARED AGENDA	BACKBONE INFRASTRUCTURE	MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES	CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION	SHARED MEASUREMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some members want clarity on how the 4 priority areas were selected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member feedback included: need to strengthen community voice; push for 'real' conversations; more time for members to review information for table discussions; allow others in leadership roles; and create clearer goals/objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is minimal understanding of other tables and a desire to know more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is limited communication between tables.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA (Not yet established)</li> </ul>

“I don't see how we can tackle the issues of Dartmouth North unless the residents are the focal point. Otherwise I'm just giving input.”

“As we go forward... there will need to be some funding diversification because BtB doesn't have the resources to pay "to do things". When groups come up with... things they want to do, they may require investment of financial resources.”

“I'm confused about what this group's role is... and what's the final goal?”



“They hear the stuff around the table fine. But people don't feel comfortable speaking freely.”

“I don't feel people are being heard.”

### OUR CULTURE & HOW WE WORK

INITIATIVE CAPACITY	TRUST AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	LEARNING & EVALUATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the future, additional resources may be needed (e.g., external communications and support for the implementation phase).</li> <li>It's an ongoing challenge to maintain engagement of champions and influencers due to minimal activity and role/responsibility uncertainty.</li> <li>Ready to move into implementation stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes members don't feel they can speak freely during meetings and that in some instances their views are not accepted or respected.</li> <li>There is a desire from some for more support, additional time, and more engagement in decision-making.</li> <li>There is concern/mistrust that the Strategic Roundtable (and not the residents) may have final decision-making power.</li> <li>Some feel that the ability to weather difficult conversations has not been tested because they have not delved deeply into action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some voices aren't present.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some members identified on the feedback forms that meetings are rushed and too full.</li> </ul>



# INTEGRATING VOICES

## Evolving Practices to Strengthen BtB



The BtB Collective Impact process has involved learning and adaptation cycles since day one. The table below summarizes the cycle captured in the Formative Evaluation. The first two columns are conclusions from the Report (based on interviews completed in early 2019) and the third column contains updates from the Backbone Team of how things have evolved from early 2019 to summer 2019.

ASPECT	EVALUATION MESSAGES	ONGOING EVOLUTION AND ADAPTATION
<b>Pace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall there is a feeling of readiness for implementing a collective plan of action, alongside an appreciation of the relationships and foundations laid.</li> <li>• Meetings can be rushed and overfull.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing time for tables to discuss pace and overall strategy, and integrating that input into planning and processes. For example, creating additional time to work together when feasible, such as an extra 15 minutes per meeting, a full-day session, and/or individuals or task teams working between meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>Shared Agenda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As some members expressed a lack of clarity about the origin of the 4 priorities, it's important to review the process as BtB moves further into implementation phase.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and sharing a narrative outlining the processes taken to identify the Shared Agenda and starting priorities.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen communication and understanding between the tables.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a regular email template for inter-network updates.</li> <li>• Engaging members to share information and engage directly across tables.</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative Capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backbone staff play many roles, and as BtB moves into a phase of increased implementation, bottlenecks may arise due to higher resource demands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with tables to identify future agenda items and co-create meetings rather than backbone staff coordinating.</li> <li>• Building capacity for all members to step into more roles and responsibilities. For example, Student Success A-Team members carrying out research and Housing Lab teams meeting independently of backbone staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Equity, Diversity &amp; Inclusion: Prioritizing Resident Voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community voice is not adequately reflected due to limited diversity around the table and members with lived experience not always feeling heard, respected or valued.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding ongoing conversations to identify and recruit additional community members. For example, new Residents' Round Table members and parents of students for the Student Success A-Team have been added and more are being sought out.</li> <li>• Meeting feedback forms are regularly used to facilitate discussions about trust and respect.</li> </ul>
<b>Clarifying Roles &amp; Power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for clarification of power and decision-making between Residents' Roundtable, Strategic Roundtable and Backbone Team. Some members mistakenly believe that the Strategic Roundtable is a higher level Steering Committee with final decision-making power.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing adaptation of the governance structure to align with purpose has resulted in face-to-face meetings of the Strategic Round Table transitioning to a virtual Community of Champions.</li> <li>• All network members were updated on the role and structure of the Community of Champions.</li> </ul>



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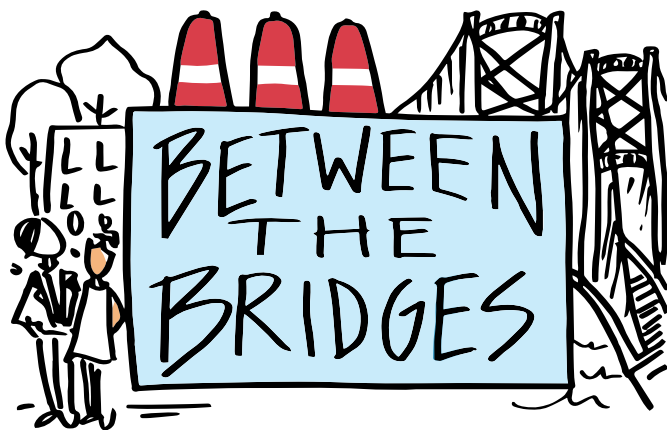
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