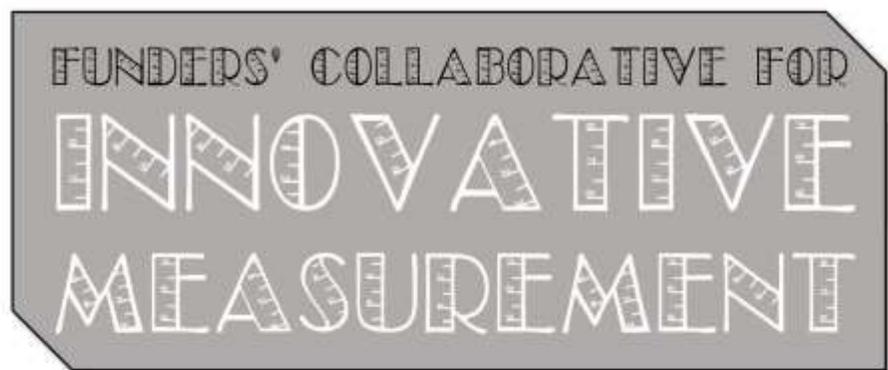


OVERVIEW



11/1/2016

Background information on the Funders' Collaborative for Innovative Measurement (FCIM)

Overview

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE FUNDERS' COLLABORATIVE FOR INNOVATIVE MEASUREMENT (FCIM)

I. WHAT PROBLEM ARE WE SEEKING TO SOLVE?

To thrive in life, young people need to develop competencies beyond mastering the traditional academic content. A report that summarized a growing body of research evidence (NRC 2012) made the case for deeper learning, which connects cognitive skills (e.g., content, critical thinking) and interpersonal (e.g., collaboration, communication) and intrapersonal (learning how to learn, academic/learning mindsets) competencies with key learning, employment, civic, and life outcomes¹ (note: for the purposes of this document we will refer to these competencies as “the Competencies”).

Although increasingly educators and youth development professionals are becoming more committed to ensuring that young people become proficient in these Competencies, arguably one cannot know they are getting better at something that they can't measure.

While there are measures of cognitive competencies that are valid and reliable for accountability and formative improvement purposes, few comparable measures of interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies are ready for use at scale. Energy and interest has been increasing in the research, policy, practice, and funder communities to address this need, generating opportunities to build a field committed to improving these measures and ensuring their appropriate use. At this pivotal time, The Funders' Collaborative for Innovative Measurement (FCIM) seeks to advance the field's work on these “hard-to-measure” competencies. It aims to build on the momentum to support and promote the coordinated development and use of innovative measurement in mainstream school instructional practice and out-of-school activity.

II. WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF FCIM?

In February 2014, a White House convening (co-sponsored by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation) was held which gathered together practitioners, policymakers, researchers, assessment developers and funders to discuss challenges of an educational system that valued important yet currently “hard-to-measure” 21st century skills and dispositions (such as key interpersonal [collaboration, communication] and intrapersonal [learning to learn, and learning/academic mindsets] competencies). As a result of that convening, the RAND Corporation interviewed or consulted with 75 representatives from the aforementioned categories, and prepared a report entitled *Measuring Hard-to-Measure Student Competencies*.

In January 2015, a follow-on White House convening gathered representatives from private foundations and Federal agencies to discuss the recommendations for next steps that emerged from the RAND report, and identified three priorities: 1) to convene a panel of experts to prioritize “low hanging fruit” of high-priority Competencies ready for immediate assessment development; 2) to explore how to develop a center that could be a deep-dive R&D effort for select competencies; and 3) to explore how to develop a board that

¹ For more information, see National Research Council (2012) Education for Life and Work <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13398/education-for-life-and-work-developing-transferable-knowledge-and-skills>

could coordinate and manage a broad, long-term program of R&D. From February through May 2015, a funder task force was assembled to determine if and how funders could begin to work towards those three goals. Ten private philanthropies came together with advisory from federal agencies and collectively decided to form FCIM to advance the measurement of “hard-to-measure” interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies.

III. WHO ARE THE FOUNDING MEMBERS?

Current members include the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Mozilla Foundation, the Overdeck Family Foundation, The Raikes Foundation, The John Templeton Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and The Wallace Foundation. The founding chair of FCIM is Marc Chun (program officer at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation); Itai Dinour (program officer at the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust) and Hilary Rhodes (senior research and evaluation officer at the Wallace Foundation) also serve on the founding FCIM steering committee.

IV. WHAT ARE OUR ASSUMPTIONS?

The work of the FCIM is based on four assumptions:

1. Assessment is a key system driver for reform and measurement of learning processes and outcomes, including growth within and outside of schools.
2. A stronger, better connected, and more permanent research, practice, policy, and public engagement infrastructure regarding the Competencies is needed to mitigate current fragmentation and lack of coordination in the development and application of measures.
3. Funders need to better coordinate investment priorities and strategies to create incentives for collaboration to capture synergies, avoid duplication and fill gaps.
4. Stakeholders need to reach greater consensus on key questions of research and practice.

V. WHAT ARE OUR GOALS?

Building upon efforts that began with the White House strategy session for funders in January 2015, FCIM has organized behind a long-term, overarching goal:

Presence of valid and reliable measurement tools that meet the needs of, and are used well by, educators, policymakers, and researchers for improvement, knowledge-building to support learning and development, and accountability for all youth to thrive and succeed.

Within the context of the overarching goal, FCIM envisions five long-term outcomes:

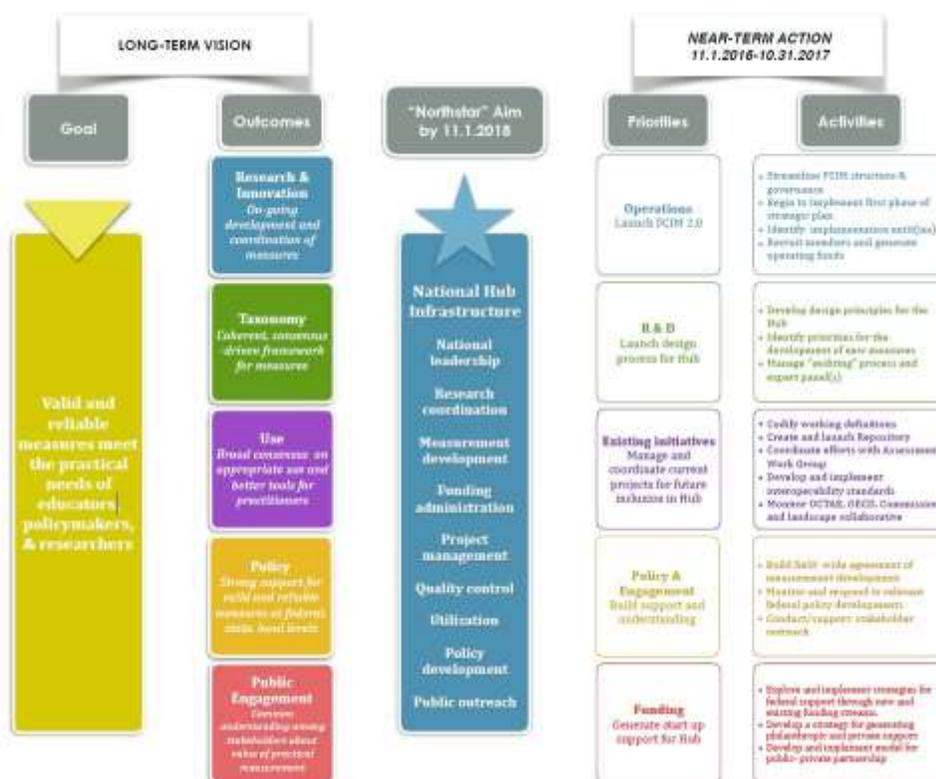
1. **Research and Innovation:** A national research and innovation hub or network, ideally supported by federal research entities, launched for the on-going development and application of valid and reliable measures for both researchers and practitioners.
2. **Taxonomy:** Widespread use of a coherent and scientifically-grounded taxonomy of the Competencies that links terms and concepts across frameworks.

3. **Use:** All key stakeholders are supported in the appropriate use of practical measures for continuous improvement and accountability.
4. **Policy:** Federal, state, and local policymakers recognize the benefits and drawbacks of valid and reliable measures and enable the appropriate use of measures of the Competencies, especially in the context of existing policy-driven mechanisms such as educational accountability.
5. **Public/Stakeholder Engagement:** The public and key stakeholders are engaged and participate in the dialogue about the development of measures and are increasingly aware of the value of interpersonal and intrapersonal development as a priority in our youth-serving systems.

VI. HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?

Through 15 months of collaborative activities and ongoing discussions, FCIM has developed a framework that maps the group's priorities and activities to ultimately lead to the long-term outcomes and the fulfillment of the FCIM's overarching goal. This framework, presented as a strategy map, lays out a pathway for "FCIM 2.0," the collaborative's planned effort from February 2017 through January 2019 (see below). As opposed to a static strategic plan, the map is intended to enable FCIM to rapidly adjust to changing dynamics in the field and take advantage of key developments.

The framework focuses on three basic priorities: 1) coordinating operations for promoting collaboration and coordination, facilitating dialogue, sharing information and learning among members; 2) catalyzing a permanent national hub infrastructure (the Hub) for coordinating and encouraging the development and practical application of measures for high-priority but currently hard-to measure interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies; and 3) co-investing in high-priority projects aligned with these objectives.



VII. WHAT ARE OUR ANCHOR PROJECTS?

Chief amongst the various activities that FCIM has pursued during its first 15 months is the co-funding of three FCIM anchor projects: a Measure Repository of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Competencies, the Assessment Work Group, and a Taxonomy Project. FCIM members recognize that each project fills a specific field-building need and can benefit from the insight, expertise and resources of the others. The FCIM co-funding strategy is intended to support and incentivize collaboration and coordination amongst these three projects so that they collectively move the field forward. Each project is briefly described below:

- **RAND Repository:** Laura Hamilton and Brian Stecher of RAND lead this effort for creating a searchable website where users can identify measures of inter- and intrapersonal competencies that are appropriate for use by teachers and other education practitioners, researchers, policy makers and assessment developers with K-12 students.
- **Assessment Work Group:** Coordinated by Roger Weissberg and Jeremy Taylor of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), this project involves more than 30 leading practitioners and researchers in a three-year, collaborative effort focused on social and emotional learning (SEL) assessment. They seek to coordinate with and learn from ongoing related efforts in the field of SEL assessment; provide practical and timely information to educators about selecting and effectively using currently available SEL assessments; and support educators' efforts to navigate and effectively use the multiple SEL frameworks that exist through use of the Taxonomy tool (see below).
- **Taxonomy Project:** Led by Stephanie Jones of Harvard University, this project seeks to develop a tool that organizes, describes and connects the Competencies and clarifies the connections across the domain's various frameworks and terms. In a way that is agnostic to brand, it aims to facilitate more effective translation between research and practice, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children and youth. To ensure that the taxonomy is effective and useful, the project involves an advisory group and additional outreach for expert opinion and user feedback, and to build field-wide interest in the tool.

The management of each project's will be led by one FCIM co-funding member, with support from the FCIM consultant, to centralize its monitoring and ongoing funder support. While all co-funders may reach out to the project's lead at any time (and vice versa), the FCIM lead will be the project's primary liaison for FCIM. S/He will facilitate project updates for the co-funding FCIM members and engage them in collectively assessing the project's progress. When required, s/he will lead discussions about the project's deliverables and any necessary course corrections and work with members to reach agreement on input for the research team.

VIII. IS THIS TECHNICALLY A FUNDER COLLABORATIVE?

The phrase "funder collaborative" is often used generically to represent any partnership between funders. Technically a funder collaborative usually implies pooling of funds. In the case of FCIM, the members seek to use the range of options that funders can work together (see Figure 1), ranging from establishing communication channels, to finding ways to cooperate and coordinate, up through collaboration (and, if eventually appropriate, convergence). We do not assume that collective action must come from pooling funds, or jointly funding all projects, but rather coordinating around projects that subsets of funders might choose to invest in together.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Funder Partnerships

Role of Funder Partnership	Activities and Connection Between Funders
Communication	Information is shared between funders, enabling greater awareness and knowledge of the work of one other.
Cooperation	Efforts are made to enable the activities of each funder to occur in parallel without disruption. Efforts also made to assist funders in achieving respective goals, when possible.
Coordination	Funders actively work together to facilitate productive interaction between and among their respective (yet separate) activities. These efforts are designed to improve mutual outcomes and relationships.
Collaboration	Funders align around shared goals and principles, pool funds, and hold one another and the collective accountable to maximize impact.
Convergence	Projects between funders are seamless, and to external parties the work might even be indistinguishable (work not seen as directly attached to any one funder, or connected only to the collective).

IX. WHO WILL BE THE MEMBERS MOVING FORWARD?

Additionally, a necessary precondition for this field-building work is to establish an ongoing community of funders, both within FCIM and beyond, and to open and maintain channels of ongoing communication across funders and governmental advisors. Doing so will promote information sharing, enable us to learn together, and create opportunities for longer-term collaboration.

To that end, there will be a three-tiered set of funder participation:

- **Sustaining members:** Representatives from philanthropies that pay an annual membership fee to participate in a focused community of practice with intentional relationship building, and deep-dive learning and collaboration opportunities. Each sustaining member organization will appoint a representative to serve on the Leadership Council (see below). Sustaining members will attend 2-3 meetings per year, receive password-protected web access to the directory of existing work, be included on a listserv/mailling list for communications, and participate in governance, staff consultations, and relationship building.
- **Affiliate members:** Representatives from any local, regional, or national funding organizations that have an interest in the goals of FCIM, but do not contribute the annual membership fee, and therefore do not directly commit the funds, services, and/or time to FCIM. We foresee affiliated members as receiving periodic (monthly) information emails and potentially attending one convening per year, affiliated with another event, such as Grantmakers for Education.
- **Advisors:** Representatives from governmental agencies (e.g., Institute for Educational Sciences and the National Science Foundation) that have been invited to serve by the Chair.

The intent is to ensure that “connective tissue” is developed among the various efforts funders are supporting so that the philanthropic effort is, at minimum, informed by the work of other funders and aligned. Note that there has been an intentional effort to *not* assume that all FCIM projects will stem from pooling of funds or require equal support from all members. Rather, at minimum, the goal is to coordinate investments to avoid replication of efforts and enable the interoperability necessary for field development.