



# Idea to Impact

Impact Collaborative Projects and Programs

*"If every new initiative succeeds, are you being innovative? We need to be more high risk. If one in ten initiatives meets all objectives; we should be good to go! What eXtension Foundation has done is to support us to move more quickly to meet our objectives or fail fast."*

– Jason Henderson, Senior Associate Dean and Director of Purdue University Extension

**Submitted by:**  
NEXUS4change  
C. Theodor Stiegler,  
Executive Director  
[www.NEXUS4change.com](http://www.NEXUS4change.com)

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Team	Institution	Section
A New DEI [aka Dynamic Developers]	Prairie View A&M	A.1.
CIVIC	Florida A&M & U. of Florida	A.2.
DEI Indy	Purdue	A.3.
National Sustainability Summits	U. of Florida, U. of Nebraska, Florida A&M, Utah State, Mississippi State, North Dakota State, Washington State	A.4.
NPSEC	U. of Connecticut, Michigan State, U of Minnesota, Utah State	A.5.
Tuskegee Public Dialogue	Tuskegee U.	A.6.
Vermont DEI	U. of Vermont	A.7.
Thorobreds [formerly Nutrition & Ag. Literacy]	Kentucky State	A.8.
ZooAtopia	UC Davis	B.1.
UGA Water	U. of Georgia	B.2.
Healthy Georgia [aka UGA Nutrition Group]	U. of Georgia	B.3.
Virtual Park Ranger	Oregon	B.4.
3 Boxes [formerly 4 Boxes]	Kentucky State	B.5.
Gold Cards	Alcorn State, Kentucky State, Fort Valley State, South Carolina State	B.6.
Extension Kats	Tuskegee U. & Fort Valley State	B.7.
Southern Jagriculture	Southern University	B.8.
Southern Goal Getters	Alabama A&M, Alcorn State, Florida A&M, Tuskegee U.	B.9.
Innovative Thinkers	Fort Valley State, West Virginia State, Alabama A&M	B.10.
Trio Team	Fort Valley State, Tuskegee U.	B.11.
Straight From the Heart	Tuskegee U., Prairie View A&M, Fort Valley State	B.12.
Fourth Pillar	Florida A&M	B.13.
Southern Warriors	Alcorn State, FVSU, Tuskegee, Virginia	B.14.
Impact Champions	Fort Valley State, Alabama Extension, South Carolina State	B.15.
Kentucky Statewide Innovation Team	U. of Kentucky	C.1.
Flying Squirrels	UC-ANR	C.2.
Horse COP	U. of Kentucky	C.3.

Indiana Coming Together	Purdue	D.1.
Healthy Boiler	Purdue	D.2.
Nebraska Regional Foods	U. Nebraska-Lincoln	D.3.
Nebraska New Learning	U. Nebraska-Lincoln	D.4.
Mental Health Utah	Utah State	D.5.
Community Based Advisory Council	UMES	E.1.
Team VCE	Virginia State & Virginia Polytech	E.2.
Innovative 4-H Volunteer Strategies	Ohio State, Oregon State, Purdue, NIFA	E.3.
Sustainable Urban Foods	Purdue	E.4.
Innovation Retreats	U. of Minnesota	E.5.
Well-Connected Communities	U. of Minnesota	E.6.
Extension Education Center	UNH	E.7.
Bobcats	Montana State	E.8.
Impact Idaho [aka 4H Volunteer Recruitment]	U. of Idaho	E.9.
Cowboy Collaborative	U. of Wyoming	E.10.
Community MH Toolkit [aka Multifaceted Roles of MH]	U. of Minnesota & Minnesota Dept. of Health	E.11.
Cultural Competency Champions	U. of Maryland	E.12.
Opioid Crisis Response Team	CES	E.13.
Including Everyone	U. of Vermont	E.14.
Delaware Small Steps to Health & Wealth	U. of Delaware	F.1.
Heart Team	Utah State	F.2.
Kansas 4H Youth Dev.	Kansas State	F.3.
Nevada Nutrition	U. of Nevada	F.4.
Virginia State U. [VSU-SFOP]	Virginia State	F.5.
Wellness in Tough Times	U. Nebraska-Lincoln	F.6.

## Executive Summary

As the eXtension Foundation works to continuously improve the Impact Collaborative [IC] methodology and practice, the following report describes its status and progress in terms of IC Project Team's implementation of their respective Impact Collaborative projects and programs. This report includes Impact Collaborative project teams, programs, and initiatives that were part of eXtension's October 2018 and April 2019 Impact Collaborative National Summits, as well as a number of select teams born out of Impact Collaborative Designathons and Innovation Skill Building institutional/state events.

The report provides:

- An overview of trends and outputs of the IC methodology and process,
- A look at the challenges and apparent success factors of Impact Collaborative Teams,
- Select facilitator experiences,
- The perspective of several Extension Directors, as well as
- An individual view of each Impact Collaborative team that participated in either the October 2018 and April 2019 Impact Collaborative National Summits [in Appendices A.-F.].

With the Impact Collaborative as eXtension's core focus program for project innovation and professional development, now in its 3rd year, the services eXtension provides are increasingly based on intellectual property and knowledge developed with partners and contractors as part of the ongoing evolution of the Impact Collaborative practice. These services provide value, and while some competition with similar and related services persists, the Impact Collaborative offerings are increasingly unique and in demand for eXtension members.

The refinement of the answers to "what does the Impact Collaborative offer that you can't get anywhere else?" is also becoming much clearer. One recent response reported by eXtension staff was a participant calling the Impact Collaborative "Extension DNA serving Extension." Event evaluation highlights include that when asked if they would recommend the Impact Collaborative Summit to others, in October of 2018 - 72% of respondents agreed. In April of 2019 - 87% of respondents agreed.

Of the 51 teams reviewed, 38 had available data to indicate a progress-toward-implementation statuses. Of these 38 teams, thirteen are implementing their project [34%], nine are nearing implementation [24%], and fifteen are in the planning stages of their project [39%]. It should be noted that a number of teams have participated in Impact Collaborative engagements with a mandate and focus to maximize their professional development experience through the opportunities inherent in the Impact Collaborative engagements, and a lesser focus on actually implementing a project once they returned to their home Extension institution.

In working through the data, we have identified the following potential progress indicators for successful Impact Collaborative Project Teams to investigate:

- 1) Impact Collaborative Event Participation,
- 2) Whether the team is focused on professional development or project impacts,
- 3) Participation in eXtension’s online E&EO suite [<https://impact.extension.org/engage-empower-online>],
- 4) Consultation with eXtension IC staff for follow up and support,
- 5) Collaboration with other IC Teams,
- 6) The targeted impacts identified by the team,
- 7) A clearly identified project timeline,
- 8) Prototyping/ piloting efforts,
- 9) Regular team meetings,
- 10) Whether the core team is co-located,
- 11) Changes in team membership,
- 12) Outspoken public support from institutional/Extension leadership,
- 13) The level of financial support from the institution[s],
- 14) Grant-funding,
- 15) Dedicated hours to work on the project with expectations of accountability to leadership,
- 16) Whether partners for the project are identified,
- 17) Whether partners are engaged,
- 18) Local project events conducted by the team, and
- 19) Publication of project as the basis for a thesis, dissertation, or journal article.

Some of the key findings from examining these progress indicators include the following:

Progress Indicator	Key Finding
<b>Impact Collaborative Event Attendance</b>	<i>Teams currently implementing their projects [13] attended an average of 1.9 Impact Collaborative Events.</i>
<b>Consultation with eXtension’s IC Support Team</b>	<i>Of the thirteen teams currently implementing their projects, eight (62%) benefitted from engagement with the eXtension IC support team.</i>
<b>Targeted Impacts</b>	<i>77% of teams currently implementing [10 of 13 teams] had clearly identified targeted impacts.</i>
<b>Clear Project Timeline</b>	<i>Of the teams with a clear project timeline [7 teams in the sample], 71% [five teams] are currently implementing their project.</i>
<b>Publicly stated institutional leadership support</b>	<i>Of the teams currently implementing their IC projects, 77% [10 of 13 teams] state they benefit from publicly stated leadership support.</i>
<b>Piloting/Prototyping</b>	<i>36% of the teams currently implementing or nearing implementation [8 of 22 teams] identified formal prototyping or pilots as part of their effort.</i>

Table 1. Key Findings Overview.

The local results reported for some of the Impact Collaborative Teams include, for example, [1] increased sharing of innovative projects across the state in the Kentucky CES system, [2] a project pilot showing changing snack choices away from sugary pop-tart options toward apples and carrots, and [3] a new Extension-sharing e-newsletter with a 50% open rate. To get a feel for some of the individual team stories, we suggest a review of the postings on: <https://impact.extension.org/success>. An overview of the work of each of the 51 teams referenced in this report can be found in appendices A - F. of this report.

Beyond being a potent professional development resource for Extension professionals, the Impact Collaborative has excelled at allowing IC Project Teams focused and inspired project design work in sparking innovation, imagination, and iterating ideas. The teams also benefit from consultation with IC support staff and the engagements of the Engage & Empower Online [E&EO] suite of online co-learning, professional development, and collaboration tools. The Impact Collaborative's facilitator corps is an additional value add to eXtension members - as one IC facilitator put it: "The Impact Collaborative as a whole – the tools, the process, and the network of colleagues across the country – is the true benefit I've received from being a facilitator."<sup>1</sup> eXtension has come a long way from providing technology supports and training and is now growing into becoming *the* innovation consultancy for CES.

In working through the data for this report and in reviewing the research, work, and energy that has gone into the Impact Collaborative over the last three years, Nexus4change would also like to offer the following recommendations. The basis and rationale for these recommendations are detailed in section 5. of this report.

**I. Provide Project Management Training to IC Teams.**

Our first recommendation offers the greatest opportunity for improving impact by connecting the entire project management progression: [1] Project Design - [2] Planning - and [3] Implementation. To improve implementation rates and ultimately impact, we recommend targeted project management training and development focused on planning and implementation, by building on existing tools including the [Impact Collaborative Roadmap](#), PLAN tool, and IC propellor.

**II. Develop a Logic Model for Successful High-Impact Impact Collaborative Projects.**

To increase the number of high-performing teams, we recommend eXtension develop a logic model for Impact Collaborative Projects. This would give IC Project Teams focus and structure after which to model their effort based on the various Impact Collaborative components built over the last several years including eXtensions Theory of Change, and the IC Practitioner Competency Framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Weigle, see section 3.3 of this report.

**III. Adopt A Comprehensive IC Project Team Evaluation Protocol.**

eXtension is at the beginning phase of collecting data that demonstrates the efficacy of the IC Methodology. The opportunity is to improve the collection, analysis, and reporting. In addition to the qualitative data currently gathered on select teams, we recommend collecting quantitative data on all teams based on the IC Project Vitals tracking tool, and the evaluation tools previously developed for the Impact Collaborative.

**IV. Create an 'IC Project Team ScoreCard.'**

This recurring assessment would be based on the logic model (II.) and become a specific tool in the evaluation protocol (III.) recommended above. The scorecard would track data points including ones established as part of the aforementioned IC Project Vitals tracking tool and the ones laid out as progress indicators in section 2.7. of this report.

**V. Create an IC Project Team-focused Training & Development Suite.**

We recommend offering a suite of training and development opportunities for IC teams and team members that provides a toolkit of interventions based on the assessments, scorecard review, and comparative analysis of teams' work on their Impact Collaborative projects. Based on the ongoing IC work and the recommendations outlined above, eXtension will be positioned to identify early warning signs, diagnose team's challenges with, for example, their process and partnering efforts, and in turn, offer specific tools and interventions to address those challenges.

The findings of and Nexus4change's recommendations in this report provide a roadmap for the Impact Collaborative to further advance and demonstrate the profound difference it is making in communities across the USA. We look forward to seeing the Impact Collaborative continue to change lives.

## 1. Introduction and Overview

The Impact Collaborative [IC] as eXtension's focus program for project innovation and professional development is now in its 3rd year. The information in this report spans from the 2018 Designathons through the April 2019 Impact Collaborative Summit in Atlanta, Georgia.

The report is based on data from a total of 51 teams, 38 of which had available data to indicate progress-toward-implementation statuses. In section 2.7. of this report, we identify the sample sets that informed the learning and conclusions shared. Data sources included team interviews conducted by IC staff, video recordings of interviews with team leads and team members, data gathering instruments at the IC Summits, as well as various other reporting by some of the teams and eXtension staff.

This report will share the following: [1] An overview of patterns and trends for the IC methodology and process, and [2] a look at the progress indicators for Impact Collaborative Teams. [3] We share a few individual stories and reflections from the growing Impact Collaborative facilitator pool and [4] reactions from Extension Institution Directors about the Impact Collaborative engagements of their teams. [5] Finally, this report provides an individual view of each Impact Collaborative team that participated in either the October 2018 and April 2019 Impact Collaborative Summits, as well as a number of select teams born out of Impact Collaborative State events [in Appendices A. - F.].

The [eXtension Impact Collaborative methodology](#) and process has increasingly been formalized and is going to be published as a [chapter](#) in the [Collaborative Change Global Library and App](#). It leverages unique opportunities to create impactful results at the local level by increasing organizational readiness and capacity for innovation and change, by connecting participant teams with skills, tools, resources, and partners that can expand and deepen their impact.

## 2. Summary and Overall Trends

The following outlines some of the overall insights garnered after two iterations of the Impact Collaborative Summit in October of 2018 and April of 2019, as well as the ongoing effort to hone and further develop the Impact Collaborative methodology and practice to better serve CES.

### 2.1. The Impact Collaborative as a Competitive Advantage for eXtension Foundation

eXtension conducted a VRIO Analysis in 2017 – looking at the Impact Collaborative in terms of what is Valuable, Rare and unique, hard or costly to Imitate, and well-integrated and leveraged in the Organization (see Figure 1.) – and repeated this analysis in 2019. The Impact Collaborative now constitutes a competitive advantage, with clear potential to become a long-term competitive advantage for the eXtension Foundation.



Figure 1. Competitive Advantage [\[wiki\]](#)<sup>2</sup>

The services eXtension provides are increasingly based on intellectual property and knowledge developed with partners and contractors as part of the ongoing evolution of the Impact Collaborative practice. These services provide added value, and while competition for similar and related services persists, Impact Collaborative offerings are increasingly unique and in demand for eXtension members.

The refinement of the answers to “what does the Impact Collaborative offer that you can't get anywhere else?” is becoming much clearer with IC participants. One recent response reported

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VRIO>

by eXtension staff was a participant calling the Impact Collaborative “Extension DNA serving Extension.”

The eXtension IC team identified as some of its core Strengths eXtension’s unique access to a network with a presence in every county/parish in the USA, its expanding Impact Collaborative practice, and its growing national IC Facilitator Network. The key to unlocking the remaining unused competitive advantage is in having eXtension practice and operations focused on and organized around the Impact Collaborative. The organizational shift toward including a consultancy model is part of achieving this end.

## 2.2. Overall Impact Collaborative Outputs

Some of the data points showing the generative Impact Collaborative success are as follows:

**People:** Thus far, more than 2320 Extension professionals participated in IC events in 2018 & 2019, not counting scheduled events, webinars and learning circles. Several of the members of the IC Facilitator Corps built by eXtension have also begun to offer Innovation Skill Building Experiences on their own for state CES educators. Impact Collaborative facilitators now have the tools and resources to contextualize the experience for both large and small groups at their local institutions. Some coaches and facilitators were even invited to join the IC teams they support.

**Institutions:** In 2018, twelve institutions were part of local Impact Collaborative events. In 2019, fourteen institutions have either scheduled or completed local Impact Collaborative events. At the 2018 IC Summit in Indianapolis 32 eXtension member institutions were represented, while the Summit in Atlanta in April of 2019 saw 34 institutions participating. At the 1890 Extension Leadership Academy, 12 institutions participated in that Impact Collaborative engagement.

**Teams:** A total of thirteen IC teams participated in a local IC event and then attended an IC Summit. Eight teams attended both the October 2018 and 2019 IC Summit. So far, over 140 teams have participated in local, statewide, and IC Summit events from State Designathons to the Innovation Skill Building Engagements at the 1890s Leadership Academy, to name a few.

Extension institutions continue to find value in and pursue participation in Impact Collaborative Engagement in the form of the:

IC Summits: <https://impact.extension.org/summit>,

Local Events: <https://impact.extension.org/state-institution-events>,

Engage & Empower Online [E&EO]: <https://impact.extension.org/engage-empower-online>,

eFieldbooks: <https://impact.extension.org/efieldbooks> and more.

### 2.3. Impact Collaborative Summit Event Evaluation Results

The October 2018 Impact Collaborative Summit saw thirty-two teams from as many institutions gather in Indianapolis, IN. The following IC Summit in April 2019 had twenty-six participant teams representing thirty-six institutions. The following data is shared from the October 2018 IC Summit Event Evaluation Instrument<sup>3</sup> and the April 2019 IC Summit Evaluation Instrument.<sup>4</sup> The overall perception of the IC summits among participants was as follows:

#### **Recommend the Summit:**

When asked if they would recommend the Impact Collaborative Summit to others, in October of 2018 - 72% agreed. In April of 2019 - 87% of respondents agreed.

#### **Attend Future IC Events:**

When asked if they will attend future Impact Collaborative workshops and events, 47% responded 'Yes' with 22% 'No' in October 2018, and 70% 'Yes' with 11% 'No' in April 2019.

#### **“Did you get what you needed over the last three days?”**

This question about the Summit experience, “Did you get what you needed over the last three days?” garnered the following responses: 70% 'Yes' with 8% 'No' in October 2018 and 84% 'Yes' with 8% 'No' for the April 2019 Summit.

#### **“We now have a path forward that will enable us to achieve project implementation.”**

90% of respondents agreed with this statement in October 2018 as well as 86% of respondents in April of 2019.

When surveyed about their IC Summit experience, 95% of participant respondents<sup>13</sup> agreed or strongly agreed with the following: “We were able to enrich a growing, innovative, engaged project, ready to move to the next level.”

When queried: “What did the Impact Collaborative Summit provide that you can't get anywhere else?” a majority of respondents<sup>14</sup> identified the following key benefit areas:

- **Resources and Support:** key experts, coaches, and other participants, outside experts, unique networking opportunities, great tools, and a collaborative space
- **Structure/Organization of the Event:** focused and dedicated time to work together in person in an engaging environment
- **Content:** program development, concept diagrams, different frameworks for thinking through a project, graphic recording, mapping

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<sup>3</sup> From Summit Event Evaluation Oct. 2018: 64 respondents

<sup>4</sup> In the April 2019 IC Summit Evaluation Instrument with 51 respondents

Team leads queried by eXtension staff at the 2019 Summit about the key learnings and outcomes of IC Summit participation indicated<sup>5</sup> that the Impact Collaborative engagement helped their teams in the following ways:

<b>Outcomes:</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>New Idea</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>New techniques and tools</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Team growth (forming, storming, norming)</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>New innovation or increased innovation</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Filled gaps in project planning</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Uncover gaps in project planning</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Gave ways to tell our team/project story</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>New support</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Refined/new purpose</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>New partnerships</b>	<b>36%</b>

Table 2. April 2019 IC Summit Outcomes.

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<sup>5</sup> In the April 2019 Team Leader Post-Summit Evaluation instrument with 22 responses.

## 2.4. Follow-up Interview Trends<sup>6</sup>

eXtension interviewed 21 team leaders or team members in the summer of 2019, who attended the October 2018 or April 2019 Summits. Through these interviews, the following indicators were found to be emerging for teams successfully progressing through the Impact Collaborative journey:

**Progressing teams have members who are passionate about the topic/issue/problem. Teams that have shown the most progress (20% of those interviewed) shared that** the team, or at least a core part of the team, is so passionate about their project that they make the time and effort to help it progress without additional support, time, etc.

**Progressing teams have members who see the project as integral to their work, not an add-on on top of other priorities. Teams that have shown the most progress (26% of those interviewed)** mentioned that their project is directly related to team members' work. About 50% of teams interviewed mentioned they have Director/Administrator support. However, even with that support, 13% shared that this is "add-on" responsibility and it is still hard to prioritize with their other work. One team mentioned release time being given to help prioritize this project work.

**Progressing teams find time to meet.** 50% of all teams interviewed mentioned how hard it is to meet once they all go back "home." 100% of multi-institution teams mentioned this.

**Progressing team members have knowledge, skills, and abilities in both the project topic/issue and basic program development skills, including community development - or are actively learning these skills.** Most teams interviewed do not have all of these skills among their team members. 33% of teams interviewed identified the need for additional knowledge, skills, and abilities related to program development and/or delivery. We have discovered through our coaching of winning teams, that the vast majority struggle to define the impact they are trying to make; they struggle to answer "...to what end?" of their project or program.

**Progressing teams create a project timeline with milestones and objectives. Teams that have shown the most progress (26% of those interviewed)** had timelines: 2 short-term (1 year or less), 2 long term (2+ years).

**Progressing teams test assumptions, pilot pieces of their project ideas, validate findings, and iterate based on those findings in succession thus creating a project/program that is more likely to succeed.** Teams that have shown the most progress (26% of those interviewed) have completed a pilot so far.

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<sup>6</sup> From an eXtension Report completed by Molly Immendorf

## 2.5. Comparison Data for Social and Community Impact Projects

To establish context for success expectations of IC project teams, we wanted to take a look at project success generally and specifically the success rates of social or community impact projects.

Social impact projects are much like entrepreneurial ventures: According to U.S. data,<sup>7</sup> of all small businesses started in the US in 2014:

- 80 percent made it to the second year (2015);
- 70 percent made it to the third year (2016);
- 62 percent made it to the fourth year (2017);
- 56 percent made it to the fifth year (2018).

Globally this success rate is even lower. In 2017, the World Innovation Forum (WIF) and World Economic Forum (WEF), started an initiative<sup>8</sup> to increase the entrepreneurial success rate from 10% to 20% by 2035 so as to significantly increase prosperity in participating countries. Furthermore, according to data from 4pm.com, most organizations have a 70 percent project failure rate,<sup>9</sup> and only 64 percent of projects meet their goals.<sup>10</sup>

One measure of success for social and community impact projects is looking at the implementation rates of initiated projects. However, eXtension is not alone in the challenge to develop clear measures of success for implementation. We inquired with both United Way and Otto Scharmer's [u.lab-S](#) initiative and found that neither had summary data on typical implementation rates for their projects easily available.

It is, however, clear that many communities and organizations are yearning for social impact approaches like the Impact Collaborative to make a difference. The support for Otto Scharmer's u.lab-S initiative work<sup>11</sup> is one example of such efforts. Teaming data in u.lab-S. provided the following averages: 4.3 core members per team, 10.2 extended members per team, and 21 expected external stakeholders.<sup>12</sup>

As the Impact Collaborative grows, we look forward to gaining insight on team and partnering constellations of Impact Collaborative teams and how these factors contribute to success and implementation. We believe that the factors identified in section 2.7. of this report can lay the foundation for evaluation standards for social impact and community impact projects and initiatives that could find adoption beyond CES.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://smallbiztrends.com/2019/03/startup-statistics-small-business.html> - from

[https://www.bls.gov/bdm/us\\_age\\_naics\\_00\\_table7.txt](https://www.bls.gov/bdm/us_age_naics_00_table7.txt)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2017/10/30/ulab-faculty-becomes-world-innovation-forums-ambassador-for-bangladesh>

<sup>9</sup> <https://learn.q2.com/project-management-statistics>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wrike.com/blog/complete-collection-project-management-statistics-2015/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.presencing.org/u-lab-s>

<sup>12</sup> From email correspondence between u.lab-S. staff and NEXUS4change staff Carol Gorelick - this data based on 106 team responses out of approx. 300 teams who are currently participating in u.lab-S.

## 2.6. Implementation Rates of Collaborative Projects in this Report

One way to look at the success of Impact Collaborative Project Teams is to consider their ability to implement their project plans. This report covers a total of 51 IC Project teams. Based on review of the data available, their project implementation statuses are as follows:

Implementation Status	# of Teams
Implementing:	13
Nearing implementation:	9
In planning process:	15
Stagnant:	1
Teams subtotal	38
Insufficient Data:	13
Discontinued:	-
Total # of teams	51

Table 3. Project Implementation Status of IC Project Teams.

This report is based largely on qualitative data from reporting at the two Impact Collaborative Summits, video recordings of interviews with team members from Impact Collaborative engagements, as well as interviews with team leads conducted by eXtension staff in the summer of 2019, and the feedback from ongoing IC consultations with select teams. Only limited quantitative data was available - most of it focused on the overall individual participant experience, rather than team project implementation, progress, and impact.

## 2.7. Progress Indicators: What Drives Successful Projects?

In the search for the often elusive tangible local ‘Level B’ impact, we felt it important to pursue the concept of “impact indicators” that was the focus of much of our evaluation conversations in 2017 and part of 2018. We have identified these indicators – that seem to indicate progress or issue a challenge to success for the respective project – from our past research and evaluation of the Impact Collaborative, the interview findings outlined above in section 2.5., and based them on past and recent interactions with IC teams and their reports on barriers and needed supports including review of the from the ‘Post-Summit Project Status’ tool and ‘IC Projects Vitals Tracker’ used at the 2018 IC Summit, and ‘IC Summit Teams Feedback’ interviews conducted in the summer of 2019, for example.

Our key findings include the following:

Progress Indicator	Key Finding
Impact Collaborative Event Attendance	<i>Teams currently implementing their projects [13] attended an average of 1.9 Impact Collaborative Events.</i>
Engagement with eXtension’s IC Support Team	<i>Of the 13 teams currently implementing their projects, 8 (62%) benefitted from engagement with the eXtension IC support team.</i>
Targeted Impacts	<i>77% of teams currently implementing [10 of 13 teams] had clearly identified targeted impacts.</i>
	<i>Only three of the teams that lacked clearly identified targeted impacts are currently implementing any part of their project.</i>
Clear Project Timeline	<i>Of the teams with a clear project timeline [7 teams in the sample], 71% [5 teams] are currently implementing their project.</i>
Regular Team Meetings	<i>29% of teams interviewed [2 of 7 teams] specified that they are holding regular team meetings.</i>
Publicly stated institutional leadership support	<i>Of the teams currently implementing their IC projects, 77% [10 of 13 teams] state they benefit from publicly stated leadership support.</i>
Piloting/Prototyping	<i>36% of the teams currently implementing or nearing implementation [8 of 22 teams] identified formal prototyping or pilots as part of their effort.</i>

Table 4. Key Findings.

In detail the progress indicators identified are as follows:

**Participation in IC events:** The IC methodology and practice includes a rich toolset and supports from facilitators and eXtension coaches including opportunities for post-event consultation and E&EO opportunities. As a result, with greater participation in multiple and successive engagements in the Impact Collaborative process, teams will more efficiently progress in their project toward implementation and targeted impacts.

*The teams currently surveyed participated in at least one and up to three Impact Collaborative events, either IC Summits, or a version of the IC Designathon or Innovation Skill Building events. Overall, teams either implementing, nearing implementation, or currently planning implementation, attended an average 1.76 IC events. Teams currently implementing attended 1.9 Impact Collaborative Events. Teams’ event attendance as related to their progress toward implementation is displayed in the graphic below. 15 teams that attended two or more IC events are either implementing or nearing implementation of their projects.*

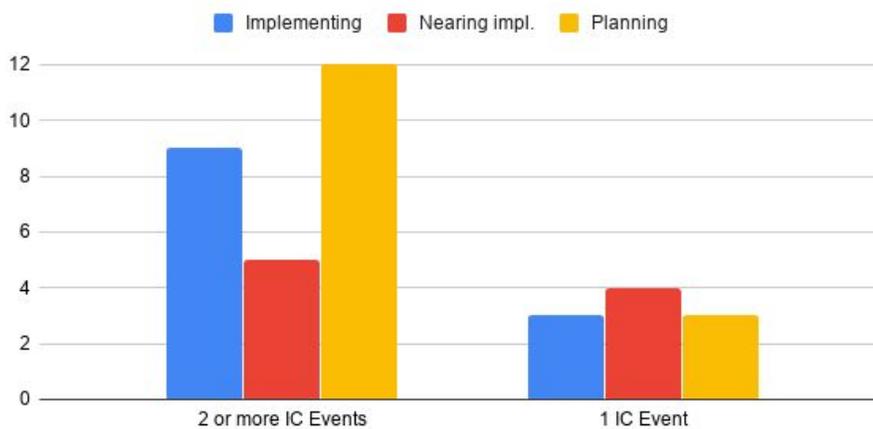


Figure 2. Teams IC Event Participation and Implementation Status

**Clearly identified targeted impacts:** Per reporting from the eXtension IC support team, a number of teams have continued to struggle in identifying clearly targeted impacts to focus their effort. Teams that establish clear targeted outcomes based on their work through the P.L.A.N. tool or the IC Propellor are more likely to achieve tangible impact through their programs and projects.

*59% of the teams reviewed for this sample had clearly identified targeted impacts. We reviewed a total of thirty-seven teams for targeted impacts: Ten of these teams had clearly identified targeted impacts and achieved project implementation (27%). Of all teams currently implementing their projects (a total of thirteen) these same 10 teams had clearly identified targeted impacts (77%).*

*In contrast, only three teams without clearly identified targeted impacts (20% of those teams with no clear targeted impacts identified) are currently implementing any part of their project.*

*Of all teams reviewed, identification of target impacts relates to progress toward implementation as shown below.*

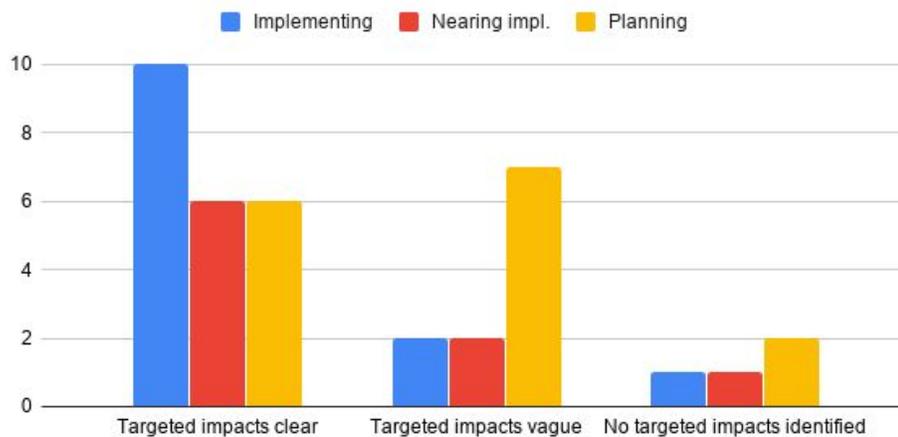


Figure 3. Targeted Impacts and Implementation Status

**Local Results Tracking:** Teams that are currently implementing their respective projects are asked to report the results and impacts of their projects.

*Current local results reporting includes: [1] Increased sharing of innovative projects across the state in the Kentucky CES<sup>13</sup> system, [2] a project pilot showing changing snack choices away from sugary pop-tart options toward apples and carrots, and [3] a new Extension-sharing e-newsletter with a 50% open rate. It may be meaningful for teams to also track elements such as increased community issue awareness toward their respective targeted impacts.*

**Focus on professional development:** From self-reporting and conversations with eXtension staff, it appears that a number of teams have participated in Impact Collaborative engagements with a mandate and focus to maximize their professional development experience through the opportunities inherent in the Impact Collaborative engagements, and a lesser focus on actually implementing a project once they returned to their local Extension institution.

*Of the two teams that clearly attended the IC Summit with a professional development focus, one is actually implementing aspects of their effort, the other had no clear data on progress toward implementation. Of the three teams that were identified with at least a partial professional development focus, one is implementing aspects of their effort, the other two had no clear data on progress toward implementation.*

<sup>13</sup> The Kentucky Statewide Innovation Team [see Appendix C.1.]

**Follow-up consultation with IC Support Team:** Several of the IC teams identified in this report were supported by and benefitted from follow-up engagements with eXtension Impact Collaborative staff. These teams are currently progressing as follows:

*Of the twenty-two teams supported by the IC support team, 8 are currently implementing aspects of their project, 7 are nearing implementation, and 4 are in the planning stages of their effort. Of the thirteen teams currently implementing their projects, eight (62%) benefitted from eXtension IC follow-up consultation. This compares to 17 teams without IC follow up supports – 4 of which are implementing, with 2 nearing implementation, and 11 still planning their project.*

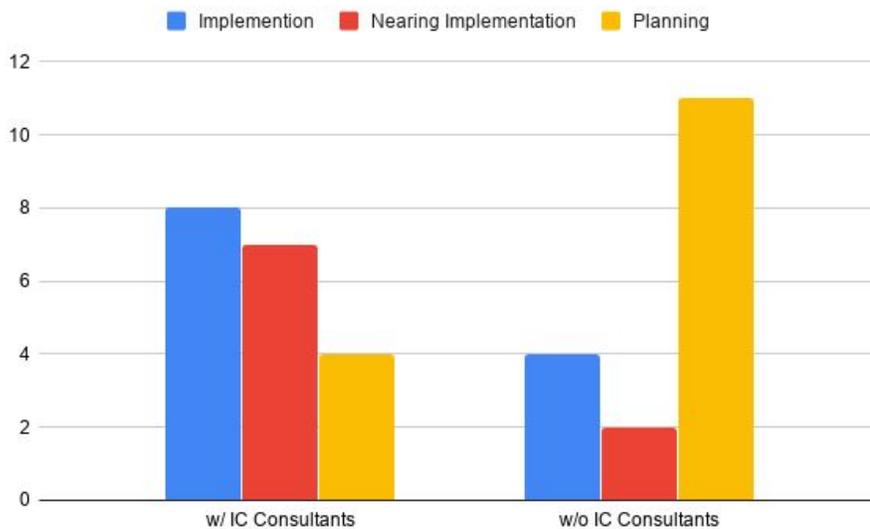


Figure 4. IC Support Team follow-up and Implementation Status

**NOTE:** It must be noted that the current data set favours the teams with eXtension IC follow-up consultation and supports, as the targeted interviews from these engagements were a key source of qualitative reporting leveraged for this report.

**Clear project timeline:** IC staff identified a lack of clear project timelines as a hurdle for several of their supporting efforts of IC Projects. 26% of the teams recently interviewed had clear project timelines, enabling them to pursue better project management toward nearing implementation.

*For the seven teams with clear data supporting the existence of a documented project timeline, five [71%] are implementing and two are nearing implementation. As shown in the graphic below, of the five teams that clearly lacked a solid project timeline, one is implementing, and two each are either nearing implementation or planning their project.*

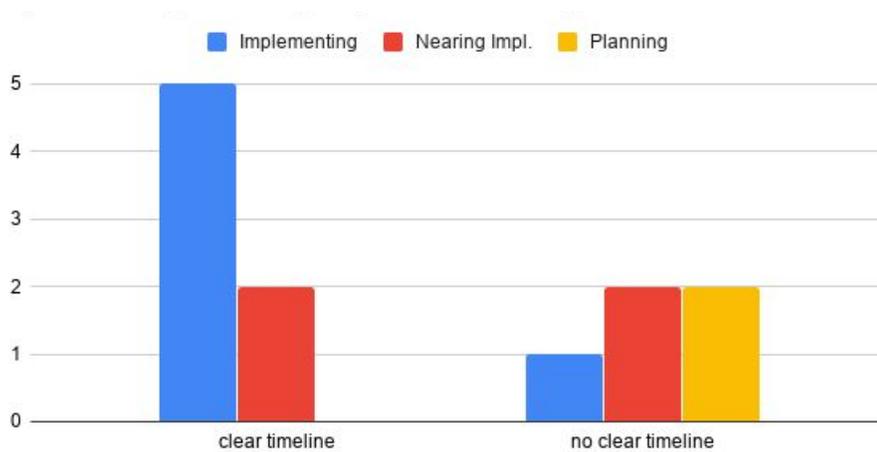


Figure 5. Clear Project Timeline and Implementation Status

**Regular team meetings:** Recent team interviews seem to bear out what successful project and/or program management practice would suggest in the expectation that those teams that create structured team routines, meeting schedules, and interactions as per the IC Roadmap, for example, are more readily progressing in their program efforts. Research indicates that attendance of and commitment to regular team meetings are a key factor toward performance that contributed to implementation and success.<sup>14</sup>

*Of the teams interviewed, only two of seven teams [29% of that dataset] clearly stated that they meet regularly, while five pointed out specifically that they are able to only meet infrequently and are unable to conduct regular meetings.*

**Dispersed team member location:** 23% of the teams interviewed regarding their IC project progress in the summer of 2019 identified dispersed team member location as a key challenge to their project’s progression. 100% of multi-institution teams mentioned this challenge. Of the 51 teams surveyed, 32 teams are co-located with 19 teams dispersed in some cases across a state, and in some cases across the nation. Their progress toward implementation is indicated as follows:

<sup>14</sup>Program Commitment. Neubert & Cady (2001)  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1htKeSVeBjqd9x7-Bhjuj7tHdZe7Bad64/view?usp=sharing>

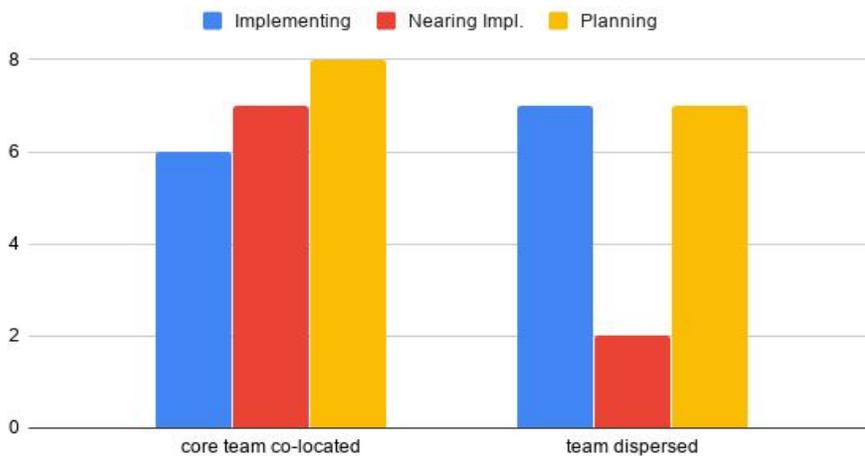


Figure 6. Co-Located vs. Dispersed Team Member Location

**Team collaborating with other IC teams:** A number of teams from the University of Minnesota and Nebraska are collaborating and sharing tools for work in similar/ related focus areas. We intend to track if and how these collaborations improve the teams’ progress toward implementation.

*Of the six teams identified as currently collaborating with other IC teams, the following are at these stages of implementation: One team is implementing, and two teams are nearing implementation. There was not sufficient data for the other three teams to assign a progress-toward-implementation status.*

**Publicly stated institutional leadership support:** The Project Management Institute [PMI] identifies executive sponsor support as its top driver of project success and inadequate support as a primary cause of project failure.<sup>15</sup> The vast majority<sup>16</sup> of the 2018 IC Summit Impact Collaborative teams identified institutional leadership support as a potential barrier to implementation success. PMI data also indicated that 62 % percent of completed projects include project sponsors who are actively supportive.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, according to a PMI and University of Ottawa study, 33% of projects fail because of a lack of involvement from senior management.<sup>18</sup>

*From the data sets available, 57% of teams report public leadership support. Their implementation status is illustrated in the table below. Of the teams currently implementing their IC projects, 77% [10 of 13 teams] state they benefit from publicly stated leadership support.*

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/pulse-of-the-profession-2018.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> 73% in the ‘Pitchfest Project Status’ tool utilized at the 2018 IC Summit

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/pulse-of-the-profession-2017.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.business2community.com/strategy/project-management-statistics-45-stats-you-cant-ignore-02168819>

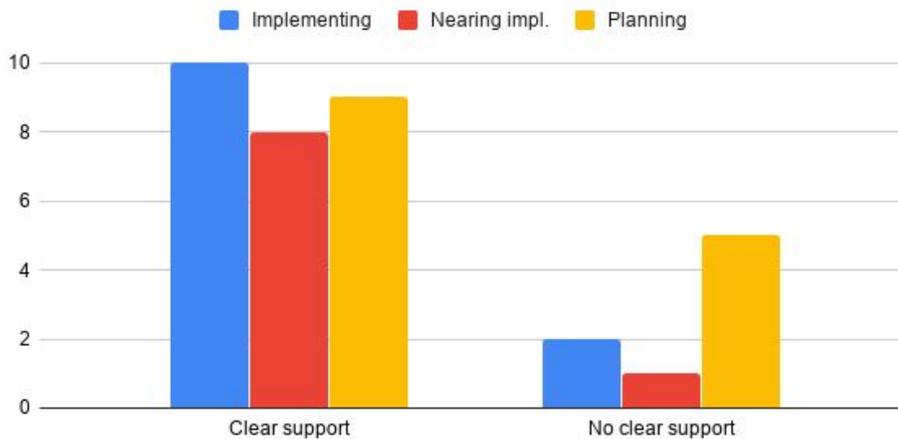


Figure 7. Publicly Stated Institutional Leadership Support Impact

**Leadership accountability, follow-up & dedicated time/hours to work on the project:**

A strain for dedicated time to continue to work on their respective project was identified as a key challenge by 45% of the teams interviewed in the summer of 2019. Several of these IC project teams reported that dedicated time toward the project was “on top of” regular work duties and expectations. Where leadership has made IC project work an expected part of the workload and has communicated this expectation throughout the organization, teams are able to progress and report back to leadership.

*This data set was limited to 7 teams. Implementation rates among teams with dedicated accountability vary compared to those working the IC project “on top of” regular assignments as follows: Of the three teams with clear accountability and dedicated hours toward the project, two are implementing with one nearing implementation. Of the four teams in this data set that identified not having dedicated hours for their project, one is implementing, two are nearing implementation and one is planning to implement. We believe the actual number of teams without dedicated hours toward their project work is significantly higher.*

**Financial support from the institution:** Most teams reported that they are receiving some basic financial support from the university for travel and other base costs. We hope to gather more detailed data in the future that would indicate whether the IC projects are specifically included in budgetary considerations [as a separate budget line] or supported from general funds, for example.

*Nine teams in the sample indicated they have specific financial support from their institution. Of these teams, one is planning, three are nearing implementation, and three had insufficient data on progress toward implementation. Two teams surveyed stated that financial support was “limited.” One each of these teams is in the planning, and one is in the implementation stage of their project.*

**Partners identified:** A key focus of the IC Summits has been on partnering potential and the identification and engagement of partners and collaborators. Research suggests that the element of accountability to a partner contributes to success.<sup>19</sup>

*Of the 25 teams that indicated they have partners identified, 8 are implementing, 7 are nearing implementation, and 10 planning for implementation. Only four teams stated they had not yet identified partnering opportunities. These four teams are in the planning stage.*

**Partners engaged:**

*Of the 30 teams that provided partnering data, 8 have not yet engaged partners. Seven of these eight teams are in the planning stage, one is nearing implementation. Of the other twenty-two teams with active partner engagements 7 are implementing, 4 are nearing implementation and 5 planning and 4 had no sufficient data to identify their progression toward implementation.*

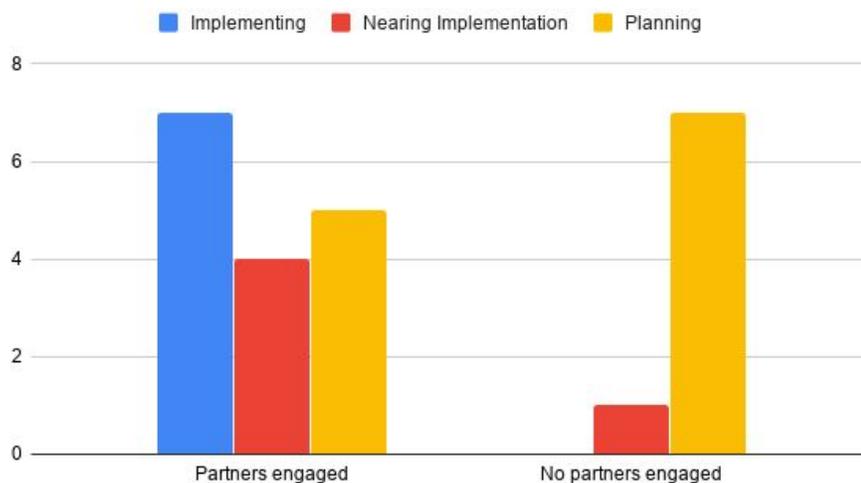


Figure 8. Partner engagement

**Prototyping/piloting:** With a core of the Innovation Skill Building engagements at the beginning of the Impact Collaborative journey aimed at design thinking and rapid prototyping, 26% of the teams interviewed engage in formalized prototyping efforts and are more likely able to assess impact indicators in their program and project implementation.

*36% of the teams currently implementing or nearing implementation [8 of 22 teams] identified formal prototyping or pilots as part of their effort.*

<sup>19</sup> <https://medium.com/the-mission/the-accountability-effect-a-simple-way-to-achieve-your-goals-and-boost-your-performance-8a07c76ef53a>

**Facilitation of local project events:** Several IC teams have held and facilitated local events to support, publicize, or further their program or cause (i.e. in events not facilitated by eXtension, but developed by a local or national IC team).

*All five teams that have held these local events are currently implementing their projects.*

**Additional progress indicators:** In analyzing the data, the following additional progress indicators toward implementation were identified, but did not yield sufficient data to meaningfully evaluate them. Based on NEXUS4change’s informed opinion, we suggest that these indicators should be tracked, including:

- **Team’s engagement with the E&EO.** Team members participation in [Engage & Empower Online](#) [E&EO] engagements should be tracked and connected to the data gathering for their specific teams. In 2019, Engage & Empower Online has added potential as both a learning and professional development platform for team members, but also serves as a virtual collaboration platform and portal into a team’s resources and work. We believe that utilization of the E&EO tools will prove meaningful to support teams’ success in reaching project implementation and ultimately contribute to local results.
- **Publication of the project.** Publication of the project or program effort in a peer-reviewed journal, or as a thesis or dissertation, appears to be a meaningful aim for some of the team members engaged in IC projects. It was suggested that where peer-reviewed publication of the program effort is a desired outcome of the process, this has positively contributed to the progress of those teams. One IC staff<sup>20</sup> shared her experience, stating that: “Identifying a publication and/or presentation outlet to present project outcomes and outputs helps to create a sense of urgency within team members that may help drive the timeline development and certainly contributes to the visibility of the project.”
- **Grant-funding.** Grants often require the key indicators of progress as part of the reporting structure. Anecdotally, many Innovation Skill-Building Experience [ISBE] participants have expressed that they intend to use the Impact Collaborative’s ISBE process to help with grant proposal writing. Tracking the programs that have secured grant funding for their program or project would give eXtension another indicator toward program success that is likely meaningful, as grant requirements typically include reporting and accountability that will benefit eXtension’s learning about the respective programs. It should be noted that the IC Partnership team has found that fewer than six IC Projects are currently developed enough to qualify for grant funding.

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<sup>20</sup> From a Conversation with Molly Immendorf

- **Changing team membership.** In interviews with eXtension IC support staff, three teams indicated a change in team membership. An integral part of the Impact Collaborative methodology predicts (and encourages) team membership change. Typically, it is the expansion of teams to include additional community member stakeholders to co-create and co-implement projects, but team membership may also change as roles and responsibilities of team members change outside of the project that may necessitate a change in participation.

Tracking this factor may provide insight into both the success or stagnation of the project. While some teams were hopeful for additional team members, one team also shared struggling with reassignments and retiring team members. This can influence team member's perception of the likelihood of project success: While research indicates that collective efficacy and perceived organizational support can positively influence member satisfaction, collective efficacy - the belief in the group's capability to perform can actually negatively affect effort, which in turn affects performance.<sup>21</sup>

- **Increased community awareness** of the targeted issues is an indicator toward local results. As part of community engagement and participation in an Impact Collaborative project, there needs to be increased awareness of the issues and opportunities (i.e. Nutritional benefits, DEI, or Emergency Preparedness) within the respective community that the IC Project Team is working in. We recommend teams track increases in awareness of the issues and challenges their project is looking to address, in their community, as this is a necessary precursor for project implementation and success.

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<sup>21</sup> *Volunteer Motivation*. Cady, Broadke, Kim, Shoup (2017).

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jcop.21939>

full article: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D4-teezGti5owyg9nR2kyXZbXnerjeku/view?usp=sharing>

### **3. Impact Collaborative Facilitator Experiences**

A core benefit to CES at large and the most enthusiastic group of Impact Collaborative practitioners are the IC facilitators that have supported IC teams in state and national events and engagements. The following outlines some of their experiences in the Impact Collaborative.

#### **3.1. John Porter**

Nebraska Extension Educator, Community Environment

##### **How did you decide to become an Impact Collaborative facilitator?**

I love finding new ways to engage audiences and facilitate work with partners. As soon as the Impact Collaborative was announced and early work with the Designathons launched I was interested. I participated in one of the early Designathons on my own, but loved the process and wanted to be involved.

##### **Describe the most energizing experience you had working with a team. Tell us the story.**

At the Spring 2019 summit, I was working with a multi-state team that all did similar programming but approached it in different ways. I worked with them to identify that the innovation they were looking for was designing a platform to share resources and develop new programs using the tools they already had, but every time they worked on their own they would revert back to their individual state perspectives or get bogged down thinking they were there to develop a new program. After a day and a half, we were finally able to get the innovation to click! They finally were able to visualize the innovation and go forward instead of backward. We were finally able to connect and understand what the process was there to help with and what true innovation is. It was great to see the development of the team and their understanding of innovation.

##### **Tell us about a time when you and another person to really connect around this work.**

We now have a good-sized team of IC facilitators in Nebraska that are all talented and great at leading the process and facilitating groups. We are organizing to hopefully develop tools and programs around IC and design thinking that we can use with our own work, deliver as a team, and hopefully offer as development to our own colleagues.

##### **What is the biggest personal benefit for you being an IC facilitator?**

I think for me the biggest personal benefit of being an IC facilitator is knowing and understanding the process and tools used in the process and being able to bring those tools and skills to my own work. I'm thankful that I can quickly understand what process or tools a certain situation calls for and can lead or facilitate a group of partners or clients almost on the fly if needed.

### **3.2. Danielle Anne Hautaniemi**

State Extension Specialist, Field Operations, Cornell University

#### **How did you decide to become an Impact Collaborative facilitator?**

My university brought in the eXtension team to run an early version of the Impact Collaborative training, Designathon. Although the training did not necessarily go as planned, I appreciated the concept and felt that any constructive criticism I had also needed to be paired with helping support and participate in the experiment. My Director supported my participation, and I took the facilitator training in January of 2019.

#### **Describe the most energizing experience you had working with a team. Tell us the story.**

One of the teams I worked with was relatively mature, and had a well-developed concept and had worked together previously. However, they had reached an impasse on how to move forward, given a timeline and guidance document that they felt that they had already committed to and the complexities of working across two institutions. Working with the charging station experts, the team was able to identify where they needed to still do some internal work to get to the external products they hoped to produce. This discussion helped to transform their work together, and allow the creativity that had been blocked before to reinvigorate their project and their approach. Their final presentation was excellent, and they went on to apply for additional technical assistance to implement the project.

#### **Tell us about a time when you and another person to really connect around this work.**

With my team that was experiencing “growing pains,” I was able to connect with several other facilitators and the charging station experts to help support the team as they pushed through their blocks to progress. These were great conversations, and gave me food for thought in thinking about change management in other groups and intuitions.

#### **What is the biggest personal benefit for you being an IC facilitator?**

Working with fellow IC facilitators and eXtension staff has been very gratifying, and has helped me gain a broader perspective in the work of LGUs and Extension across the US. There’s a lot of commonality of the issues that we face, but the creativity and diversity of approaches that individuals bring to those challenges has been inspiring. The training and facilitation experiences have increased my professional network of other “innovators” who are looking to keep Extension true to its cutting-edge mission.

### **3.3. Jason Weigle**

Community Vitality Educator, Unit Leader, Nebraska Extension Educator

#### **Describe the most energizing experience you had working with a team. Tell us the story.**

There are so many it's difficult to pick just one. Probably the one that sticks out is working with the NPSEC team over the last two summits. It was amazing to watch the growth of their program and the team over the two summits. Being able to use the IC tools to help focus their strategy and framework and then hearing about their success outside of the summits was really rewarding as a coach.

#### **Tell us about a time when you and another person to really connect around this work.**

I can't say that I've really connected with any one person in particular. The Impact Collaborative has given me the opportunity to connect with and support many colleagues from throughout the US. The friendships I've formed over the last year have been invaluable in tackling many different aspects of my work.

#### **What is the biggest personal benefit for you being an IC facilitator?**

The Impact Collaborative as a whole – the tools, the process, and the network of colleagues across the country – is the true benefit I've received from being a facilitator.

### **3.4. David Keto, University Of Wyoming Extension Media Producer/Director**

#### **How did you decide to become an Impact Collaborative facilitator?**

I decided to become an Impact Collaborative facilitator for a few different reasons. First, I wanted to give something back to CES at the system level. I had been privileged to participate as a team member in the I-3 corp and enjoyed taking a new approach and working differently. I was interested to become a facilitator to help others learn new and innovative approaches. I'm also fortunate that being in our communications and technology office I have a lot of leeway to explore a wide range of interests if they benefit our comm and tech work and Extension throughout Wyoming. My boss is also very supportive of professional development and pursuing areas of passion.

#### **Describe the most energizing experience you had working with a team. Tell us the story.**

Perhaps the most energizing experience with a team occurred at the most recent summit. I was working with a nutrition team from Nevada who had just recently formed. They were fortunate to be able to bring a community partner with them and their work at the summit focused on the issue of opioid addiction in women of child-bearing age and how a program that combined nutrition and opioid prevention efforts in rural Nevada might work. The team made amazing progress during the summit on a very impactful area of work. They were so appreciative of my help they asked if I could come to Nevada and help introduce the Innovation Kit to their Extension colleagues.

#### **Tell us about a time when you and another person to really connect around this work.**

I think the most one on one connections in this work have happened in interactions with other facilitators, particularly in the spaces and times outside of formal training and facilitation sessions. I'm always intrigued by the breadth of Extension work across the country and just how locally responsive we are to helping address community needs with some amazing professionals. It's been great to get to know a wider range of western region colleagues particularly in Idaho, Nevada, Colorado, and Montana. As many of us from across the country repeatedly facilitate together it's nice to reconnect and check in on each others' lives. I always enjoy getting to hear the latest from Bekah Sparks in Mississippi. The more stories I hear from fellow facilitators and Impact Collaborative participants the more I think Extension is due for a book that chronicles the great stories of the individuals that make up our organization, instead of the usual literature that focuses on the organization itself.

#### **What is the biggest personal benefit for you being an IC facilitator?**

The biggest benefit of being a facilitator has been to improve my facilitation skills. As an Extension communicator, I don't get quite as many chances to give public presentations and facilitate programs as my field-based colleagues do. The IC has given me a chance to help hone these skills. Staying connected to the national beat and pulse of Extension has also been of particular value.

## 4. Director's Perspectives

*The Impact Collaborative prepared the CIVIC team with new skills, resources, and opportunities that have helped them come together as a team to accelerate and scale their program. Their involvement with the Impact Collaborative has helped create new pathways for reaching a more diverse audience, find strategic ways to engage new partners, and better help Extension professionals across Florida facilitate a process that builds community capacity in addressing challenging issues such as climate change, sustainability, opioid addiction, and water quality.*

– Vonda Richardson, Director of Extension at Florida A&M University

*Addressing mental health needs, particularly for rural Nebraskans, is one of our strategic priorities. We formed this team as part of a larger initiative to address this need. We also have a focus at UNL on increasing innovation and the opportunity to work with eXtension and the Impact Collaborative helps reinforce that focus. A number of Extension professionals from our institution have been involved with the Impact Collaborative, helping catalyze innovation across our system. The most recent Impact Collaborative Summit was a great opportunity for this new team to dive deep into their program planning, evaluate their partnership development strategy alongside the resources eXtension brought to the table, and return to UNL with a program ready to move forward to make a positive impact in our local communities.*

– Chuck Hibberd, Dean and Director for Cooperative Extension at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

*Taking action to help communities across Utah in response the opioid epidemic is a critical priority. The HEART Team's focus on Harm Reduction Education is one important component of our response to the epidemic. The time this team spent with the Impact Collaborative allowed them to form a vision and strategy for their project, test their ideas, and get equipped with skills and tools that helped innovate a new project idea from the ground up with real potential for saving lives and increasing awareness of programs available to our communities across Utah.*

– Dr. Brian Higginbotham, Associate Vice President of Extension, Utah State University

*One of UVM Extension's strategic priorities is to find new ways to create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable atmosphere within our system and our program planning. We leveraged the opportunity to send members from our diversity committee to participate with eXtension's Impact Collaborative. Their involvement with the Impact Collaborative provided connections to resources and contacts like the Carver Center at Tuskegee, creative ideas to build out their work plan, guidance on developing outcomes for their project, and metrics to support them.*

– Chuck Ross, Director of Extension at the University of Vermont

*The Impact Collaborative provided an excellent space for this team to collaborate on and develop their project with a network of experienced Extension professionals and find innovative ways to build off the work from the Coming Together for Racial Understanding cohort. Even more amazing has been their ability to adapt what they have gained from the Impact Collaborative and apply it to local issues. At each Impact Collaborative experience, the team has returned to Tuskegee University with a more developed project plan, and the opportunities they've had with the Impact Collaborative has helped shape a better vision for addressing this strategic priority. Their experience has also helped us to develop outcomes related to critical dialogue across all of our programming.*

– Dr. Raymon Shange, Interim Assistant Dean for Cooperative Extension at Tuskegee University.

*Sustainability is one of our strategic priorities. 200 participants representing 33 institutions alongside 10 community partners participated in the NSS + NEES event resulting in inspiring and motivating speakers, new knowledge gained among participants, and new connections developed across organizations. The Impact Collaborative Summits were unique opportunities for this team to engage more deeply in reaching new and more diverse audiences, strategic planning for cultivating new partnerships, and finding new and innovative avenues for increasing local impact.*

– Dr. Nick Place, Dean and Director for the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service

*Our work with the eXtension Foundation has made me realize even more that we, as directors, need the right person learning the charge of our offices and initiatives and we need to support the time to build a solid team. It takes a lot of time and energy to build a project, let alone co-create alongside partners, to the point of it being ready for investment/dollars. We need to be flexible to evolve based on partner needs and we need to build our capacity to engage partners.*

– Jason Henderson, Senior Associate Dean and Director of Purdue Extension

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

The Impact Collaborative methodology and practice has grown tremendously over the last three years. What began as an innovation incubator for CES through its Designathon engagements, has grown into an evidence-based approach, that will be [published as a methodology](#) for community impact and engagement in the [Collaborative Change Global Library and App](#).

The Impact Collaborative has been eXtension’s “Laser Focus” since 2017 and as such been the core platform for eXtension’s member engagement. When we conducted a SWOT Analysis of eXtension’s work and the Impact Collaborative in early 2018, the following key strengths and opportunities were identified.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- built on History &amp; Relationships</li> <li>- Digitally &amp; Virtually Capable</li> <li>- eXtension Staff &amp; Partner Expertise</li> <li>- Leveraging eXtension’s Existing Membership</li> <li>- Existing and Potential Networks in and connected to CES</li> <li>- Issue &amp; Impact Focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration, Innovation, &amp; Transformation</li> <li>- Differing Regional Needs</li> <li>- Digital Learning &amp; Collaboration</li> <li>- Diverse Needs of Members</li> <li>- Resource Sharing</li> <li>- Collaboration and Engagement</li> <li>- Timesavers for Engagement</li> <li>- Collaborative Change Competencies</li> </ul>

Table 5. Strengths and Opportunities from 2018 SWOT Analysis

With the growth of Impact Collaborative method and practice into multiple events and engagements, a SOAR Analysis approximately a year and a half later in the summer of 2019 identified these following strengths and opportunities:

Strengths		Opportunities	
<b>A National Network</b>	We are unique in our access to a network with a presence in every county/parish in the USA.	<b>Resource Hub</b>	Leverage and provide resources not readily available locally/ @state level.
<b>Leveraging Technology &amp; Virtual Work Teams</b>	eXtension models the ability of virtual work and has championed technology solutions for CES.	<b>System-Wide Data for Influencing Impact</b>	Leverage our national reach for data aggregation and curation.
<b>Impact Collaborative [IC] methodology</b>	A formalized approach and practice to enable local impact through IC projects and programs.	<b>A National CES Marketing Service</b>	Provide brand-building to CES.

Strengths		Opportunities	
<b>IC Facilitators</b>	eXtension has built a national IC Facilitator Network.	<b>Online Delivery of IC Professional Development</b>	Virtual delivery of the IC Innovation Skill-Building experience.
<b>Our Staff</b>	Flexible, smart, mission-driven employees.	<b>eXtension Services Used By More Than CES</b>	eXtension is considering targeting and offering its products and services to other nonprofits.
<b>Extended Reach of Efforts</b>	eXtension’s member and partner engagement has increased from 1-2 national events to state events, online options, and more.	<b>Issue Focus</b>	Communicate how and why CES cares about an issue: what are the impacts and outcomes and who will work on/ partner in achieving them?
		<b>Relationships w/ Communications Leaders Across CES</b>	Creating new channels to consistently engage with communications leaders at our member institutions.

Table 6. Strengths and Opportunities from 2019 SOAR Analysis

Beyond being a potent professional development resource for extension professionals, the Impact Collaborative has excelled at allowing IC Project Teams focused and inspired project design work in sparking innovation, imagination, and iterating ideas. The teams also benefit from consultation with IC support staff and the engagements of the Engage & Empower Online [E&EO] suite of online co-learning, professional development, and collaboration tools. The Impact Collaborative's facilitator corps is an additional value add to eXtension members - as one IC facilitator put it: “The Impact Collaborative as a whole – the tools, the process, and the network of colleagues across the country – is the true benefit I’ve received from being a facilitator.”<sup>22</sup>

eXtension has come a long way from providing technology supports and training and is now growing into becoming *the* innovation consultancy for CES. One recent response to eXtension staff that describes the unique value-add of the Impact Collaborative to CES was in a participant calling the method “Extension DNA serving Extension.”

In working through the data for this report and in reviewing the research, work, and energy that has gone into the Impact Collaborative, NEXUS4change would like to identify the following opportunities and offer these recommendations:

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<sup>22</sup> Jason Weigle, see section 3.3 of this report.

## I. Provide Project Management Training to IC Teams.

Our first recommendation offers the greatest opportunity for improving impact by connecting the entire project management progression: [1] Project Design - [2] Planning - and [3] Implementation. To improve implementation rates and ultimately impact, we recommend eXtension add targeted collaborative project management training and development to the Impact Collaborative process focused on planning and implementation that could build on the existing [Impact Collaborative Roadmap](#), PLAN tool, and IC propellor.

The Impact Collaborative currently gets high praise from participants and stakeholders for supporting [1] project design work in sparking innovation, imagination, and iterating ideas. When it comes to [2] planning, 100% of the teams with a clear project timeline are either implementing or nearing implementing. However, only two of seven teams (29%) stated that they hold regular team meetings. With regard to [3] implementation, based on the available data for the IC Project teams in this report, 40% of teams reviewed [15 of 37 teams] did not have clearly targeted impacts identified, and 42% [5 out of 12 teams] did not have a documented project timeline. Even of the teams with IC follow up consultation from eXtension staff, 18% did not have a clear project timeline in place.

There is an old Japanese saying, 'Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.' A big issue across many systems and organizations is the tension between planning and implementation. Planning is one thing. Implementation is very different. According to a study by PwC,<sup>23</sup> 97% of organizations believe that a critical component of their performance and organizational success is project management.

More specifically, research indicates that attendance of regularly scheduled team meetings is a key factor toward program commitment and performance that ultimately contributes to implementation and success.<sup>24</sup> With only two teams in the sample identifying scheduled structured team meetings as part of their project effort, we suggest that improvements in the area of project and program management can provide significant results.

## II. Develop a Logic Model for Successful High-Impact Impact Collaborative Projects.

To increase the number of high-performing teams, we recommend that eXtension develop a logic model for Impact Collaborative Projects, based on the growing experience with participant teams and the data and indicators established in this report. This model would give IC Project Teams focus and structure after which to model their effort and would inform them about best practices and supports to seek out.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.business2community.com/strategy/project-management-statistics-45-stats-you-cant-ignore-02168819>

<sup>24</sup> *Program Commitment*. Neubert & Cady (2001)  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1htKeSVeBjqd9x7-Bhjuj7tHdZe7Bad64/view?usp=sharing>

This logic model would build on the various Impact Collaborative components established over the last several years including eXtensions Theory of Change, and the IC Practitioner Competency Framework.

Publication of and reporting on this logic model would further inform eXtension members, partners, and stakeholders about yet another model that provides an additional best practice platform originated by the Impact Collaborative with potential for adoption and adaptation in community and social impact-focused programming across Extension.

### **III. Adopt A Comprehensive IC Project Team Evaluation Protocol.**

You are at the beginning phase of collecting data that demonstrates the efficacy of the IC Methodology. The opportunity is to improve the collection, analysis, and reporting. While the current qualitative data sets and tracking at the IC Summits offer opportunities to learn, the evaluation of Impact Collaborative teams needs to be both more targeted, comprehensive, and capture more teams.

In addition to the qualitative data currently gathered on select teams through interviews and IC staff engagements, we recommend collecting quantitative data on all teams. This includes targeted data gathering at all IC events, as well as following up with participant teams based on the IC Project Vitals tracking tool, and the evaluation tools developed for the Impact Collaborative. The interview results listed in section 2.4. of this report, and the progress indicators laid out in section 2.7. will also inform these protocols. The resulting tools, analysis, and evaluation reporting serve to:

- a) Validate the logic model suggested above,
- b) Provide feedback on progress for each Impact Collaborative Team,
- c) Empower teams with sound data upon which to base decisions,
- d) Demonstrate the impact of eXtension Foundation's Impact Collaborative practice to eXtension members, its board, partners, stakeholders, and CES at large, and
- e) Show local communities why engagement with Impact Collaborative projects and programs is a valuable benefit of Extension work in the respective communities.

### **IV. Create an 'IC Project Team Score Card.'**

This recurring assessment would be based on the logic model (II.) and become a specific tool in the evaluation protocol (III.) recommended above. The scorecard would track data points including ones established as part of the aforementioned IC Project Vitals tracking tool and the ones laid out as progress indicators in section 2.7. of this report. This will enable simplified tracking of key impact indicators and allow IC teams to, for example,

- a) Compare their efforts with other IC Teams,
- b) Utilize the data to establish budgeting criteria for their effort,
- c) Report and be accountable to institutional/CES sponsors and partners, and
- d) Leverage their progress to initiate and justify additional funding requests.

**V. Create an IC Project Team-focused Training & Development Suite.**

We recommend offering a suite of training and development opportunities for IC teams and team members that provides a toolkit of interventions based on the assessments, scorecard review, and comparative analysis of teams' work on their Impact Collaborative projects. Based on the ongoing IC work and the recommendations outlined above, eXtension will be positioned to identify early warning signs, diagnose team's challenges with, for example, their process and partnering efforts, and in turn, offer specific tools and interventions to address those challenges.

In conclusion, the findings and recommendations of this report provide a roadmap for the Impact Collaborative to further advance and demonstrate the profound difference it is making in communities across the USA. We look forward to seeing it continue to change lives.

## **Additional References, Resources, and Data Sources:**

Pre-publication edit of the [eXtension Impact Collaborative](#) methodology chapter for the [Collaborative Change Global Library and App](#)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-0EGct7rW8IDbySrR9bj9seh3rOICheu/view?usp=sharing>

Article: *Informing Innovations Through Deeper Insight on Strategic Priorities and Expansive Ideas*, JOE Special Issue <https://www.joe.org/joe/2018september/comm2.php>

Article:

*Program Commitment: A Multi-study Longitudinal Field Investigation of its Impact and Antecedents*, Neubert & Cady (2001)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1htKeSveBiqd9x7-Bhjui7tHdZe7Bad64/view?usp=sharing>

Article: *Volunteer motivation: A field study examining why some do more, while others do less* Cady et al. (2017)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D4-teezGti5owyg9nR2kyXZbXnerjeku/view?usp=sharing>