



2020

Building Relationships to Create Change:

THE SELA COLLABORATIVE STORY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the why and what of collaborative work may be understood, we are still in the information gathering stage as to how to best organize a voluntary and cross-disciplinary group to successfully shift the trajectory of individuals residing within a specific geography. Many investors and practitioners of place-based strategies continue to ask how to best assess a community’s readiness or capacity to create change. The following case study offers a deeper look into the most salient aspects of how one group, the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Collaborative, has organized to work collectively and sustain their efforts while continuously learning, adapting, and making progress towards achievement of their goals.

Southeast Los Angeles is comprised of a series of independent cities and unincorporated areas. Corruption, voter fraud and lapses in civil services have plagued several local city governments, resulting in escalated resident distrust in their elected officials and city governments. The area has lacked social cohesion, service infrastructure and the political will to garner significant investment in the region from either public or private entities.

The SELA Collaborative is a network of organizations gathered to lead the Southeast Los Angeles area into an era of increased vitality by garnering resources to build a robust infrastructure of local nonprofits, to inform and engage residents for increased civic participation, while also providing data and research opportunities specifically designed to explore the unique possibilities of this region.

The Collaborative came together organically, with no pre-identified resources, but instead with a shared optimism and commitment that they *could*, and *would*, create positive and lasting change.



1. NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDING

Goal: To strengthen the nonprofit sector’s capacity in the region.



2. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Goal: To promote the active engagement of Southeast Los Angeles residents in civic life and empower residents to seek and affect positive change in their neighborhoods, cities and the region.



3. DATA-DRIVEN RESEARCH

Goal: To inform, support and promote a body of research reflecting the assets, opportunities and challenges of SELA that can be used to drive regional discourse and solutions.

It has been nearly ten years that the Collaborative has been coming together to improve the lives of those living within Southeast Los Angeles. This case study is the first time the SELA Collaborative has endeavored to fully capture its story. As with any retelling of past history, even those who have directly participated often have a different recollection of an event or have a different perspective as to the significance of any particular event or person on the evolution of the effort. The case study offers the following lessons learned:

BEGINNINGS DO MATTER.



Focus on reciprocity and collective action

Consider the main goal of the initial planning phase as the opportunity to build a common understanding of the current problem and historical context. Work to make the value of participation explicit and transparent and identify key areas where the group has the impetus and capacity to take action.



Include new perspectives and voices

Having people with history with one another and the geography of interest is critical in understanding the historical and current context. Yet, an outsider who is afforded positional power within the group has the opportunity to offer a new perspective. A new perspective can be the catalyst for a group’s shift in thinking and new ways of functioning providing the breakthrough needed for meaningful change.



Invest in building a core of local leadership

Cities or communities that have had a history of corruption and abuse of the public’s trust, need to consider and attend to the time needed to rebuild new and trusted leaderships structures at the community or regional scale. The traditional mechanisms for organizing a community for collective action may not be present and past actions may have also created a deeply rooted cynicism towards actions and actors intending to support the public good. Working in this type of context requires a different

approach and invest in building a core of local leadership with the relationships and capacity to build shared ownership and trust locally, as well as attend to building the requisite relationships at the larger scales.

ACKNOWLEDGING A MIDPOINT ALLOWS FOR COURSE CORRECTION & DRIVES COLLECTIVE ACTION.



Embrace the opportunity to reframe & reorganize

We often get too wedded to our original thinking or plans. Having specific times for taking stock both within the group but also with larger stakeholders is necessary. But what is most critical in these moments is to consider that the original theory of action and strategies may have evolved. Rather than consider this a failure of the group, revisiting earlier assumptions and plans can provide a key juncture that can shift a group from maintaining a focus on incremental, small scale changes to more meaningful large-scale change.



Leverage the skills, expertise and resources of your larger networks

While a core group is needed to move the effort forward, the group should never forgo attending to their larger network of relationships with individuals, organizations and larger institutions. Having a network of others who can offer an on-going outsider perspective provides the core group with continuous access to thought partners with various expertise, knowledge of potential opportunities and a larger pool of potential resources.



Stay committed to managing adversity

Times of conflict and adversity are inevitable. What is important during these times is not to simply stay focused on keeping the group together. Ironically, an organization or individual’s exiting over a particular decision or group action, can help strengthen group cohesion and trust. Having the skill and intention of attending to and managing disagreements is what is most helpful in make explicit the group’s operating culture and norms.



Design and invest in the support that fits your needs

Administrative and staffing resources are needed to support collective work. Yet, one size does not fit all. Keep readiness in mind and take a developmental approach towards introducing the support needed for change. The backbone agency and staffing structure should be equipped with the skills and capacities to support the collaborative at the level needed to sustain the collective work without subsuming responsibility as the implementors the Collaborative’s collective actions. This requires taking an adaptive approach to governance and scaffolding the change strategies as needed.

Creating meaningful large-scale change is hard, learning how to make and sustain this change needs to be easier. By taking the time to draw out the most salient aspects of their journey thus far, the hope is that this story is a helpful guide and makes it easier for others taking on, or investing in, large scale change.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 40 years, the philanthropic community, service providers, and others have been working collectively to improve the health and wellbeing of families and communities on a global scale. During this time, general agreements have been reached as to why this level of change requires collective action as well as the key elements needed to achieve change. These key elements include; shared purpose and aims, accountable leadership, shared governance, strong communication mechanisms, common data sets, and structured community change strategies. It is now commonly accepted that these critical components are necessary among collaboratively organized groups.

While the *why* and *what* of collaborative work may be understood, we are still in the information gathering stage as to how best organize a voluntary and cross-disciplinary group to successfully shift the trajectory of individuals residing within a specific geography. In particular, many investors in place-based strategies continue to ask how to best assess a community’s readiness or capacity to create change. The following case study offers a deeper look into the most salient aspects of how one group, the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Collaborative, has organized to work collectively and sustain their efforts while continuously learning, adapting, and making progress towards achievement of their goals. The existing collaborative members have been a part of many other collaborative efforts and deemed it critically important to share and employ the best of what each has learned to experiment with new approaches and collective actions in order to avoid repetition of past errors.

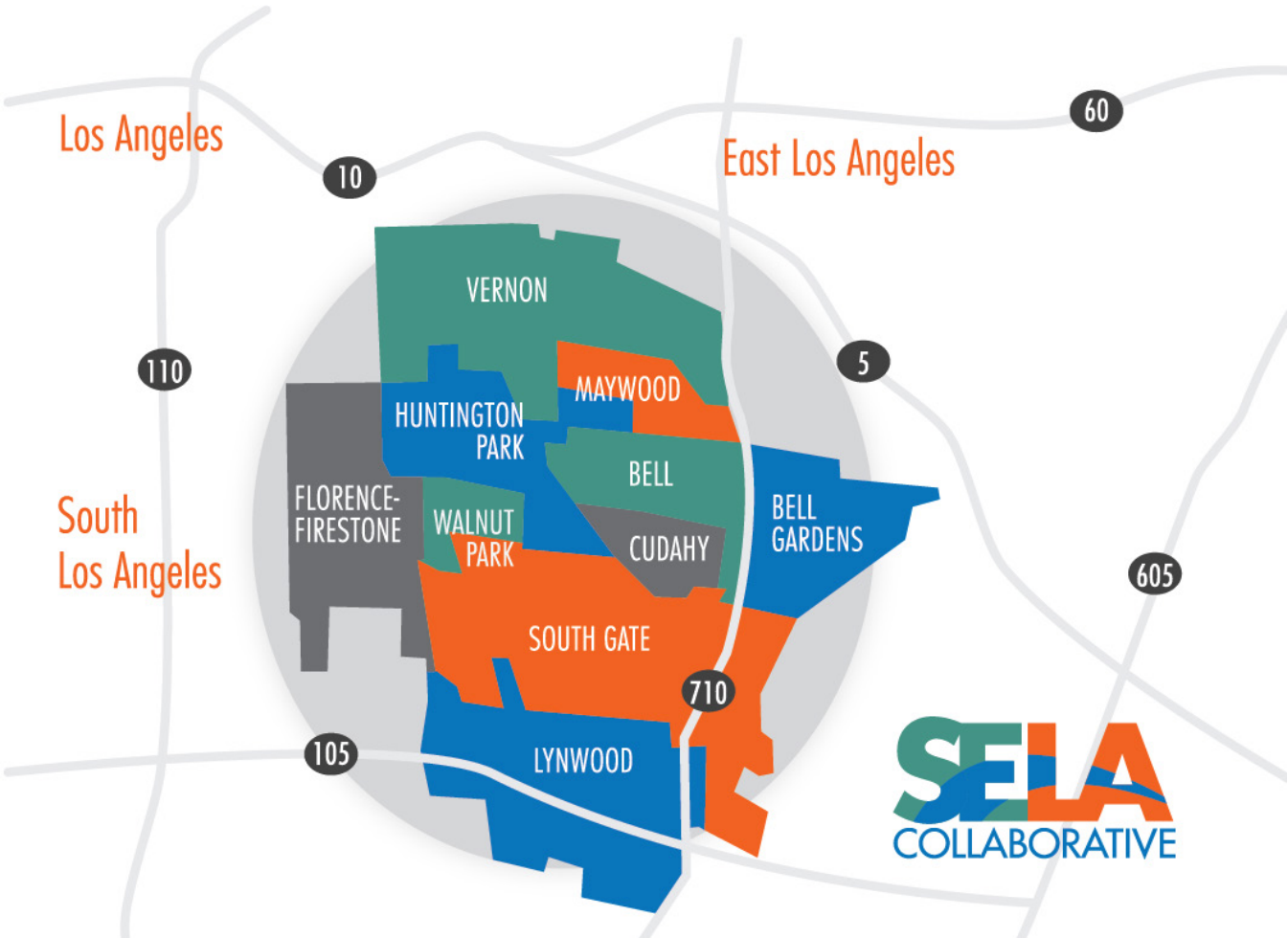
The SELA Collaborative is a network of organizations gathered to lead the Southeast Los Angeles area into an era of increased vitality by garnering resources to build a robust infrastructure of local nonprofits, to inform and engage residents for increased civic participation, while also providing data and research opportunities specifically designed to explore the unique possibilities of this region.

The Collaborative came together organically, with no pre-identified resources, but instead with a shared optimism and commitment that they could, and would, create positive and lasting change. Throughout this collaborative journey, the SELA Collaborative has teamed with both philanthropy and political sector officials to broaden their understanding of the when, where and how to move their collective work forward.

In this expanded partnership with public sector officials and philanthropy, the SELA Collaborative has adopted and is committed to three strategic priorities in order to form a regional identity. Those priorities include nonprofit capacity building, civic engagement, the on-going use of data driven research to inform planning and advocacy, and to form a regional identity. Current organizational members of the SELA Collaborative include: Alliance for a Better Community, AltaMed, the Council of Mexican Federations in North America (COFEM), East Los Angeles College, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Families in Schools, First 5 LA, Hub Cities, Human Services Association, Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA, Southeast Community Development Corporation, and the Southeast Rio Vista YMCA.

This case study begins by offering a snapshot of the SELA community as defined by the Collaborative members, followed by the case study findings with reflections, and key learnings based on interviews with Collaborative members, elected officials, philanthropic partners and investors. Additionally, included is a review of historical documents and observations of the Collaborative Steering Committee and other committee meetings. The case studies addendum covers the SELA Collaborative timeline which highlights key milestones, while the theoretical framework section discusses the group’s theory of change and action. Lastly, the Collaborative structure and staff roles are also available in the addendum.

This case study serves as both a tool for internal learning and collective sense making of the group’s progress to date, as well as an opportunity to share this experience with others in the spirit of contributing to the larger knowledge base of community change agents. Both the SELA Collaborative and author are dedicated to improving health and equity within and across communities, cities and the nation.



SELA COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The geographic area now commonly referred to as SELA evolved into a hub of industrialization as a result of its proximity to major rail routes that served the port of Long Beach. The region continued to maintain a strong industrial character, even as industries transitioned over time. By 1993, the area was dominated by the apparel and textile industries. This trend has continued, with the most recent economic expansions occurring in the leisure, hospitality and retail trade sectors. Additionally, in recent decades the population has continued to increase which has created a struggle for resources and continued community development.

The Collaborative has defined the Southeast Los Angeles community as Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, Florence-Firestone, Huntington Park, Lynwood, Maywood, South Gate, Vernon and Walnut Park. These neighboring 8 cities and 2 unincorporated areas make up a geographic region that lies south of the 5 freeway, east of the 110 freeway, north of the 91 freeway, and west of the 60 freeway. This region is also considered part of the 710 Corridor, as the 710 freeway runs through the area, terminating at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

The SELA Collaborative’s defined geography is currently home to approximately 440,000 people. The area contains many young families, and numerous residents are younger than the County average: 30% of the population is under the age of 18, and an additional 28% is between the ages of 18 to 34. Over 90% of the population across SELA’s communities identifies as Latinx. The area is also home to just over 191,000 immigrants, representing about 44% of the total population, 10% higher than the County average.

There are 126,455 non-citizen immigrants in the SELA region, representing just over two-thirds of the total immigrant population. Cudahy, Bell Gardens and Florence-Firestone have the largest share of non-citizen immigrants at nearly 74%. With regard to children under the age of 18, approximately 5% are immigrants, nearly all of whom are non-citizens. The unemployment rate in the SELA region averages 11.01% which is higher than the County average of 8.9%. The SELA community has a median household income of roughly \$40,500 which is lower than the Los Angeles County median of almost \$58,000 (Southeast Los Angeles Collaborative, 2018).

The SELA community has a long and demonstrated history of resilience self-reliance and commitment to the region. Younger residents are attending post-secondary institutions at higher rates than their parents. SELA is home to diverse industries and business activity that has increased in recent years and created more job opportunities. The region’s location along the 710 corridor provides easy access to nearby job centers and transportation possibilities.

While there are many promising assets upon which to build within the Southeast Los Angeles community, significant structural barriers exist that have limited the maximization of the region’s potential and progress. In recent years, the SELA community has been challenged by a burgeoning

population with economic health, education and social indicators reflecting poor child and family well-being. SELA communities also face higher exposure to environmental hazards than other parts of Los Angeles County. The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) developed a metric for measuring pollution exposure called a pollution burden score - an index ranging from .1 to 10 measuring air quality, drinking water contamination, pesticide use, toxins from facilities, and traffic density. SELA communities have an average pollution burden score of 7.17, which is higher than the County average of 6.19 and the state average of 5.17 (Southeast Los Angeles Collaborative, 2018).

Unlike nearby areas such as South and East Los Angeles, the Southeast Los Angeles area has not had a long-standing regional identity, a strong nonprofit network, or a history of grassroots organizing and community self-advocacy. Southeast Los Angeles is comprised of a series of independent cities and unincorporated areas. Corruption, voter fraud and lapses in civil services have plagued several local city governments, resulting in escalated resident distrust in their elected officials and city governments. The area has lacked social cohesion, service infrastructure and the political will to garner significant investment in the region from either public or private entities.

SELA STATS

440,000

approximate number of SELA residents

30%

of SELA’s population is under 18

28%

is between the ages of 18 to 34

90+%

identifies as Latinx

191,000+

number of immigrants who call SELA home

126,455

non-citizen immigrants in the SELA community

11.01%

average unemployment rate in SELA

\$40,500

SELA’s median household income

7.17

SELA’s average pollution burden score, higher than the County average of 6.19 and state average of 5.17

THE COLLABORATIVE’S STORY

The following case study is based on a review of historical documents, observations of SELA Collaborative meetings and discussions and feedback from the Collaborative Steering Committee members. This study was also informed by nine interviews with Collaborative members, elected officials and philanthropic partners and investors. This exploratory study did not attempt to test or prove any prior hypotheses. However, there does exist a large body of research on the social dynamics and processes of successful groups and implementing effective large scale-change. Therefore, some of this established theory was used as a basis for understanding the Collaborative’s development.

In Dan Pink’s book, *“When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing,”* (2018), the author deconstructs the science of the beginning, midpoint and ending of individual and team efforts. Research shows that when things happen can have an even more defining effect on an individual or groups ability to make good decisions, recognize progress or achieve success (Pink, 2018). Pink’s premise is that we still pay much more attention to *what* happens rather than considering the importance of *when* things happen.

Within an almost ten-year period, the SELA Collaborative has reached two of Pink’s three pivotal phases in its evolution; the beginning and midpoint. While the end point has yet to arrive, gathering insights such as progress to date can inform recommendations to further improve the Collaborative’s work and offer practical insight to others adopting, or currently investing in, collaborative approaches.

THE BEGINNING

Nearly 10 years ago, a series of public scandals within a number of the SELA cities prompted a group of nonprofit leaders with significant experience serving the SELA community to voluntarily come together. Believing it was necessary to empower community, keep local government accountable and help set a new tone for the region, these leaders decided to work together and thus formed the SELA Collaborative to achieve these objectives. At the same time, these public scandals also caught the attention of County and State officials along with the philanthropic community who also realized they had a desire and responsibility to improve conditions for those living in Southeast Los Angeles. Everyone’s attention and interests quickly aligned, and what has emerged is a partnership among philanthropy, public officials and the local nonprofit community who are all committed to achieving regional large-scale change.

As with many community change endeavors, it is a crisis or galvanizing event that serves as the catalyst for bringing a community of people together who commit to work collectively in response. For the SELA Collaborative, there was not simply one catalyzing event, but rather a series of events such as co-occurring relationship building, a focus on developing the collective capacity for collaborative work and taking advantage of a series of timely occurrences. Through on-going relationship building, which positively impacted the group’s collective capacity, the SELA Collaborative was prepared and activated to leverage and maximize these key opportunities afforded by philanthropy, elected officials and others.





Focus on reciprocity and collective action

People’s earliest responses to each other can set lasting precedents with regard to how a team handles the challenges, ideas, questions, and strategies that members bring (Gersick, 1988). Through her observations of work teams, Gersick (1988) proposed that a framework begins to emerge from a set of behavioral patterns, based on how a group approaches its first meeting and projects. Gersick’s research found that the group stays with this framework throughout the first half of its life. Additionally, Gersick (1988) acknowledged that while the first meeting is key, group members may arrive at this meeting already having shared assumptions. People may have exchanged information about themselves and their values, as well as their perspectives on, and interest in, a common problem or aim prior to coming together. This is certainly the case for the SELA Collaborative members.

In asking why Collaborative members came together, responses centered around the desire to be in relationship with others working within the same geography who share values and a desire to help strengthen, not only their own organization, but to work together to serve the larger community good. The ability of a group to balance both individual and collective needs is one of the hallmarks of being an effective collaborative (Christakis, 2018; Gloor, 2009). As offered by one of the founding members:

“For me, this has been as much about building a support system as anything else. It is a win, win. It is person centered, taps into our passion, and is a point of leverage of our skills, our organizations, our impact and reach.”

Comments from other SELA Collaborative members echoed how the balance of individual and organizational needs helped set the conditions for cooperation and collective work.

“This is about building relationships, building a culture of cooperation in order to continue to leverage opportunities. For example, the Old Timer’s Organization was struggling, but had space. So, they are now sharing the resources they have, space, with others. We are beginning to align our own needs and resources. This is a culture shift for us.”

“We have essentially learned our way forward as a collaborative, beginning with civic engagement. A natural place to start given the SELA context and the outside interest of foundations and politicians. But more importantly, at first, we began with informal meetings. We built relationships and helped one another.”



Include new perspectives and voices

A key aspect undergirding the SELA Collaborative’s evolution can be attributed to the organic networking and relationship building that was occurring within Southeast LA and the larger social landscape of Los Angeles. Interviewees recounted years of experiences and connections to one another prior to formalizing their collaborative relationship. For example, interviewees identified the specific role of one of the founding collaborative members, Victor Dominguez. In 2007-2008, as a newly arrived nonprofit leader, Victor purposely sought out others who were open to supporting one another, willing to work in new ways, and committed to larger-scale community problem solving. As explained by Victor:

“I had been working in Long Beach and was being recruited by the YMCA in Los Angeles. I was drawn to their Huntington Park site. It was under-resourced, both the facility and the offerings. At the same time, it was crowded. It was clearly a spot that was a convening space, a safe zone. There was such organizational neglect, but what was even more telling was the community settled for this. Families had a lot of needs, but they were fine with making the best of it. I began thinking beyond the “Y” right then, beyond what we as one organization could do. But when I first started working here, I was isolated. I could identify maybe five other organizations. All were disconnected. So, I began to build relationships.”

Victor brought new energy and a personal interest in bringing others together. As an outsider to the SELA Community, he offered a new perspective and reaction to the community’s dynamics and needs. New opportunities, breakthroughs and innovations are often connected to shifting one’s perspective or view of an existing situation (Stroh, 2015). The role Victor played was instrumental in bringing local nonprofit leaders together and helped build a culture of mutual support has been the cornerstone for SELA’s collective work. Members voiced the importance of the role Victor played at this formative stage. As described by the interviewees:

“Victor was just beginning to work at the Y. We shared the same values, commitment and perseverance to do this work.”

As offered by another interviewee, “Victor was the catalyst. He was the original voice and leader for the group.”

Finally, “Victor took the lead. He used his relationships to further the work.”

Research on sustaining successful social groups also points to the need for a group to evolve a mild hierarchy wherein a member assumes leadership responsibilities and is respected in this role by other group members, regardless of any formal designation (Christakis, 2019). Victor’s embracing of the leadership role and his desire to represent the Collaborative to outside audiences, has been critical in shaping the group’s identity and obtaining the resources to both launch and evolve the Collaborative’s work.



Invest in building a core of local leadership

In SELA’s foundational years, a small set of executives from local nonprofits chose to work collaboratively as they considered the most promising approach to realizing the group’s large-scale goals. These founding members began with an understanding of the challenges associated, and fully realized a collaborative approach could become overly cumbersome, lengthy, and was not guaranteed to end in success. Through the interviews with Collaborative members and observance of the Collaborative Steering Committee meetings, it was clear that the SELA Collaborative had set out to deliberately move beyond their past, and somewhat negative experiences, with collective work. Due to their organic and cooperative nature as a group, the SELA Collaborative had more freedom to form and design their own approaches which is rare given the traditional nature of collaborative formation.

Most funded initiatives are part of larger system or philanthropic driven change strategy dedicated to addressing a particular issue or improving a specific indicator. As explained by one collaborative member, “We had experience with other collaboratives, we know what we don’t want. There needs to be some formality and structure that will endure, but we also need to be able to organize beyond a prescribed programmatic response or orientation.” Collaborative members described past experiences where a funding entity or

governmental body determined the structure, processes and scope of the efforts used to determine priorities and receive funding or other resources. A contracted entity would be responsible for facilitating and overseeing the planning process. Then the work would shift, to another entity being responsible for monitoring the group to assure adherence and accountability to implementing the proposed plan. As explained by another collaborative member:

“I learned from these efforts, don’t overcomplicate things. The work and the role will evolve. Set a vision as a frame to guide the work but don’t have it be the driver of the work. Also, don’t let money drive the work but continuously demonstrate the need and commitment to get things done.”

In their initial collaborative approach, the framework and assumptions articulated by the SELA Collaborative reflected many of the attributes more akin to a network engaged in co-creation. In co-creation, the group self-organizes around a shared goal, establishes common principles and rules of engagement and the value of participation is both individually and organizationally defined (Gloor, 2009). There is also a willingness to experiment with new roles and new ideas as well as a structure or platform that fosters shared knowledge and the ability to align with other players influencing the desired outcomes (Gloor, 2009). As described by a Collaborative member:

“While we need a strategic direction, we need to balance keeping our heads down as well as our head up. This requires keeping a balance with creating something new and attending to our own organizational needs and capacities.”



As described by another Collaborative member:

“I refer to it as using a network approach. How you work in networks goes two ways. We need to be supporting our work but also responding to emergent needs. We have to keep grounded to what is happening around us and to us.”

In the interviews, many thought that being able to create a locally designed and led collaborative was due to the nonprofit executive leadership that acted as the convening and planning body from the beginning. As offered by one of the interviewees:

“I had exposure to collaboratives and a past history working within non-profits. SELA is different. These are executive directors. They grew up in nonprofits and are prepared at a different level. These are young executives, creating a learning and growing space. It makes me grow. It truly is something special.”

At the same time, Collaborative members were able to strategically use local funder convenings and initiatives as an opportunity to expand their network and continue to coalesce around a common set of principles, values and aims, rather than having funders or other outside interests define who had to be involved or how the work was to unfold. In 2010, not long after the nonprofits leaders had begun to form the SELA Collaborative, First5LA began investing in the Best Start Initiative in the SELA region. Some Collaborative members met and participated in the Best Start meetings, but they determined this would not be the best vehicle for the SELA Collaborative to organize and address the larger needs and context of the community. Another example was offered by one interviewee:

“The California Community Foundation was hosting a meeting to talk about the SELA region. No one really invited me, but I found my way there. I met others at this meeting and was then invited to join in their planning.”

A grant from the California Community Foundation was used to officially launch the work of the Collaborative and the group began as the Southeast Civic Engagement Collaborative. This modest grant was used to seed the Collaborative’s civic engagement work and to create a strategic plan. While the civic engagement efforts and strategic plan creation were important as part of SELA’s development, the Collaborative could not get additional and vital investments to further this strategy or sustain themselves under their initial name. However, these initial efforts did fortify the group’s understanding of how to maximize individual and organizational strengths, build collective capacity, and maintain resolve.

Traditional group development models are silent about team-context, outside relations, and the influence of such relations on a team’s progress (Gersick, 1988). In viewing the evolution of the SELA Collaborative, it is difficult to fully understand the development and progress of their efforts without considering the timing and influence of players outside of the core collaborative group, particularly philanthropy and elected officials. As a Collaborative member explained:

“We began by helping each other out, but we also knew there were huge needs and an important way to address this was through political participation and representation. So, we took on civic engagement. The California Community Foundation gave us the \$25,000 to get us started together. We all wanted to do this as it was a start towards a long-term way to improve the community.”



THE CURRENT STATE

While the SELA Collaborative did not have a specified timeframe for attaining their aspirational goals, members were clear that what they were attempting to achieve was undoubtedly a long-term endeavor. The Collaborative members recognized and described their geographic area as under-resourced and underserved. As explained by one collaborative member:

“This community is a helicopter community. Investment is big in East LA, Boyle Heights, skips right over Southeast LA and then is big in South LA.”

As offered by another Collaborative member, “I used to think the East LA was poor, but when I look at SELA I have a different perspective. This is completely different. Huge needs, no representation, no funders. This is what it means when you talk about inequity.”

It was this larger narrative and framing that resonated with outside groups, particularly public officials and philanthropy. As explained by a local funder:

“There are over 400,000 people that are invisible. No connections. No voice. There is a lack of a regional agenda, no common community view. In effect, we only have about a ten-year window to influence the development of the region. Larger changes are coming, we need to be visible and intentional about influencing this change.”

Some of this shift occurred due to new people, in new roles, offering new perspectives, with the ability to influence change. There were newly elected public officials as well as individuals who worked within the local nonprofit community now holding positions within regional foundations or assuming new roles in a larger array of nonprofits. For the new Los Angeles County Supervisor representing the First District, Hilda L. Solis, the SELA Community stood out as a place where she wanted to invest time and resources. As explained by the Supervisor:

“You could quickly see and experience the need for a new approach for the area. Building the local infrastructure is not a specified County role. But if our goal is to improve the quality of life of our County residents, these areas must be able to demonstrate and make visible their needs and then have some capacity to capture and organize those resources to best address these needs. I most definitely wanted to play a role in helping to improve the local infrastructure.”

As a demonstration of her commitment, the Supervisor opened a field office in Huntington Park. This was the first ever First District Field Office for the SELA region. The Supervisor wanted a physical presence in the community to gain more direct access to providing services, establishing a greater understanding of the local day-to-day experiences of SELA community members, and cultivating new local relationships. The Supervisor’s team quickly realized that many residents were not aware of County services. The County needed more exposure and mechanisms to connect resources to those that needed them. As stated by Supervisor Solis:

“Change has to occur at multiple levels to truly create change. When planning at a countywide scale, there can be a disconnect between policy, planning, and the actual service delivery. We are always trying to achieve a more open and intentional approach to connecting County services to local needs. [In the SELA Community] Service delivery was isolated and fragmented. As a County, we had been slow to respond to local need. We need to improve the public and nonprofit infrastructure and establish the building blocks for improved quality of life.”

Embrace the opportunity to reframe & reorganize

The changes in people’s roles and positions also brought forward an expanded network of individuals with a prior history of relationships and connections. Through these new connections, an emerging awareness of common interests began to take root among the elected officials and local funders. The newly elected Supervisor had a senior advisor, Eileen Adams. Ms. Adams was also on the Board of the Weingart Foundation and arranged for Supervisor Solis to speak with the Weingart Foundation’s president. It was in this meeting that dialogue about the Southeast Los Angeles region as a public, private and community partnership began as Weingart shared their goal of organizing a listening tour to for their own learning and strategy development. As offered by the Foundation’s senior vice president:

“We took a look at our own data and investments and did noticed a gap in the SELA region. It was commonly understood that this area was underserved and under-resourced and we had to admit we were a part of that. We had to consider the types of investments we do and our commitment to equity.”

However, this was not only a new geographic area for the Weingart Foundation, it also meant a willingness to shift their investment practices. As explained by the Foundation’s senior vice president:

“We generally fund by issue or strategy. We do not consider ourselves place-based. Yet, we began taking on a place-informed lens. We began to look at SELA as a region. We want to be careful as to how we define place-based investment. For us, place is an ecosystem. The issues and problems were complex, intertwined. We needed to have a deeper understanding of this context, the ecosystem. For the Foundation, it was also about considering our role in the ecosystem and how can we bring all of our resources... investor, convener, host, partner, our learning to support one geographic place.”

The Supervisor’s office asked the Weingart Foundation if they would consider expanding their listening tour to include her office and other funders. It was in 2016, nearly five years after the Collaborative’s first iteration, the Weingart Foundation organized a bus tour to help both themselves and others have a deeper understanding of the SELA context. During the tour the previous work to build the region’s civic engagement infrastructure was discussed and the groups on-going relationship-building and mutual support was highlighted.

Concurrently witnessing and experiencing the region’s assets and needs, created a synergistic effect whereby local nonprofit leaders, elected officials and local philanthropy began to uncover and define their larger common cause. Due to this impactful experience, the SELA nonprofit leaders were offered the opportunity to reignite the Collaborative’s work. The bus tour was clearly a pivotal moment, serving as the de facto midpoint for the SELA Collaborative.

It is important to note, that from 2013 through the time of the bus tour in 2016, the SELA Collaborative had essentially been on hiatus (although some of the original members continued to meet informally). During these informal discussions, those present continued offering leadership and professional advice to one another in an effort to strengthen their collective potential.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Within the SELA Collaborative’s three-year strategic plan (established in 2017), the group included a theory of change and theory of action to help guide and center the work from a research perspective.



THEORY OF CHANGE

When civil society is strong, communities are resilient and political leaders are more accountable to the needs of their constituency. Increasing nonprofit capacity and sustainability leads to better outcomes across all sectors.



THEORY OF ACTION

When SELA nonprofits are sustainable and civically engaged, have a regional identity, and make decisions driven by data, these nonprofits will be stronger and more impactful in the region. Additionally, the community should be empowered to develop local solutions to local problems that leverage assets and collective power.

Leverage the skills, expertise and resources of your larger networks

In observing work teams, Gersick (1988) offered that the timing and transitions of a group progress in a pattern of punctuated equilibrium. Groups develop through sudden formation, maintenance, and then an abrupt revision of their framework for performance; rather than through a universal series of stages, such as the commonly referenced forming, norming, storming and performing model of group development. During the initial phase of development, groups may show little visible progress as members may be unable to translate what they are generating together into meaningful action (Gersick, 1988).

Every group undergoes a major transition at the midpoint of their allotted lifespan, regardless of the intended duration of the group. For groups, progress is more effected by the awareness of time, deadlines and other outside pressures. In a concentrated burst of changes, groups drop old patterns, reengage with outside stakeholders, adopt new perspectives on their work, and make dramatic progress. The events that occur during these transitions, especially a group’s interactions with their larger environment, shape a new approach for each group (Gersick, 1988).

For the SELA Collaborative, the transition from an organically organized and unfunded group to a politically connected and funder supported collaborative was a significant shift. The group benefited from a larger set of stakeholders. Public sector leaders and philanthropy willingly offered themselves to the group as thought partners, sharing advice based on their own experiences and expertise. They also invested in other strategies to support the effort that extended well beyond offering monetary resources, such as convening other funders and county department heads. With this continuous support, the Collaborative reconfigured, amending its original civic

engagement focus. The Collaborative adopted a shared governance structure with accountable leadership and more clearly specified roles, focused on leading and integrating a broader array of local capacity building efforts. Now more aligned, and in partnership with the larger political and funder community, the Collaborative had the resources to invest in a backbone agency and hire staff responsible for providing support around the identified community change strategies. Additionally, these new resources allowed the group to build the internal and external communication mechanisms and establish the research, data, and policy agenda needed to inform and support the Collaborative’s locally driven capacity building approach to achieving large-scale change.

The critical financial investment in the newly configured SELA Collaborative around 2017 allowed the group to focus on taking action and delivering on its stated promises within each of its goal areas. Yet, while transitions can unleash productivity, they also involve risk and surface pain points. As offered by a collaborative member:

“While we have been better at getting philanthropic dollars, this also creates an environment that is somewhat less forgiving. With dollars, we are under scrutiny and yet we are still building, and need to build, our own collective capacity.”

Throughout the interviews, Collaborative members revealed a keen awareness of the opportunities, risks, and their own vulnerabilities in the current phase of the collaborative work. The Collaborative members have also seriously considered the perceptions created by the region’s past history, and the need to hold themselves accountable to building a new narrative and demonstrating a new way of working together. The following comments from Collaborative members provide a glimpse of the structural shifts that were necessary, along with the challenges these shifts brought forward.

“We were too informal. We have outlived its usefulness, overextended the benefits to this. We now have too many important decisions and no structure, like what happened when we first tried to hire the director.”

“We’ve moved into using Robert’s Rules of Order. It is very formal. I understand that fits more in formal settings, like the City or County. Robert’s Rules pushes us to focus on the procedural, not the strategic conversations. We need to go deeper. We have to go through this journey and find the ways that will work for us. We need more models. There could be a smoother process than the current one.”

“We need to be better at managing ourselves. The group unintentionally went at one of the steering committee members, challenging his comments. He and the group didn’t know how to deal with it. A current member also puts himself out there and he gets push back too. He is more of an activist. This is where it is critical to make group norms explicit.”

“We all have a lack of experience in realizing our vision as partners. We need to realize we are still fragile. It could appear as if we are self-dealing. Experts getting funding to deliver on the things they already do for the community. This is part of the history and legacy of the SELA community. Therefore, we need to be more transparent. What are the collective goals? Who is doing the work for who? We are still building a collective identity. Managing the collaborative is key. It is clear that we are committed, having a good time, doing beautiful work. So, getting past this stage, we will be fine.”



Stay committed to managing adversity

Ironically, these expressions of concern and difficulties, rather than reflect shortcomings within the group, are actually indicative of the Collaborative’s key strengths and resilience. From the beginning, the Collaborative adopted positive behaviors that have enabled the group to persevere. Successful communities or groups exhibit a set of behaviors that enable the group to function. These behaviors include balancing group identity and individuality, fostering cooperative instincts by cultivating a sense of friendship and belonging to the group, and displaying a mild hierarchy with effective leadership (Christakis, 2019). Early comments regarding the experience of group members in the forming of the Collaborative strongly reflect the presence of these behaviors.

Yet, the Collaborative had to change how it functioned. As explained by a Collaborative member:

“This is a process and there is a phasing to this work but when money is exchanged, money changes the dynamics. We needed to build up internal systems, fiscal administration, policies, and procedures. At the same time, we need to understand our own readiness. Make clear choices on what to take on and when.”

This change has required the group to transform from a self-organized and voluntary network of individuals and organizations to a more formalized and recognized collaborative body. The Collaborative members have designated roles and responsibilities. There are dedicated paid staff, as well as the requisite administrative capacity to receive and manage funds, oversee the fulfillment of contractual obligations, and attend to rising outside expectations and pressures. As offered by a Collaborative member,



“We are now on the map, visible. Spearheading the effort is critical. We need to remain authentic and keep community first. Yet, we also need the infrastructure to execute our plan.”

Stated more simply, “We were a voluntary network that now needs to function as an effective organization.”

These shifts in structure, roles, responsibilities, and relationships are where the formative stage of a group’s development is tested. Being able to sustain cooperation is what drives collective behavior and being part of a group with the shared norm of mutual support, helps facilitate cooperation considerably. Yet, a strong sense of group belonging also builds cooperation through mutual fate. It is not only that outsiders can affect the group, it is also that group members affect one another’s fates because of a shared group identity (Christakis, 2019). As expressed by one of the members,



“We keep saying that the backbone agency is taking on the liability, managing the risk. Yet, there is a risk for everyone. Increased visibility brings value, but also political risk.”

When a group is invested in building a sense of belonging and shared identity, it can be difficult to have a member leave or someone new join the group. However, having no change in group membership is also detrimental to a group’s functioning. Rather, an individual’s exit and other’s awareness of their ability to opt out of the group, actually strengthens the group’s ability to work together (Christakis, 2019). These transitions have not always been easy for the Collaborative. As offered by one member:



“We have had people drop from the Steering Committee. One for sure left because he didn’t like how decisions were being made. Didn’t think it was fair. I tried to talk to him, tried to repair. But it is okay to disagree, you need to learn to not make it personal. Need to understand that you win some and lose some. Things do not always go your way. We can have different perspectives. Everyone is growing as leaders.”

However, if the group were to have too little or no social fluidity, cooperation would be low (Christakis, 2019). Social fluidity also requires adding in new people and organizations. The Collaborative has been slow to add new partners.



“This is an experimental project. Others want to be a part. New people bring a new dynamic, new agendas. This can be good, but we have to walk the tight rope with that. We recently brought in new people, added three Steering Committee members. We vetted them well. Hopefully, this is a good approach.”

Actually, being careful and deliberate in adding group members is well warranted. If there is too much change, and people’s connections to one another shift too quickly, there is less incentive to invest as others can be gone at any moment. In the end, optimal cooperation in groups is achieved when there is balance and an intermediate level of social fluidity (Christakis, 2019).



Design and invest in the support that fits your needs

Groups have a significant advantage in achieving success if they have an intermediary or effective leadership that helps minimize group conflict, manage troublesome individuals before they compromise group harmony, and keeps work on schedule. Additionally, effective leadership that makes rational decisions in emergencies, deals fairly with conflict, and facilitates communication can ensure that groups are best poised for success (Christakis 2019; Ostrom, 1990, 2010). In effect, cooperation and punishment go hand in hand. Cooperation levels start and stay higher in groups that have members who monitor group agreements, manage conflict, and have the authority to administer sanctions or punishment for misbehavior, even if they never have to administer any punishments (Christakis 2019).

At the same time, groups need instrumental leaders focused on practical objectives and tasks. However, it is not possible for the same person to assume both instrumental and expressive roles (Christakis 2019). For the SELA Collaborative, both governance and leadership

roles continue to evolve. The Collaborative leadership is mostly comprised of local nonprofit executive-level staff. Originally functioning as a voluntary network, the group had to adapt its structure and bring in support to more effectively execute around established strategies. The Collaborative elected to adopt both an intermediary, or backbone organization, and hire staff to assume a Collaborative leadership role. The need for a change in structure was expressed by a Collaborative member in this way:



“This is an ambitious project. Money is critical but how is it allocated? Taking money creates accountability and risk. We have to remember this is not an organization. We are making the decisions, but we are a collaborative without formal standing.”

For the Collaborative, understanding and defining these roles and their requisite responsibilities has been a process of learning by doing. As explained by the Collaborative’s backbone organization:



“We are a member of the Collaborative, but this also encompasses a different role than the other partners. The backbone role historically had been that of fiscal administrator. Our thinking has evolved. The backbone role is moving to the next level of support and internal capacity building. This is about coalescing, consensus building and learning together. We also support the collective actions in order to achieve impact.”

For the SELA Collaborative, the critical backbone functions for their current state are building organizational stability, overseeing the fiscal management, nurturing the relationships between members and maintaining an orientation towards the future.

Within the interviews, members also clearly recognized the need to reconsider traditional staff roles, lines of authority, and decision-making. Again, this has not been without some trial and error and consternation among the Collaborative members. In the process of reviewing potential candidates for the Collaborative Director position, the members realized there was not a collective agreement as to the functions most needed in this role. Rather than proceeding with the decision, the Collaborative abandoned

their first search and took the time to reconsidered what was truly needed in the director role. Thus, it took roughly six months to bring on the first Collaborative Director. Given the timebound nature of current resources, this delay created some pressure. At the same time however, the Collaborative was able to coalesce around a common understanding of staff roles, as well as the necessary internal shifts required for new staff to be successful.



“This new role is more of a leader than a manager. Not everyone is on the same path on how to execute the vision. The staff have to hold and nurture the Collaborative and help maintain the focus and scope, all without having direct authority over us.”

“Wilma’s [the Collaborative Director] hiring has forced us to re-think roles and delegate some authority to move the work forward. This role needs to be beyond coordinating. She needs to have the autonomy to push things forward and push back on us.”

“Entering staff, there is a shift. We have to let go of ownership and turn it over to the staff. It’s hard. People don’t want to let it go.”

“Wilma [the Collaborative Director] needs to be respected as the leader. She needs to be the face of the group. We need to demonstrate positional equity and hand off the relationships with funders to her.”

THE FUTURE

The last two years have been particularly productive for the Collaborative and steady progress has been made with regard to established priorities. The SELA Collaborative Director was hired in June of 2018, and with other administrative and communication staff on the Steering Committee, a new mission and messaging platform, logo and branding strategy were adopted.

In November of 2017, the SELA Collaborative convened a Summit of Possibilities, focused on transportation issues and development for the region. More recently in June of 2019, the Collaborative held a public forum to release their new Policy and Advocacy Agenda developed by the Alliance for a Better Community, as well as the Nonprofit Landscape and Needs Assessment conducted by HUB Cities. The policy agenda and the newly gathered local data on nonprofits were two key areas where more information was needed to create a regional approach to drive locally responsive policy and service delivery.

With regard to civic engagement, the Collaborative launched a series of workshops and *charlas*, or talks, for community groups and residents on topics such as: government accountability, the census, budget and financing issues, along with a continued discussion on transportation challenges for the region. The Collaborative has also begun to position itself to be recognized as a formal body and a regional convener. As such, they have assumed a formal role with the Los Angeles Regional Census Table who organizes the Census outreach in the SELA region. Additionally, the SELA Collaborative has partnered with both the Registrar's Office around the Vote Center Placement Project, as well as the Statewide Strategic Growth Council Research project. The latter project focuses on building climate-smart communities and improving community design to increasing the supply of affordable housing. Moreover, the Statewide Strategic Growth Council's

Research project aims to make it easier for community members to walk, bike, and access public transportation systems.

As for nonprofit capacity building, the Collaborative also launched a series of workshops in the spring of 2019 to assist smaller nonprofits in understanding the basics of nonprofit management. The series included sessions on how to start a nonprofit, maintain compliance, nonprofit advocacy and lobbying, as well as how to gather and using publicly available data and data maps.

Over short periods, people who are asked to perform discrete and useful tasks with minimum formal authority—aided by a collaborative environment filled with people who have the ability to commit to the tasks at hand—can successfully achieve their intended result (Zolli & Healey, 2012). Clearly the Collaborative is demonstrating the will and capacity to achieve their short-term goals. As explained by the County Supervisor:

"It was in the second convening that the conversation shifted from naming issues to discussing what to do and how. I invited the County department heads. I wanted to make the introductions and do a hand-off. I wanted them to see and know that this is what SELA is doing; building nonprofit capacity and identifying municipal capacity. The County needs these vehicles to connect services and reach those that need them."

The more difficult question is whether the short-term endeavor creates the necessary conditions for the group to sustain their efforts long enough to realize their intended purpose. By focusing only on short-term achievements, we tend to give too much credit or blame to the most immediate actions. We are more likely to attribute a result to the traits or personalities of a given person, or persons, within the group. We often fail to think about

outside influences or whether the prior behaviors were those most helpful in achieving long-term change. That being said, it is these short-term wins that are key to providing the impetus for pursuing a longer-term goal (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). As explained by one of the funders:

"Success will be sustainability. Can you realize your goals? Execute the plan? We do have patience. We realize timing and phasing of this type of work is not always evident. But is their committed leadership? Is the infrastructure and practices being built for operating the collective, investing in the staff for the long-term?"

In her Nobel Prize-winning work, Elinor Ostrom posed eight design principles that offer a practical framework for improving the efficacy of a broad range of groups working cooperatively towards a common purpose (Ostrom, 1990, 2010; Wilson et al. 2013). The design principles include:

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Forming a collective identity and common purpose
2. Fair and equitable distribution of assets
3. Fair and inclusive decision-making
4. Monitoring agreed upon behaviors
5. Graduated sanctions for misbehavior
6. Fast and fair conflict resolution
7. The authority to self-govern
8. Appropriate relations to other groups

Similar to the SELA Collaborative's experiences, the groups studied by Ostrom (1990, 2010) arrived at these principles through trial and error, not because they were known to the group in advance. In the end, groups did the right thing without necessarily knowing why it was right (Wilson et al., 2013).

Through the interviews, observations and exploration of the SELA Collaborative's history to date, there are clear markers that the Collaborative has embodied the design principles articulated by Ostrom and is on the right path to ensure long-term success. As explained by a Collaborative member:

"Right now, I am working more on this collaborative, more than I am my own job. But I believe this is what families need, what it takes for my agency to be responsive and meet its goals. I worked to build an internal infrastructure and capacity so I could play this role. We took on a larger vision and purpose as an agency. For me, it is now about this bigger goal."

This shift in the commitment and actions among the local nonprofit leaders has not gone unnoticed by the funders. As expressed by two funders:

"A lot of transformation is happening, a renegotiation of power. Change does not just happen from the bottom up. We know you need the bottom up, a lateral shift and the top down. It is not just about the issues. It is brokering the power dynamics; this needs time. That's why we are investing in the building of trust as a practice orientation as well as a sustainable asset."

"Trust is reflected in the community partnership. There is a clear reciprocation among the partners."

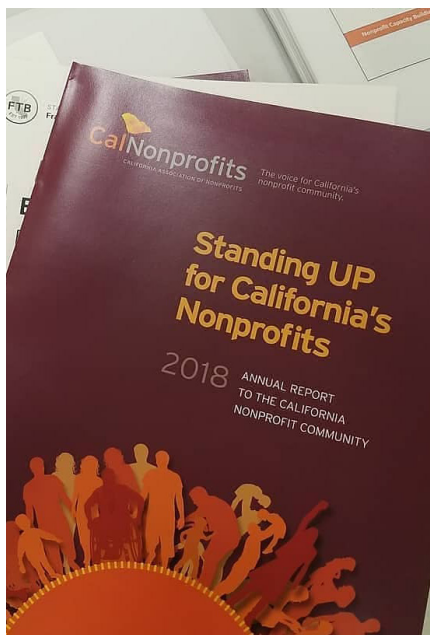
Yet everyone - collaborative members, philanthropy and political officials are clear; while building trust, fostering a culture of cooperation and creating the platform or structure to execute a change agenda is critical, this is not the endgame. The Collaborative is simply at a new beginning.

"We have built an openness to learning and growing. So now we need to build out the service networks and expand their scope and reach. We have to be focused, both improve programmatic outcomes and positively influence this area."

"Success will be a clearly identified regional agenda that includes a policy platform and a common agenda coming from the community and a more responsive local government. We need to keep asking, what is the scale that most benefits the SELA community? When is it the city, when the region? Are concerns getting lost? Is there a strong community benefit to the new development... the river, housing, regional transportation?"

As put forth by Supervisor Solis:

"The [SELA] community is not interested in being patronized. This area received a lot of promises that weren't kept. This has created a lot of skepticism. There needs to be consistency and follow through. There is pride in place. A resurgence of energy, second and third generations are coming back, investing in the area, bringing energy and creativity. These are huge generational shifts that should not be neglected. We all need to tap into this next generation and invest in young people with training, education, and mentorship experiences that build connections to the new emerging economy."



FINAL REFLECTIONS

This case study has attempted to bring forth both the common understandings, as well as the divergent views, as to the sequence of events and their significance in the development and functioning of the SELA Collaborative. Their experience offers the following lessons learned:

BEGINNINGS DO MATTER.

Focus on reciprocity and collective action

Consider the main goal of the initial planning phase as the opportunity to:

- 1. Build a common understanding of the current problem and historical context,
- 2. Work to make the value of participation explicit and transparent;
- 3. Identify key areas where the group has the impetus and capacity to take action.

There is no perfect planning process or a set time period with which to coalesce and build a common vision and set a course of collective action. Yet, it should be sufficient time to build the requisite group norms and culture that will sustain collective work.

Include new perspectives and voices

Having people with history with one another and the geography of interest is critical in understanding the historical and current context. Yet, an outsider who is afforded positional power within the group has the opportunity to offer a new perspective. A new perspective can be the catalyst for a group’s shift in thinking and new ways of functioning providing the breakthrough needed for meaningful change.

Invest in building a core of local leadership

It cannot be emphasized enough, those closest to the problem are also those closest to the solution.

Yet, the problems that communities are experiencing are happening at multiple scales, individual, organizational, community, regional, national and globally. Cities or communities that have had a history of corruption and abuse of the public’s trust, need to consider and attend to the time needed to rebuild new and trusted leadership structures at the community or regional scale.

The traditional mechanisms for organizing a community for collective action may not be present and past actions may have also created a deeply rooted cynicism towards actions and actors intending to support the public good. Working in this type of context requires a different approach and investment in building a core of local leadership with the relationships and capacity to build shared ownership and trust locally, as well as attend to building the requisite relationships at the larger scales. Therefore, consideration should be given that building a collaborative in this type of context may require a different pacing and understanding of progress than is currently being offered within most traditional community planning processes.



ACKNOWLEDGING A MIDPOINT ALLOWS FOR COURSE CORRECTION & DRIVES COLLECTIVE ACTION.

Embrace the opportunity to reframe & reorganize

When working at the community or larger levels, we cannot possibly know all of the factors influencing the problems we are attempting to address, nor the opportunities or challenges afforded by others also effecting or area of interest. Yet, we often get too wedded to our original thinking or plans. Having specific times for taking stock both within the group but also with larger stakeholders is necessary. But what is most critical in these moments is to consider that the original theory of action and strategies may have evolved. Rather than consider this a failure of the group, *revisiting earlier assumptions and plans can provide a key juncture that can shift a group from maintaining a focus on incremental, small scale changes to more meaningful large-scale change.*

Leverage the skills, expertise and resources of your larger networks

While a core group is needed to move the effort forward, the group should never forgo attending to their larger network of relationships with individuals, organizations and larger institutions. Having a network of others who can offer an on-going outsider perspective provides the core group with continuous access to thought partners with various expertise, knowledge of potential opportunities and a larger pool of potential resources. Expanded networks can be built organically or haphazardly as individuals interact at meetings or community functions. However, adopting this as a core function or strategy with a dedicated investment in resources and time more accurately reflects the critical need of being embedded in a larger network of invested partners and stakeholders.

Stay committed to managing adversity

Many have heard the saying that collaboration moves at the speed of trust. Most times, the markers or proxy for whether a group has sufficient trust to move is captured through having a shared purpose, espoused values and an articulated theory of change.

Yet, trust is situational. It is more about whether the actions and reactions to specific events meet one’s understanding of what the shared purpose or values look like in practice. Times of conflict and adversity are inevitable. What is important during these times is not to simply stay focused on keeping the group together. Ironically, an organization or individual’s exiting over a particular decision or group action, can help strengthen group cohesion and trust. Having the skill and intention of attending to and managing disagreements is what is most helpful in make explicit the group’s operating culture and norms. Being able to make group norm’s and values more explicit creates the opportunity to more effectively engage and maintain more aligned partners.

Design and invest in the support that fits your needs

Administrative and staffing resources are needed to support collective work. Yet, one size does not fit all. It is not a question of having a certain amount of FTEs or a fixed budget to support the collective efforts. Not having sufficient funding and support to get off the ground is challenging and can impede a group’s ability to even get started. Yet, too much money, too fast, is not helpful either. *Keep readiness in mind and take a developmental approach towards introducing the support needed for change.* The backbone

agency and staffing structure should be equipped with the skills and capacities to support the collaborative at the level needed to sustain the collective work without subsuming responsibility as the implementors the Collaborative’s collective actions. This requires taking an adaptive approach to governance and scaffolding the needed change strategies.

It has been nearly ten years that the Collaborative has been coming together to improve the lives of those living within Southeast Los Angeles. This case study is the first time the SELA Collaborative has endeavored to fully capture its story. As with any retelling of past history, even those who have directly participated often have a different recollection of an event or have a different perspective as to the significance of any particular event or person on the evolution of the effort. Creating meaningful large-scale change is hard, learning how to make and sustain this change needs to be easier. By taking the time to draw out the most salient aspects of their journey thus far, the hope is that this story is a helpful guide and makes it easier for others taking on, or investing in, large scale change.

Today, the SELA Collaborative has positioned itself as a regional leader and convener for SELA. As the collaborative embarks in a new strategic planning year, the Collaborative will continue to play a critical role in driving regional dialogue across policy issues that are critical to uplift the SELA Communities. Additionally, true to its origins of building on relationships, the Collaborative prepares to launch the creation of a larger network that will strengthen the cross-sector partnerships across the SELA Cities to advance collective action. The SELA Collaborative continues to be invested in building the capacity of the region to ensure that the local community is empowered to develop local solutions to local challenges. Due to this commitment and value in leveraging assets and building collective power, the SELA Collaborative will continue to sustain and nurture the infrastructure required to improve the lives of all who live within the communities of SELA.

ADDENDUM

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COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE AND ROLES

The SELA Collaborative’s partner organizations choose collaboration as the most promising model to achieve the long-term sustainability necessary to realize the group’s goals. The partners recognized that a collective approach would be more challenging and require a substantial time investment. Yet, given each partner organizations significant experience working and serving the SELA community, the group felt it necessary to set a new tone for the region. As nonprofit leaders, the partners strongly believe that to achieve an influential regional collaboration, the partners needed to exhibit regional cohesion.

The SELA Collaborative Steering Committee (Steering Committee)

The Collaborative Steering Committee was originally composed of the eleven founding organizations engaged in the development of the three-year strategic plan. The Steering Committee expected that additional partners would join as the work launched and a more expansive, experienced leadership body would be needed to fulfill the collaborative aims. Currently, the Steering Committee is comprised of twelve partner organizations.

Members of the Collaborative Steering Committee sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the fiscal agent, as well as a member agreement document that outlines the specific Steering Committee roles and responsibilities.

Additionally, the Collaborative Steering Committee oversees the programmatic and governance work of the group. The primary role of the Collaborative members is to:

- Set goals and priorities for the Collaborative
- Adjust the strategic plan as necessary and track progress
- Fundraise to support the plan
- Represent the Collaborative at events

The Collaborative Steering Committee has the authority to delegate the management of activities to any person(s), management company or committee, provided that the activities and affairs of the Collaborative are well managed and all corporate powers are under the ultimate direction of the Collaborative.

SELA Collaborative Members

The SELA Collaborative members are a broader set of partners and organizations with shared interests in meeting the Collaborative’s goals. These members participate in the events, hold decision making power, and are the primary partners in executing the work.

Backbone Organization and Fiscal Agent

The backbone organization and fiscal agent provide support around the Collaborative’s day-to-day functions and works in partnership with Collaborative members. The backbone organization is responsible for managing grants and available funds for the following purposes:

- Fiscal accountability
- Convening the Collaborative Steering Committee and any working groups
- Leading marketing and branding for the Collaborative and its work
- Fundraising to support the execution of the strategic plan
- Completing reports to funders

It is important to note that Collaborative decisions are not made solely by the backbone organization, but instead by the Collaborative Steering Committee members, of which the backbone organization is included.

Staff

Collaborative staff are employees of the backbone organization and obligated to the human resource policies and procedures of the backbone agency.

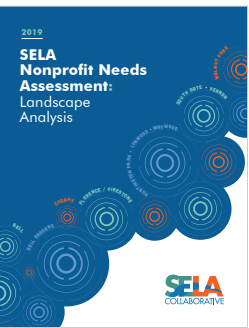
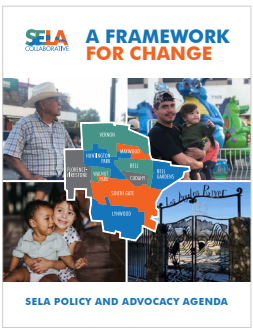
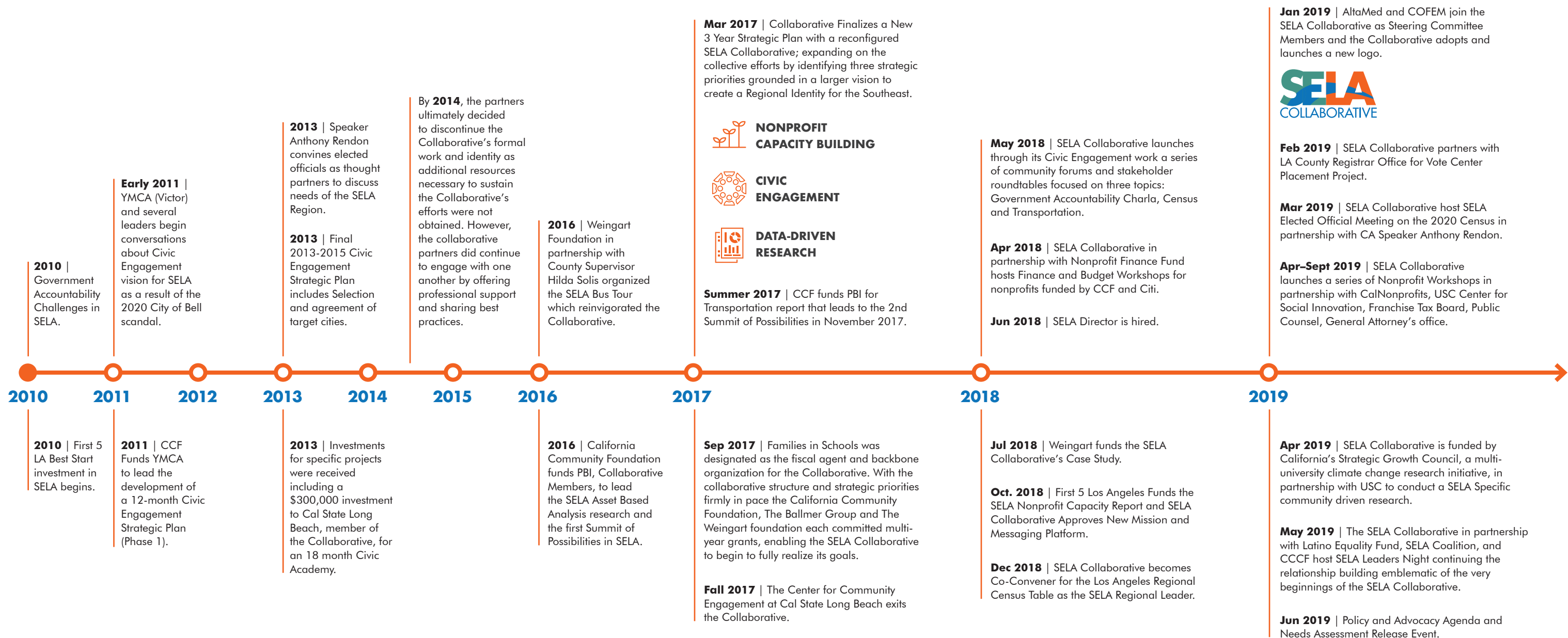
The Executive Director (1 FTE) is responsible for: the day to day operations of the group, convening and managing the Collaborative Steering Committee and general Collaborative meetings, representing the Collaborative at funder meetings, facilitating communication and alignment between the work of the Collaborative members, representing the Collaborative at regional and national conferences, and managing the work of the associate director, communications coordinator, administrative support and related consultants.

The Associate Director (1 FTE) is responsible for: assisting with project planning, implementation of programmatic activities, providing guidance on data and evaluation related to programming, Collaborative effectiveness, and developing a data management system. This includes overseeing internal data collection, data analysis, and the preparation of reports and updates for grant deliverables and/ or public distribution.

The Communications Coordinator (1 FTE) is responsible for: leading the branding and communication strategies of the Collaborative, developing the highlight videos, producing and disseminating the information of the Collaborative via social media platforms, producing annual reports, producing and disseminating the newsletter, supporting Collaborative members in marketing events and activities, and supervising technical consultants producing videos and other content.

The Administrative Assistant (1 FTE) is responsible for: providing administrative support to the Executive Director and Communications Coordinator, managing the database, coordinating mailings, and supporting Collaborative members in the outreach and execution of events and activities.

THE SELA COLLABORATIVE TIMELINE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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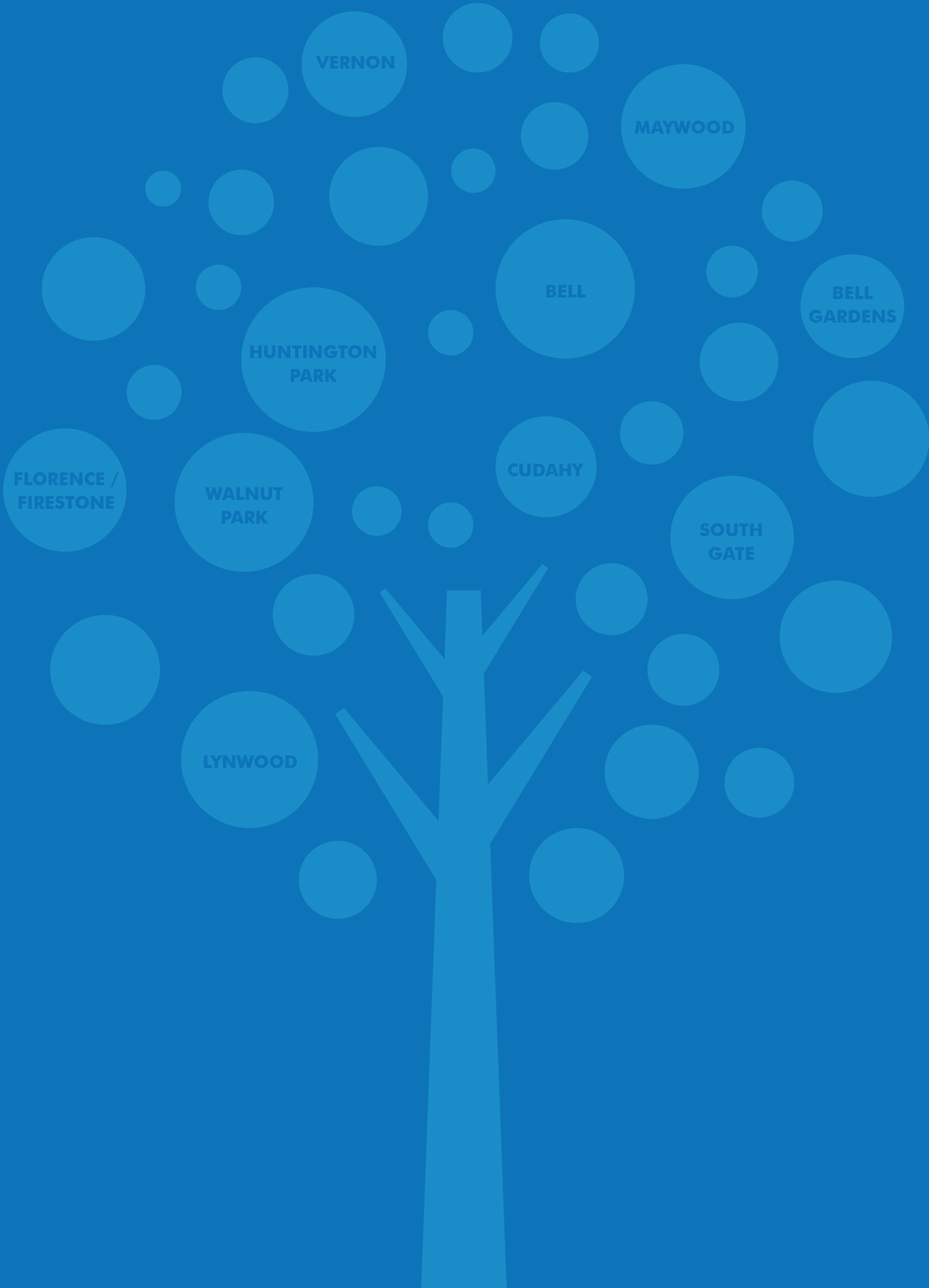
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Patricia Bowie has been working with organizations, community-based initiatives, and community groups to develop new ways to improve their work while sustaining their viability and commitment to their missions. Her commitment to continuous study of contemporary research allows her to provide a unique opportunity for organizational learning and guidance on using proven theories to improve organizational practice, improve systems and work towards population level outcomes. Currently Managing Director for the Population Change Institute and a senior fellow with UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, Ms. Bowie holds a Master’s in Public Health from UCLA and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Vermont.

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The Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Collaborative is a network of organizations gathered to lead the area of Southeast Los Angeles into an era of increased vitality by bringing resources to build a robust infrastructure of local nonprofits; to inform and engage residents for increased civic participation; and, to provide data and research specifically designed to explore the possibilities of this region.



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