

# **CREATING ENDURING SOCIAL IMPACT: A MODEL FOR MULTI-SECTOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The nonprofit and public sectors are in the midst of a paradigm shift from addressing community concerns individually and competing with each other for existing funding to working collaboratively and thinking collectively across sectors to solve some of society's most intractable social problems. This transition requires new approaches that challenge assumptions and generate new knowledge. Existing models for change, while theoretically sound, are difficult to adapt to multi-sector transformational change because they are mostly targeted mostly toward single organizations in the corporate world. Undertaking multi-sector transformational change, change efforts that cross the nonprofit, public, and/or for-profit sectors, is substantially different than the vast majority of change efforts that take place within a single organization, differing in scope, complexity, and leadership.

This paper describes a new model, the Emerging Systems Transformational Change Model (ESTCM), specifically designed to address the unique needs of multi-sector change efforts. It is built on the theoretical framework of complexity science and complex adaptive systems, organization development, transformative and organizational learning, and multi-sector transformational change. ESTCM consists of five phases: (a) discovery and dialogue; (b) deepening, refining, and assessing; (c) infrastructure, communication, and coordination; (d) ongoing implementation and progress reporting; and (e) learning, celebration, and sustainability. These five phases represent a cycle that is designed to be iterative, building on new knowledge gained from the previous cycle. Aside from providing a new approach to multi-sector transformational change, the significance of ESTCM is its adaptability and flexibility.

Keywords: Multi-sector, Transformational Change, Transformative Learning, Organizational Learning, Complexity, Complex Adaptive Systems, Organization Development, Dialogue, Stakeholders

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today's most pressing social issues involve complex systems of relationships and interwoven networks, creating interdependencies that challenge even the best system scientists to discover potential means for alleviating negative effects. The nonprofit and public sectors are all too familiar with complexity, as they struggle to address these problems. There has been a growing realization in both sectors that today's complex problems will only be solved by bringing together the collective wisdom of all

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stakeholders and by considering how new thinking might be brought to bear on society's most intractable problems. For example, the cost of housing in many communities across the U.S. has become unreachable for many middle and lower income citizens, and the consequences are significant for those communities. The aging population is increasing the need for affordable senior housing accessible to transportation networks and for aging in place. Young adults, whose entry level incomes cannot support housing costs in high cost regions, are moving out for more affordable locations, often never to return to their roots. For others who must work in high cost areas, they are forced to find housing farther from their jobs, resulting in long commutes that impact their disposable income and the social capital of their community and at the same time increasing their carbon footprint. The complexity of the problem is mind-boggling to the extent that it can be paralyzing. Clearly, past approaches to alleviating these issues have not had significant enough impact, and new, more innovative thinking must be generated to introduce change into the system. But where and how does one begin to address the issue and inspire generative thinking?

To that end, new models for multi-sector transformational change have emerged and are continuing to evolve. These models “[allow] for emergence, self-organization, adaptation, learning and many other key concepts that have been synonymous with complexity thinking” (Richardson, 2008, p. 14). Complexity thinking is defined as “the art of maintaining the tension between pretending we know something, and knowing we know nothing for sure” (Richardson, 2008, p. 21). Nonprofit and public sector leaders are just beginning to grasp what is involved in transformational change but still have a considerable distance to travel to make complexity thinking a practice. Developing comfort with unpredictability and uncertainty, building capacity for learning and adaptation, and framing the work through dialogic process or meaning-making are still relatively new to those who work in the nonprofit and public sectors, but they are rapidly becoming accepted as best practice for transformative change (Bushe & Marshak, 2015).

A new approach to complex problems requires considerable collaboration and coordination across multiple organizations. Collaboration is particularly salient in these circumstances because without it, coordination will not happen. Collaborating across multiple organizations can be challenging at best and impossible at worst, therefore it is imperative that a foundation of trust and good communications be established. Participating organizations will also need to make their case, particularly to funders, for why collaboration is necessary to address the specific issue. Adapting Morten Hansen's work on collaboration (Hansen, 2009), organizations will need to demonstrate that collaboration will yield better innovation, more efficient use of resources, and less duplication of programs and services. The advantage of such collaborations is a greater impact on problems that have, in the past, seemed unsolvable.

Multi-sector transformational change also requires the formation of a coalition of community and organizational leaders with a high level of emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence. Emotional intelligence includes the capacity for emotional self-awareness, emotional self-control, adaptability, achievement orientation, and positive outlook (Boyatzis, 2009). Social intelligence competencies include empathy, organizational awareness, coaching and mentoring, inspirational leadership, influence,

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conflict management, and teamwork (Boyatzis, 2009). Cognitive intelligence includes systems thinking and pattern recognition (Boyatzis, 2009). While no one individual can be skilled at all of these competencies, the coalition will perform best if each competency is present in at least one coalition member. Hughes and Terrell (2007) noted that the combination of these skills creates what they call “collaborative intelligence” (p. 3). Furthermore, emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence are necessary for individuals to engage in transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000), with transformative learning being necessary to bring about transformational change (Henderson, 2002).

Undertaking multi-sector transformational change is substantially different than the vast majority of change efforts that take place within a single organization. The challenges are many, including identifying stakeholders, determining leadership, building trust amongst stakeholders, coordinating work, and maintaining momentum and motivation. The scope and complexity of multi-sector transformational change efforts far surpasses that of change efforts within single organizations. Leadership in a multi-stakeholder transformational change project evolves throughout the project and may be shared (Averbuch, 2015; Corrigan, 2015; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000), participatory (Corrigan, 2015; Roehrig, Schwendenwein, & Bushe, 2015), adaptive (Averbuch, 2015; Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012; Holman, 2015), distributed, and/or rotated. It is highly likely that it will look different at the various stages along the way. These differences require a new approach to multi-sector transformational change as well as the frameworks of transformative and organizational learning in order to succeed. Existing models, while useful in single organization change efforts, require adaptation and often translation to be beneficial in multi-sector work. There is still much to be learned about placing potential models into practice successfully. This paper will introduce one such model, called the Emerging Systems Transformational Change Model (ESTCM).

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The ESTCM outlined in this paper embraces the theoretical underpinnings of complexity, organization development, transformative and organizational learning, and multi-sector transformational change. Much of the research and literature in these areas has been conducted and written from the perspective of working within a single organization, and those organizations are more likely to be from the for-profit sector. Well-known authors, such as Schein (1988, 2009, 2010, 2013), Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2001), Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2001), Block (2011), Verlander (2012), Brooks and Edwards (2013), and Senge (Senge, 1990; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1999) all consult mainly, if not entirely, in the corporate world and exclusively within single organizations. Much of the theoretical framework of their collective work applies universally across sectors, but the processes or techniques often do not fit in the nonprofit or public sectors. The proposed model incorporates those theories while at the same time adapting the processes and techniques for multi-sector work.

#### **Complexity Science and Complex Adaptive Systems**

The theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) grew out of the work of Bertalanffy’s general systems theory (GST) (Hammond, 2003; Ramage & Shipp, 2009). Bertalanffy first proposed GST in the early twentieth century as a means for distinguishing the

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current reductionist approach to science from a systems and humanistic approach: “[The] humanistic concern of general systems theory, as this writer understands it, marks a difference to mechanistically oriented system theorists speaking solely in terms of mathematics, feedback, and technology” (von Bertalanffy, 1972, p. 423). His work on GST began with organismic biology in which he claimed that organisms could only be understood by both examining their parts and the interrelationships of the parts to one another (Hammond, 2003). This thinking evolved into differentiating between open systems and closed systems, where open systems are characterized by self-organization and dynamic equilibrium, the concept “that a system needs to constantly change its component parts to maintain its basic form of organisation” (Ramage & Shipp, 2009, p. 59), which accounts for systems change, differentiation, evolution, emergence, creativity, and self-realization (Hammond, 2003). Closed systems, on the other hand, tend toward static equilibrium (Ramage & Shipp, 2009) and cannot evolve without additional inputs (Hammond, 2003). Bertalanffy considered open systems to be hierarchical in their organization and display equifinality, the notion that there are multiple paths that can be navigated to reach the system’s steady state (Hammond, 2003; Ramage & Shipp, 2009). GST outlines principles that are found in all systems and which illuminate structural similarities across disciplines (von Bertalanffy, 1955/2009). Bertalanffy (1955/2009) proposed that these isomorphisms occur in society’s most intractable problems and that a systems approach would provide a means for alleviating these issues.

Bertalanffy’s work on open systems, particularly with dynamic disequilibrium, evolution, and self-organization, was foundational for the development of complexity theory (Ramage & Shipp, 2009). The concept of CAS was developed by the Santa Fe Institute and is described as “systems which are made up of many interconnected parts that are constantly self-organising and adapting in response to their environment” (Ramage & Shipp, 2009, p. 241). These components are interdependent (Ackoff, 1974; Morçöl & Wachhaus, 2009) and cannot be examined independent of each other. CAS often display unpredictable behavior (Bushe, 2013; Kent, 2011), and system outcomes are frequently uncertain (Bushe, 2013; Kent, 2011; Morçöl & Wachhaus, 2009). Multi-sector transformational change efforts take place within such circumstances, requiring a CAS framework to accomplish such endeavors. Four principles of CAS are particularly important in the development of ESTCM: self-organization, hierarchy, emergence, and learning. These four principles can combine to create resilience in organizations (Edson, 2010), an essential organizational capability for today’s fluid environment.

Multi-sector transformational change efforts are more easily understood and facilitated through the lens of CAS and the four principles mentioned above. The stakeholders (actors in the system) come together to do work that none can accomplish alone. The work is unpredictable, and although there may be specific desired outcomes, those outcomes are never certain. Desired outcomes may also shift over time as the environment changes. As the project launches, much of the initial time is spent on relationship building, self-organizing, and learning about each other and what exists in the larger system. As the coalition develops, hierarchies are established to facilitate the work, but as the work progresses, those hierarchies can shift with the process of emergence. The coalition must be open to holding the tension between uncertainty and the desired outcomes to allow solutions to emerge. In doing so, they begin to engage in

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transformative and organizational learning. When that occurs, they have become a resilient learning organization.

A system's resilience is related to its adaptive capacity (Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Edson, 2012). That capacity can be measured through the system's ability to reflect on and learn from its processes. Edson suggested "that institutionalization of competencies that support the renegotiation process [at the end of a project] (flexibility, versatility, and adaptive capacity) [are] important in developing a resilient organizational culture" (p. 27). New types of leaders are required for such an endeavor, ones that are typically referred to as adaptive leaders: "*Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive*" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 14). In other words, leaders can no longer operate through command and control systems but must instead create an environment where employees are empowered to work to their fullest potential. That includes creating an environment conducive to learning. Kent (2011) concurs, stating that "future strategic leaders will have to move beyond their traditional comfort zones and embrace the ambiguity that reflects reality, and consequently will have to develop appropriate anticipatory and adaptive skills" (p. 963). Leaders of multi-sector transformational change will need to develop their capacity for adaptive leadership and challenge their assumptions about how they perceive the world. This capacity is essential for transformational change, where the expectation is that all participants will need to challenge their worldviews.

### Organization Development

The need for new types of leaders is reflected in the evolution of the Organization Development (OD) field. The field began in the 1940s with Kurt Lewin's work in developing action research (Cummings & Cummings, 2014). His model of unfreezing, moving, and refreezing has endured for decades (Cummings & Cummings, 2014), but there is new movement away from this model. In their recent article describing this movement in the field, Cummings and Cummings (2014) illustrate these shifts with four continuums: (a) development versus change, (b) episodic versus continuous change, (c) planned versus emergent change, and (d) diagnostic versus dialogic OD. Multi-sector transformational change reflects these shifts: there is a need to develop adaptive capacity in a constantly changing environment where outcomes are uncertain and thus, cannot be planned for.

The support needed for multi-sector transformational change requires a new model. Bushe (2013) published his theory of practice for what is being called dialogic OD. The traditional model of OD, now referred to as diagnostic OD, placed emphasis on planned change, top-down control, and the OD practitioner as an outside, objective observer (Ray & Goppelt, 2013). In contrast, dialogic OD relies on the emergence of new ideas to guide the community toward its desired outcome, encourages the engagement of the whole community in co-creation, and recognizes that the OD practitioner is not separate from the larger system (Bushe, 2013). Dialogic OD

is not about incremental change, which is how to make the current system better at what it already is and does. Transformation changes the very nature of the community to be better at what it aspires to be and do. (Bushe, 2013, p. 12)

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In other words, dialogic OD aims to tap leverage points to restructure and redefine a system, pushing it toward a far-from-equilibrium state. Dialogic OD has the potential for greater success in multi-transformational change efforts than other change models, but it is still in its early phase of development. Leaders of multi-sector transformational change need to be introduced to the theory and practice of dialogic OD and be skilled in discerning what of the model is useful and what is not.

### **Transformative and Organizational Learning**

Transformative and organizational learning are key factors in restructuring and redefining a system. Transformative learning is focused at the individual level and is defined as an individual's ability to question and change one's worldview (Henderson, 2002; Perkins et al., 2007; Silberstang & London, 2009). Critical reflection is an essential component of transformative learning as well as being a catalyst for transformational change (Henderson, 2002; Wiessner, Mezirow, & Smith, 2000). Those involved in transformational change can choose one of two paths: they can be committed to the change or they will be compliant with the change. Critical reflection is more likely to create commitment rather than compliance (Henderson, 2002), and it is commitment that is needed for transformational change (Henderson, 2002; Senge, 1990).

Transformative learning and organizational learning are interdependent and are crucial for transformational change, with transformative learning as the stimulus for organizational learning (Bess, Perkins, & McCown, 2011; Henderson, 2002; Perkins et al., 2007). Transformational change requires organizational learning capacity in the form of aligning organizational systems and creating a learning culture (Bess et al., 2011). Reflection is as important in organizational learning as it is in transformative learning (Bess et al., 2011). Thus, for transformational change to transpire, organizations must be able to engage in organizational learning as well as transformative learning at the individual level. Leaders of transformational change will need to develop a practice of reflection, both individually and collectively.

Although Jack Mezirow is considered to be the father of transformative learning and Peter Senge the father of organizational learning, the theoretical underpinnings of both concepts come, in part, from general systems theory. Bertalanffy (1972) described systems philosophy as "the reorientation of thought and world view" (p. 421), similar to the definition of transformative learning. Vickers' (1968) concept of appreciative systems, defined as "the ongoing process of sense-making over time" (Ramage & Shipp, 2009, p. 79), could be considered a precursor to transformative learning. Vickers (1968) viewed adult learning as both a product of and catalyst for change and considered learning to be an iterative process that includes multiple perspectives. He argued that individual appreciative systems are based on assumptions about others made through interactions with them and that those systems can change with continued interaction. He considered dialogue the part of human interaction that seeks to reconcile and enlarge the appreciative systems of all participants. Finally, Vickers (1968) determined that appreciative systems consist of two interacting subsystems, a value system (what ought to be) and a reality system (what is). Comparing these two systems provides direction toward a goal. This idea is similar to Senge's (1990) concept of creative tension, that is, the gap between current reality and the desired future. Multi-sector transformational change requires

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participants to challenge their basic assumptions in order to find the path from the reality system to the value system.

### **Multi-Sector Transformational Change**

In multi-sector transformational change, transformative and organizational learning must happen at the coalition level, the individual organizational level, and the individual participant level. The complexity of this endeavor can overwhelm a project; therefore it is important to first start at the individual level with transformative learning and then build in organizational learning at the organizational and coalition level and possibly moving into the community level (Perkins et al., 2007). As noted earlier, there are not many change models that address this complexity. Dialogic OD offers great potential but is relatively unknown in the nonprofit and public sectors. Its highly academic approach may, in part, explain its lack of popularity. Dialogic OD includes under its umbrella a number of techniques that are familiar in the nonprofit and public sectors, such as Appreciative Inquiry, Future Search, Open Space Technology, and World Café (Bushe & Marshak, 2015), but are not understood to be part of the larger body of knowledge known as Dialogic OD.

The *collective impact* model, developed by the consulting firm FSG, has had far better success in addressing multi-sector transformational change. In 2011, Kania and Kramer published their seminal article “Collective Impact” in the winter edition of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, and the concept of multi-sector transformational change exploded across the sector. Their model of social change is based on having the following five conditions in place: (a) a common agenda, (b) shared measurement systems, (c) mutually reinforcing activities, (d) continuous communication, and (e) a backbone support organization (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The popularity of this model has grown substantially in the past five years; it remains to be seen if there will be long-term success. Leaders of multi-sector transformational change need to have a basic understanding of these two models in order to connect their transformative learning to organizational learning.

The success of multi-sector transformational change also hinges on the adaptive capacity of the partner organizations involved as well as the coalition itself. Vickers (1959/2008) discussed the adaptive capacity of a system in relation to the disturbances it experiences and determined that systems have limits to adaptability. He speculated that pushing the internal and external relationships of a system beyond its limits would result in instability that can cause either change in or destruction of the system (1983/2009). He claimed that when a system is overloaded by disturbances, it will revert to a simpler organization in order to preserve its coherence, placing urgency above importance and ultimately leaving the system in poorer condition (1959/2008). These disruptions, however, are at the root of transformative learning (Gilpin-Jackson, 2015; Henderson, 2002; Mezirow, 2009; Silberstang & London, 2009). Intentionally harnessing those disruptions to create new thinking and knowledge can transform a system into what it aspires to be (Bushe, 2013). In other words, in order to avoid dissolution of the system as a result of overwhelming change, the system must be proactive rather than reactive.

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## OVERVIEW OF ESTCM

The theoretical frameworks previously discussed in the Theoretical Framework section are reflected in the five phases of ESTCM. Phase 1, *discovery and dialogue*, is where the coalition of organizational and community leaders is formed and focuses on understanding current reality, identifying key stakeholders, building relationships, and creating a shared vision. Phase 2, *deepening, refining, and assessing*, continues to deepen and refine the work of Phase 1 while at the same time establishing a practice of reflection. Phase 3, *infrastructure, communication, and coordination*, initiates implementation and establishes feedback mechanisms. Phase 4, *ongoing implementation and progress reporting*, delves deep into implementation, launches feedback mechanisms, and looks ahead to sustainability. Phase 5, *learning, celebration, and sustainability*, provides a more formal evaluation of the project outcomes and processes, and requires the coalition to decide whether the effort is completed or continues. Figure 1 illustrates these five phases as an iterative cycle, with the double arrows indicating that at any time in ESTCM, the coalition leading the change effort may decide to return to previous phases. In other words, these phases are not necessarily sequential steps.

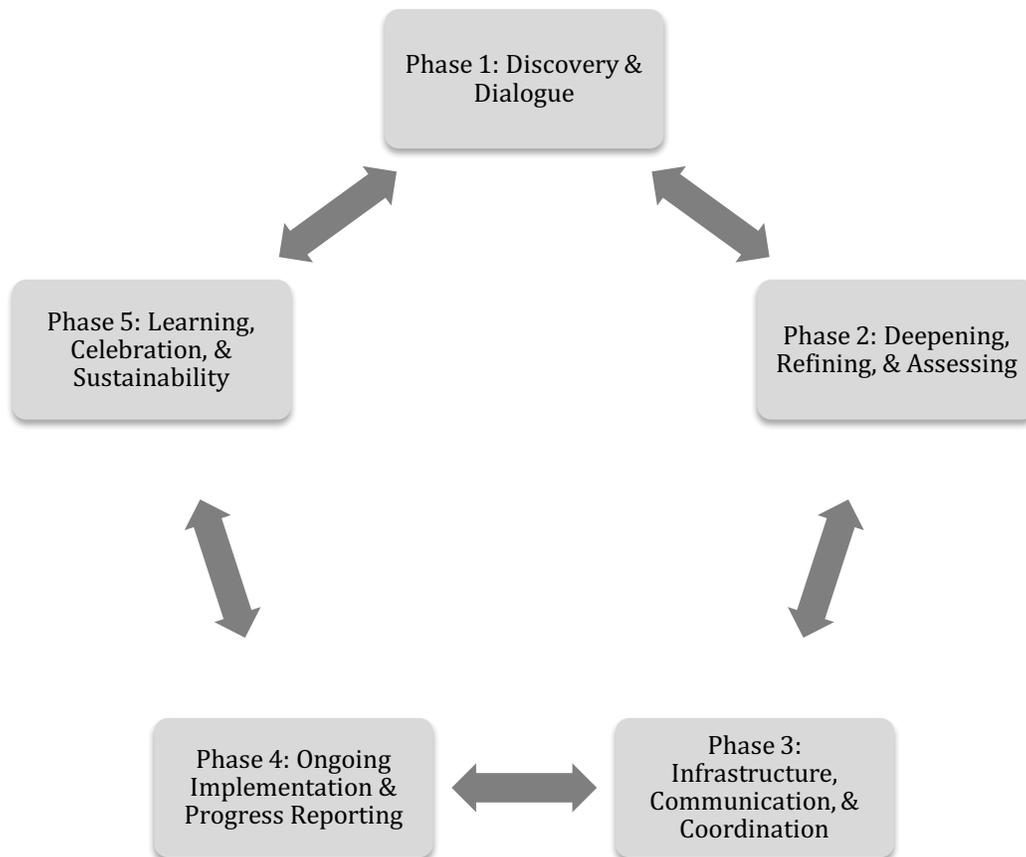


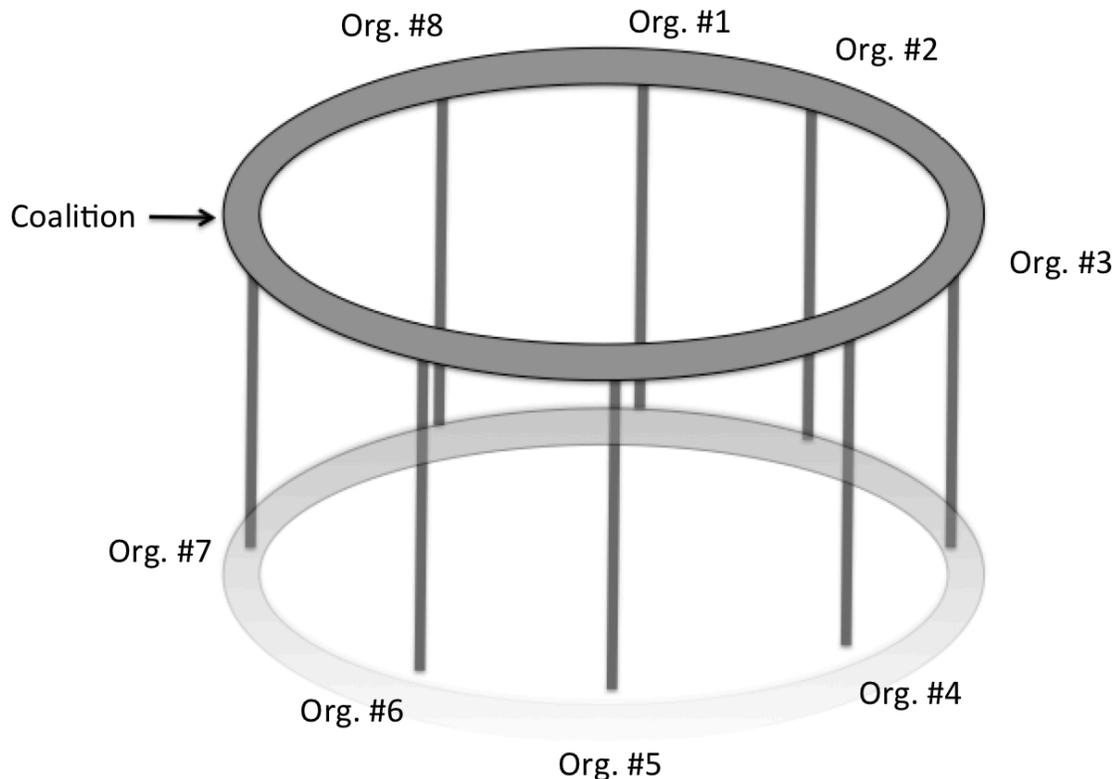
Figure 1. The five phases of the Emerging Systems Transformational Change Model.

As mentioned above, first step in creating structure for multi-sector transformational change is to engage a broad representation of stakeholders as members of the coalition. This coalition, in establishing its membership, needs to cast a wide net to include all those interested in and/or affected by the potential changes, what Born (2012) would

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describe as “the *unusual* suspects” (p. 42). Since solving complex problems requires new thinking and new systems, varied perspectives must be engaged: “Diversity of thought and experience is perhaps the single most important criterion for gaining new insight and accessing collective wisdom” (Brown & Isaacs, 2005, p. 53). Furthermore, it behooves this coalition to embrace detractors and welcome their opposing viewpoints, rather than shying away from them. Whereas detractors can often derail a coalition’s efforts, engaging them in the process of transformational change can instead convert them to avid supporters. Ultimately, the more diverse the perspectives, the more likely the coalition will make progress on the issue they are trying to address.

Once the coalition has identified its members and has convened for the first time, the members will need to begin to create a coalition structure that supports the project. Coalitions, as they perform their work together, create a ring of T-shaped organizations. T-shaped organizations are managed by “people who simultaneously deliver results in their own job (the vertical part of the ‘T’) *and* deliver results by collaborating across the company (the horizontal part of the ‘T’)” (Hansen, 2009, pp. 95-96). T-shaped organizations reach out to other organizations in an attempt to eliminate silos and create more collaboration (Hansen, 2009). This framework can be applied at the organizational level. Figure 2 illustrates what this might look like.



*Figure 2.* The organizational structure for ESTCM. Partner organizations create a coalition in the form of T-shaped organizations in a ring.

The Strive Partnership, located in the greater Cincinnati, OH region, is an example of a ring of T-shaped organizations. Established in 2006, it assembled a coalition of

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organizations and community leaders whose goal is to improve the well-being of children from birth to when they enter the job market. Members of the coalition include superintendents, early childhood educators, nonprofit leaders, business leaders, funders, city officials, and university presidents with the intent of creating greater collaboration and coordination and aligning resources amongst existing organizations and programs. The coalition set clear goals and established specific measures to track progress toward those goals. Over the years the public schools have experienced a 15.3% increase in kindergarten readiness, 6.7% increase in high school graduation, 12.7% increase in fourth grade reading levels, 8% increase in postsecondary enrollment, and 16.7% increase in eighth grade math scores (Strive Partnership, 2015). Moreover, the local postsecondary institutions reported an 18.5% increase in postsecondary preparedness. The Strive Partnership demonstrates the value in reaching out across sectors to collaborate and improve the overall community.

In addition to the coalition structure, the coalition will need a support organization. It is not realistic to expect busy leaders of existing organizations to suddenly take on the responsibilities of a transformational change project and still perform their duties as expected. Therefore, some form of support organization is required. The function of the support organization is to coordinate and facilitate work among the partner organizations and the project workgroups involved in the effort. The support organization can be structured in a variety of ways: it can be based within a funding organization, created as a new nonprofit, based within an existing nonprofit, established within a governmental organization, shared across multiple organizations, or driven by the steering committee (Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012). It may be dismantled at the end of the project, if it has an endpoint, or continue to provide support to an ongoing effort. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, those leading and implementing the change cannot add the responsibilities of a support organization to an already demanding schedule. Therefore, a support organization is essential for high-performing coalitions.

Finally, the coalition will also need to develop a project structure. Figure 3 depicts a very simple project structure. The support organization sits off to the side to indicate that it works to support the entire structure. The work groups consist of key stakeholders working on different aspects of the project. They must communicate to all other workgroups, the support organization, and the coalition, as well as their own organizations. The structure is intentionally a flat hierarchy with ongoing communication traveling all ways. The coalition strengthens and supports the project structure by holding the vision for all involved, encouraging experimentation, reflecting on the overall process, and creating and sharing new knowledge with participants and the wider community.

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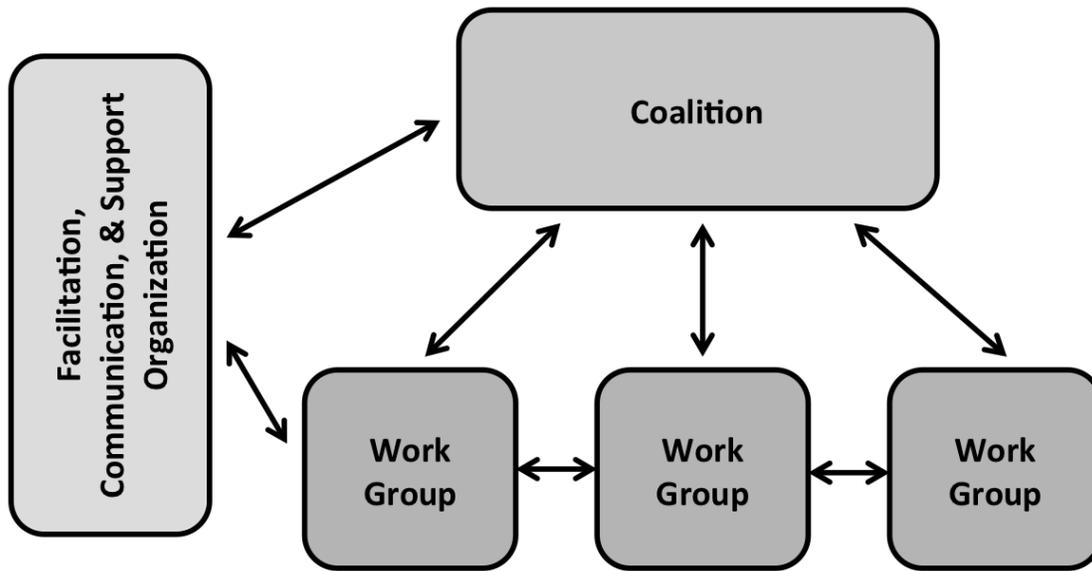


Figure 3. A basic project structure for ESTCM.

### The Five Phases

Although Figure 1 illustrates the five phases of ESTCM in a sequential cycle, the work of multi-sector transformational change is anything but sequenced. Building a social network map, a system map, and a community assets map, along with practicing reflection are key tools to grasping the dynamic environment of CAS. The ability for coalition leaders to understand the nonlinearity of complex problems will enable them to avoid the trap of linear and short-term thinking. ESTCM is described in the next sections in sequence for ease of comprehension, but it is important to reiterate that anyone who applies this model should be capable of holding the tension between current reality and the desired future, that is, what currently exists and the vision for the future.

#### *Phase 1: Discovery and Dialogue*

Like any new project, Phase 1 revolves around establishing a strong foundation from which the effort will launch. In multi-sector transformational change, that foundation is built on establishing and nurturing relationships with multiple constituencies: community and organizational leaders, stakeholders and partner organizations, and funders and key sponsors or champions for change. Multi-sector work begins with a sense of urgency amongst key organizational and community leaders (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Averbuch, 2015; Hanleybrown et al., 2012) as they come together to address a particular issue. These individuals form the initial project team, whose first task is to identify key stakeholders and partner organizations and invite and encourage them to join the effort. At this early stage, the expanded project team, now the project coalition, will need to decide whether or not an external facilitator is necessary. Does the coalition possess the suitable skills to facilitate the change effort on their own and do they have the time to commit to it? These skills include an intricate understanding of group process and complex adaptive systems. A facilitator must also be accomplished at engaging in

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transformative learning in order to model it for participants and engage them in such learning (Gilpin-Jackson, 2015). Finally, a skilled facilitator will be adept at setting the context and framing generative questions that encourage participants to challenge their assumptions (Southern, 2015). If these competencies are not collectively present in the coalition, it may be well worth the investment in a professional facilitator, particularly one experienced with dialogic OD.

Another significant objective of Phase 1 is to assess current reality. It is critically important to take stock of all that is being brought to bear around the particular issue: Who is connected to whom? What is currently being done with respect to this issue? What has been tried in the past and what were the outcomes? How do the partnering organizations interface? What is the capacity of individuals and organizations to contribute and what is the coalition's capacity for change? In addition to these questions, the coalition needs to define a clear description of the issue to be addressed and develop a shared vision of the ideal state. This work will enable the coalition to begin building a community assets map, a social network map, and a system maps. These three maps will provide a visual representation of current reality. Furthermore, social network analysis (SNA) can offer insights into the strengths and weaknesses of an effort. Social networks (not those of the electronic type, such as Facebook or Twitter) form informal structures within organizations and along with SNA (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002), are important features to consider for multi-sector transformational change:

A **social network** is a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called "nodes", which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige.

**Social network analysis** views social relationships in terms of network theory consisting of nodes and ties (also called edges, links, or connections). Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and ties are the relationships between the actors. ("Social network analysis: Theory and applications," 2011, p. 1)

Social networks are strengthened by many factors, including a supportive, open, and flexible organizational structure, a planning process that urges leaders to tap expertise internally and externally, a supportive and collaborative environment, a culture of risk-taking, the ability to maintain day-to-day functions simultaneously with developing innovations, and investment in technology (Cross & Thomas, 2009). Strengthening ties within the network is also critical: "Strengthening ties between members of a network increases trust, interaction, communication, information sharing, and diffusion of innovative ideas, which translates into increased adaptive capacity (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2015, p. 90). All these factors can be leveraged to increase a network's readiness to undertake transformational change and its ability to impact outcomes. Table 1 outlines the necessary tasks for this phase.

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Table 1

*Phase 1 Tasks for ESTCM*

Suggested Sequence of Tasks	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Network with colleagues re: feasibility of project	—————				
Assemble initial project team	—————				
Identify stakeholders/partner organizations	—————>				
Expand project team	—————				
Determine need for external facilitator	—————				
Connect with key sponsors & funders	—————>				
Build relationships	—————>				
Develop community assets map	—————>				
Conduct a network analysis	—————>				
Develop a system map	—————>				
Assess needs/clarify issue	—————				
Determine outcomes/shared vision	—————				
Determine contributions of each group	—————				
Identify performance measures	—————				
Assess individual & organizational capacity for change	—————>				
Develop proposal	—————				
Pitch proposal to funder	—————				

*Note.* ————— Continuous; —————> Continues indefinitely

This phase of ESTCM is crucial to the overall success of the change effort and cannot be accelerated or abbreviated. Coalitions need to invest the resources and time to embrace this first phase, an investment that will reap subsequent rewards. As mentioned earlier, leadership in multi-sector transformational change can be challenging, particularly in this phase. It is highly likely that those who emerge to lead this phase may not be the best leaders for ensuing phases. The early phases of ESTCM require leaders to build trust, create a shared vision, and mobilize resources where later stages focus more on

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implementation and evaluation, competencies that are not readily found in one individual. Moreover, this phase is a lengthy period where both the shared vision and the process need to emerge along with the implementation. In a single organization effort, only the implementation is emergent. Ultimately, this phase prepares change leaders for the uncertainty and unpredictability of transformational change and sets the stage for embracing emergence.

### *Phase 2: Deepening, Refining, and Assessing*

Phase 2 essentially expands and strengthens the processes put in place during Phase 1. The coalition continues to identify potential stakeholders and partner organizations; reaching out to key funders and sponsors; building relationships within the coalition as well as with stakeholders, partner organizations, and funders and sponsors; fine-tuning the community assets map, the social network map, and system map; and assessing individual and organizational capacity for change. As the coalition moves into this more detailed phase, it will need to determine what data currently exist and begin to develop a cursory action plan, keeping in mind that too much detail is likely to be a waste of time in a rapidly changing environment. The coalition members must also begin thinking about project evaluation, including evaluation of both processes and outcomes.

An essential element of ESTCM is to build capacity of both organizations and individuals involved in the change effort. During this phase, the members of the coalition will begin to create a capacity-building plan for themselves and other key participants that will be regularly updated as capacity is built and participants change. The plan should include a method for the coalition and key participants to gain some familiarity in the following four different areas of theory: (a) organizational and group behavior, (b) organizational culture and leadership, (c) organizational change, and (d) systems thinking and organizational systems. Organizational and group behavior underpins nearly everything that happens in organizations. Schein (1988) refers to these as human processes and contrasts them with structures. Structures are reflected on the formal organizational chart, whereas human processes reflect the reality of how organizational members interact. By understanding these interactions, the coalition can begin to grasp the culture of each partner organization as well as to shape the coalition's culture. Schein (2010) defines culture as

a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

Leadership within the organization directly influences the organizational culture. Understanding the various organizational cultures and their leadership will enable the coalition to assess readiness for change, identifying areas that need strengthening through capacity building. The capacity-building plan is likely to include understanding the dynamics of change within an organization. This is particularly important when it comes to dealing with resistance to change and to gaining client ownership of both the problem and the solution. What ties organizational and group behavior, organizational culture and leadership, and organizational change together is systems thinking, the ability to see

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wholes rather than just parts, to identify leverage points for change, and to understand that a shift in one part of the system is likely to have consequences elsewhere, some of them unintended.

Readiness for change is a significant component of a capacity building plan. Developing readiness for change takes place at two intricately interwoven levels: the individual and the organizational. Individual readiness for change

can be defined as a comprehensive attitude that is influenced simultaneously by the content (i.e., how the change is being implemented), the context (i.e., the circumstances under which change is occurring), and the individual (i.e., characteristics of those being asked to change/be involved). (Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris, 2007, p. 326)

At the organizational level, readiness for change is determined through employees' perceptions and is thus designated as perceived organizational readiness for change (PORC), "which is defined as 'organizational members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization's capacity to successfully make those changes'" (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993, p. 681). In multi-sector transformational change, these two types of readiness for change must be implemented in complex layers. There needs to be adequate individual readiness within the coalition of organizational and community leaders as well as within each of the partner organizations. Similarly, the coalition and the partner organizations need to demonstrate sufficient PORC.

Another key process that is initiated more formally in this phase is that of critical reflection. As stated previously, critical reflection is a fundamental practice of transformative learning and foundational to transformational change (Henderson, 2002; Wiessner et al., 2000): "Critical reflection...refers to questioning the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience" (Taylor, 2009, p. 7). It particularly challenges the assumptions of the existing power dynamics and the belief that current processes are productive when in fact they are not (Brookfield, 2009). Modeling is the most effective technique for learning and practicing critical reflection (Brookfield, 2009). The practice of critical reflection is an ongoing process throughout the life of the project along with developing a capacity-building plan. Table 2 outlines the tasks for Phase 2.

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Table 2

*Phase 2 Tasks for ESTCM*

Suggested Sequence of Tasks	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Determine what data currently exist	- - - -	—————			
Create a capacity building plan		—————→			
Develop an overall action plan		—————			
Determine evaluation options	- - - -	—————			
Establish ongoing meetings for reflection	- - - -	—————→			

*Note.* - - - - Intermittent; ——— Continuous; ———→ Continues indefinitely

The most important aspect of this phase is that practices and processes initiated in Phase 1 become more routine. Although none could be considered established patterns at this point in time, participants are moving from unconsciously incompetent to consciously competent (Adams, n.d.). Another significant accomplishment in this phase is the initiation of critical reflection. It is important that critical reflection begin early in the project to give participants the opportunity to practice and develop their skills. Without transformative learning, real transformational change is impossible.

*Phase 3: Infrastructure, Communication, and Coordination*

Phase 3 is where implementation begins. The coalition will create a project structure as illustrated previously in Figure 3, including the various work groups that will carry out the work, as well as establishing governance for the overall project. The individual work groups will create more specific action plans, again with the understanding that too much detail is unproductive and unresponsive to change. The coalition will also make decisions about how best to communicate their progress both internally and externally.

The most important decision in this phase, however, is that of creating a facilitation, communication, and support organization. As mentioned previously, this support organization exists as a separate, fully funded organization in some form to coordinate the work of the coalition and work groups. The coalition must be clear about the functions the support organization will perform and hire accordingly. It also functions to hold individuals and organizations accountable to their commitments. Together, the coalition and the support organization will fulfill several critical functions. They must decide on what system will be used to track performance and manage knowledge, hold ongoing coordinating and progress-reporting meetings, implement the capacity-building plan, and work with partner organizations to implement organization specific plans. Finally, the coalition, with the assistance of the support organization, must assess the risk of the project, which can be accomplished by analyzing the scope of the project, changes

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in the environment, the approaches used in effecting change, and the project’s structure (Verlander, 2012). Table 3 outlines the tasks in this phase.

Table 3

*Phase 3 Tasks for ESTCM*

Suggested Sequence of Tasks	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Establish infrastructure & governance for ongoing work	-----		—————		
Determine communications	-----		—————→		
Create a communication /facilitation group			—————		
Decide on system to track performance & knowledge			—————		
Form work groups			—————		
Develop work group action plans			—————		
Hold ongoing coordinating & progress reporting meetings	-----		—————→		
Assess risk	-----		—————→		
Implement capacity building plan			—————→		
Implement organization specific action plans			—————→		

*Note.* ----- Intermittent; ————— Continuous; —————→ Continues indefinitely

The key task in this phase is creating the communication, facilitation, and support organization. The coalition must be thoughtful and intentional in doing so. The structure of the support group needs to sustain the project, and those who staff it must be highly skilled in project management, facilitation, communication, systems thinking, and organizational change. Moreover, they are likely to be the ones collecting data, tracking progress, and managing knowledge. The success of the support organization will significantly factor into the overall success of the project.

### *Phase 4: Ongoing Implementation and Progress Reporting*

Phase 4 consists of two immense tasks. The first is to launch the use of a shared measurement system. This will require considerable technical expertise to ensure that such a system is functional for all partner organizations. The support organization will also need to provide training and follow-up to be sure all participants are using the system accurately to protect the integrity of the data being entered. Moreover, the support organization will need to test the overall measures for accuracy as well as facilitate discussions with the coalition and the partner organizations about the meaning of the data.

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The other task in this phase is to plan for sustainability, keeping in mind that, as Weisbord (2012) declared, “Sustainable change is an oxymoron” (p. 4). Rather, Weisbord (2012) believes change efforts need to sustain practices, something this model implies by indicating continuous processes. It is also important to note that although the task of planning for sustainability begins in earnest in this phase, it is something that needs to be kept at the forefront of everyone’s thinking from the start of the project (Devane, 2007). In order to sustain those practices, the organizational culture must support those practices and vice versa (Kotter, 2012). In other words, the coalition must be intentional about developing new practices as well as modeling the type of culture that sustains these practices. Aside from the processes already outlined or alluded to, there are some additional considerations for planning for sustainability. One is to design a process for any consultants involved to make a smooth exit and transition the coalition, support organization, and work groups to taking full responsibility for the ongoing work (Devane, 2007). Another is to create space for new ideas and processes to emerge (Devane, 2007). Finally, a project is more likely to be successful at sustaining practices if a variety of approaches are used to facilitate sustainability (Devane, 2007): large group techniques, individual and group coaching, focus groups, and skills training, to name a few. Sustaining practices in a constantly changing environment requires finding that delicate balance between stability and innovation. Table 4 outlines the two tasks described above.

Table 4

*Phase 4 Tasks for ESTCM*

Suggested Sequence of Tasks	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Launch use of measurement system				—————	
Plan for sustainability		- - - - - —————>			

*Note.* - - - - Intermittent; ————— Continuous; —————> Continues indefinitely

### *Phase 5: Learning, Celebration, and Sustainability*

Phase 5 serves one of two purposes, depending on the project. If the project has a finite endpoint, then Phase 5 functions as a final reporting and celebration stage with the purpose of disengaging or adjourning. If the project is ongoing for the near future, then the phase serves more as an evaluation, reflection, and learning phase where the coalition returns to reconsider previous processes as they learn more. It is a generative process that continues as long as the project exists. For either type of project, this is the stage where a formal longitudinal evaluation is conducted, with the results communicated widely. It is also time to celebrate successes, particularly if the project is ending with this phase. Multi-sector transformational change, however, is often a lengthy process and major milestones may not be achieved for weeks, if not months. Therefore, it is important to celebrate small successes along the way to maintain momentum for and commitment to the project.

For a project that is ending, the process of closure is often overlooked or minimized, but this can be a costly mistake:

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Endings leave a lasting impression that will impact the beginning of the next iteration of change in the organization. What you do here to prepare for the future and put closure on the past will influence the degree of readiness, willingness, and capacity in the organization for continued transformation. (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001, p. 224)

Attention should be paid to the structures and processes that continue to be advantageous and incorporate those into normal work routines (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001). Participants in the design and implementation of the change process must also be considered. The transition back to their previous work may be difficult, possibly even detrimental, so it is important that other options are discussed with those who have been thriving on the pace of transformational change (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001). For those continuing on, with or without consultant support, they will need to be confident that the new ongoing processes they have established are firmly embedded in their practice. Table 5 outlines the tasks for this phase.

Table 5

### *Phase 5 Tasks for ESTCM*

Suggested Sequence of Tasks	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Conduct formal longitudinal evaluation					—————
Plan for needed adjustments				- - - - -	—————→
Communicate evaluation results widely					—————
Celebrate successes	- - - - -	- - - - -	- - - - -	- - - - -	—————→
Assess readiness for disengagement					—————
Plan & implement disengagement				- - - - -	—————

*Note.* - - - - Intermittent; ——— Continuous; ———→ Continues indefinitely

### **Ongoing Processes**

Transformational change is not aimed at improving the existing system; rather it concerns a whole-scale redesign of the system that results from generative collective thinking (Bushe, 2013). ESTCM provides a framework for accomplishing that by emphasizing the importance of particular ongoing processes. In total there are 17 ongoing processes that can be divided into the following categories: relationships, assessment of current reality, feedback mechanisms, capacity building, and execution. These ongoing processes assume that there is no endpoint in the project but rather ongoing adaptation.

Much of the relationship building begins in Phase 1, but there are a couple of tasks that start later. Below is a list of the relationships ongoing tasks:

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- Identify stakeholders/partner organizations (Phase 1);
- Connect with key sponsors and funders (Phase 1);
- Build relationships (Phase 1);
- Determine communications (Phase 3); and
- Celebrate successes (Phase 5).

It is important to note that the last two tasks in the above list begin on an intermittent basis in Phase 1. One of the most effective ways to build relationships is through dialogue that seeks to create a better understanding of different perspectives on common concerns. These conversations engage participants in deliberate listening as a means to finding common ground and to committing to the effort to explore new possibilities (Born, 2012). Due to the complexity of the problems that are addressed through multi-sector transformational change, relationship building must be continuous. Omitting these tasks in any such endeavor would be the death knell of the project. Coalitions that choose to shorten or compress these tasks do so at their own peril.

The complexity of multi-sector transformational change projects also requires the coalition to continuously assess current reality. With the environment in constant flux, it is imperative that the coalition regularly appraises its situation and makes the necessary adjustments to their processes. Below are the tasks that fall into this category:

- Develop community assets map (Phase 1);
- Conduct a network analysis (Phase 1);
- Develop a system map (Phase 1);
- Assess individual and organizational capacity for change (Phase 1); and
- Assess risk (Phase 3).

Throughout the course of work, the coalition will discover new programs and services or the termination of existing ones, meet new people who are touched by the issue, and learn that some individuals have moved on from the issue. This new information needs to be added to the community assets map and the social network map, which ultimately affects the system map. As individuals come and go, new participants will require some level of capacity building, while changes in the environment will trigger the need for new risk assessment. The most current information provides the coalition, the support organization, and the work groups with the best possible circumstances for success.

Feedback mechanisms are critical to the success of multi-sector transformational change efforts. Data from feedback mechanisms help the coalition reduce the gap between their theory-in-action and how others perceive their actions (Dyer as cited in Weisbord, 2012). The data also facilitate individual awareness of how each participant both changes the system and is changed by the system (Senge, 1990). There are two tasks involved with

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ongoing feedback to the system: establish ongoing meetings for reflection (Phase 2) and hold ongoing coordinating and progress reporting meetings (Phase 3). These two tasks both begin on an intermittent basis in Phase 1, underscoring the importance that they become regular practices. Without such feedback mechanisms, the project would stumble in the dark and fail to create the generative learning that is required for transformational change (Southern, 2015). These feedback mechanisms provide a level of information that intentionally guides the project toward its desired future.

Capacity building becomes an ongoing effort as a result of the changes in the environment and the changes in participants. There are three tasks involved in capacity building at both the individual and organizational levels: create a capacity building plan (Phase 2), implement capacity building plan (Phase 3), and plan for sustainability of the ongoing effort (Phase 4). Likewise, execution is ongoing due to the rapidly changing environment. The feedback mechanisms provide information for continual adaptation of processes. As such the following tasks must be regularly executed: implement organization specific action plans (Phase 3) and plan for needed adjustments (Phase 5). It is important to explain that, like all models, this one is only partially accurate. Consequently, there is a significant amount of flexibility built into this model that allows for individual adaptation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Multi-sector transformational change requires the convening of key stakeholders to collectively engage in generative thinking that can illuminate possibilities for better outcomes. These stakeholders come together to form a coalition of organizational and community leaders and with the support of key funders and sponsors, work collaboratively to alleviate society's most intractable social problems. The success of these coalitions is dependent on the individual capacity of coalition members to engage in transformative learning and the organizational capacity of the coalition to transform into a learning organization. While there are several existing models that can guide this work, these models continue to evolve. Furthermore, the concepts, skills, and practices required to successfully undergo transformational change are still relatively unknown to most organizational and community leaders. Nonetheless, it is imperative to build individual and organizational capacity if society is ever going to make a difference in creating communities where the well-being of its citizens is of the utmost concern.

To this end, ESTCM offers a framework to build the required capacity for transformational change. It further offers flexibility and adaptability to each unique situation but with the caveat that certain critical processes cannot be omitted. Broad stakeholder representation is essential to mobilize and engage those who care about or are affected by the particular issue. Building strong relationships with those stakeholders, as well as sponsors, funders, and partner organizations, establishes robust connections that will serve to propel the project forward and reinforce the project during challenging moments. Identifying key champions, those who reduce barriers, open doors, and make connections, provides the project with loyal advocates. Fully funding a facilitation, communication, and support organization enables organizational and community leaders to focus on the creation of new knowledge and provides a level of oversight that will maintain the momentum throughout the project. Developing the transformative learning

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capacity of all participants and weaving that together to create a learning organization will ensure that the wisdom of all participants is brought forth to understand the nuances of the issue and explore possibilities. These five processes provide the backbone for any multi-sector transformational change effort, and with that fortification, the coalition will be poised to crest a wave toward significant social impact.

ESTCM is still in its infancy and will continue to evolve with ongoing research and as it is applied in various settings. Indeed, it is unlikely to become a static model. The model will begin its inaugural application with a group of nonprofits, municipalities, developers, funders, and local residents who are attempting to address the lack of affordable and supported housing in their region. As the project unfolds and proceeds through the phases, there is likely to be new knowledge discovered to enhance ESTCM. The model will continue to be built by the transformative and organizational learning that it encourages in its users.

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