The Power of Collective Impact in Creating Regional Trails

California Trails & Greenways Conference
April 24, 2015

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Laura Cohen, Western Region Director
Session Overview: Speakers

• Laura Cohen, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
• Yves Zsutty, Trail Manager, City of San Jose Trail Program
• Laura Thompson, Project Manager, San Francisco Bay Trail Project
Session Overview: Content

• What is Collective Impact?
• What are the key components to successful regional trail collaborations, and how do we overcome common challenges?
• “Playing well with others”: Working across jurisdictional boundaries and across agencies;
• Collaboration in action: California success stories
Quick Poll

Any burning questions or specific topics/issues you are hoping we’ll cover today?
Presentation Overview

1. What’s Collective Impact?
2. Successful collaboration models in California
3. New: Bay Area Trails Collaborative
4. What are the magic ingredients of successful collaborations? What are the pitfalls?
5. Tips for Success
What’s Collective Impact?

• Commitment of a group of actors & stakeholders from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem

• Significant shift from paradigm of “isolated impact” – single groups acting alone and competing for funding
What’s Collective Impact?

• Resources: Toolkit for working groups as they form a collective, determine strategic direction, develop implementation plans, and identify measurement indicators

http://collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/
Successful Models of Collective Impact in California

Bay Area Open Space Council: network of more than 60 non-profits and agencies dedicated to land conservation, stewardship and recreation

Achievements: Created Bay Area Conservancy program, secured $193 million of bond funding, which supported 425 projects, including 200 miles of trails
Successful Collective Impact Efforts Outside California

- **The Circuit** is a planned 750-mile trail network connecting 2 states and 2 metro areas – Philadelphia, PA & Camden, NJ - across the Delaware River.
- $23 million TIGER grant (2009)
- The Circuit Coalition: non-profits, govt agencies, private sector, supported by foundations, including William Penn Fdn
New: Bay Area Trails Collaborative

- Launched June 2014 by RTC
- Purpose: Advance completion of Bay Area trail networks by leveraging our collective influence to increase funding and advance best practices and innovative trail development strategies.
- Partners: Over 20 trail leaders from non-profits & agencies
Bay Area Trails Collaborative

**Early Actions:**

- Shaping Active Transportation Program (ATP), California’s largest trail/bike/ped funding program
- Advocating for MTC to create regional trail count program
- Innovative Public/Private Partnerships to advance trails
Tips for Success

Magic Ingredients of Successful Collaboration:

1. Common agenda and goals
2. Shared Metrics
3. Joint Action, Mutually Beneficial
4. Trust and Communication
5. Lead Organization
Overcoming Common Challenges

Challenges:
1. Getting agreement on goals/objective
2. Sharing workload
3. Commitment and follow through
4. Trust and Communication

Solutions:
1. Inclusive goal setting process; get buy in
2. Form action teams; if no volunteers, table the task. Start small, build on successes.
3. Task leads; regular check-in between meetings
4. Ask: what motivates your participation?
“Creating a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people”

- *Create trail building resources*
- *Provide technical assistance*
- *Advance bike/ped/trail policy and funding programs*
- *Create trail-user tools: TrailLink.com; guidebooks*

www.railstotrails.org