

The San Antonio Experience: A Case Study of Community Collaboratives

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Photo by Vincent Law

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Key Factors for Impactful Community Collaboratives

Autonomous and Adaptable

These Collaboratives are self-governing, make their own decisions about how to carry out their respective missions, and are able to quickly adapt to changing needs, growing demands, and internal or external upheavals.

Listen to Community

Collaborative members work hard to cultivate compassionate listening as part of their culture and be responsive to the unique communities they are each serving. Listening to and then responding to community needs are central to their work.

Centered on Compassion

Like a north star, the ethic of compassion serves as a guide for orienting the members of the Collaboratives. The value of compassion oriented the head, heart and hands of the members interviewed.

Trusting Relationships

Collaboratives members work hard to build strong bonds of trust, internally, through processes of shared vulnerability, caring and transparency. The trust they have in each other helps to create caring cultures within the Collaboratives.

Group Collaboration

Many Collaborative members shared that they were drawn together for a cause. They recognized a need and came together based on that need. They formed groups with strong identities and shared purpose.

"We are unified by a shared vision and a sense of urgency to help those in need. We are agile, and make moves organically. People are open to each other's ideas."
-Volunteer, SACRD

"Listen. Learn. Ask questions with respect."
-Volunteer, VISTA

"...from your first contact, whether on the phone or in-person, you show you are someone who wants to listen."
- Staff, The Health Collaborative

"Compassion is like water; it gets through the cracks down to the level of need. It is like a soothing tea when you are sick." - Volunteer, VISTA Collaborative

"Each person in the Collaborative matters! If you want to keep people involved for 25-30 years, you need to make room for them and their lives. This weaves a level of trust that endures for a long time..." - Volunteer, Compassionate SA

"We are stronger together."

"Building relationships to support and inspire others to develop ideas and sustain effort - like in a dance, the collectives move like a dance" - Volunteer, EcoSA



Survey Findings - San Antonio Collaborative Members

"We're working on trying to make a regenerative system, a social system, civic system locally, that addresses needs, and includes equity and inclusion balances, decision making, and all the like."



Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	8
NEED	8
CONTEXT	10
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	11
<i>Cultivating psychological flexibility.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Creating a sense of shared vision</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Creating and prioritizing opportunities.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Action learning.....</i>	<i>13</i>
COMMUNITY-LED ACTION RESEARCH	14
RECRUITMENT	16
TRAINING WORKSHOPS	16
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS AND SURVEYS.....	16
COLLECTIVE SENSEMAKING AND REPORTING.....	17
.....	18
RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	18
AUTONOMOUS AND ADAPTABLE	20
LISTEN TO COMMUNITY	22
GROUP COLLABORATION	24
TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS.....	25
CENTERED ON COMPASSION.....	27
OBSERVATIONS	29
<i>The Role of Psychological Flexibility.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Correlation Analyses.....</i>	<i>30</i>
CONCLUSION	32
SUGGESTIONS.....	33
<i>San Antonio Community Collaboratives</i>	<i>34</i>
.....	34
<i>City of San Antonio</i>	<i>34</i>
.....	34
<i>Cities in the USA.....</i>	<i>34</i>
APPENDIX	35
CITY RESOLUTION AFFIRMING ‘COMPASSIONATE SAN ANTONIO’	36
OSTROM’S EIGHT CORE DESIGN PRINCIPLES - DETAILED DESCRIPTION	38
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY	39
EXAMPLES.....	41
RECRUITMENT FLIER	42
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	43
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	44

Executive Summary

“I think compassion has to be at the heart of all action and sustainability: Compassion for ourselves, our present selves, our bodies, our mental health, compassion for our families, compassion for our colleagues and our friends, compassion for the stranger - the person we may never meet but who inhabits our world and is affected by our actions.” - Volunteer, Environmental Collaborative of San Antonio (EcoSA)

Six years ago, on June 22, 2017, the City of San Antonio, Texas, became a “Compassionate City” when the newly elected Mayor Ron Nuremberg declared the city’s commitment to compassion. This was the very first resolution signed by the newly sworn-in Mayor Ron Nirenberg. He wanted to signal to the citizens of San Antonio that compassion was going to be front and center during his administration. He knew that cities don’t become a “Compassionate City” because they have achieved a long list of tasks. Committing to being a Compassionate City is a rallying point for action. It is what they are striving for, leaning into, and working towards through intent and action.

“My personal security increases if people are fed, have jobs, and are educated. This makes my life better. The city as a whole is better off with less suffering.” Volunteer, SACRD Collaborative

Supporting the Mayor’s efforts are 18 mostly volunteer-run Collaboratives that each focus on a different need: mental health, immigration, environment, housing, healthcare, peace, a resource directory, etc.

As part of a research project¹, we engaged 12 volunteers from across the city of San Antonio to interview 42 people associated with five Collaboratives in differing stages of growth and development. Our primary aim was to discover what the San Antonio community collaboratives could teach us about *collaboration to foster compassion*.

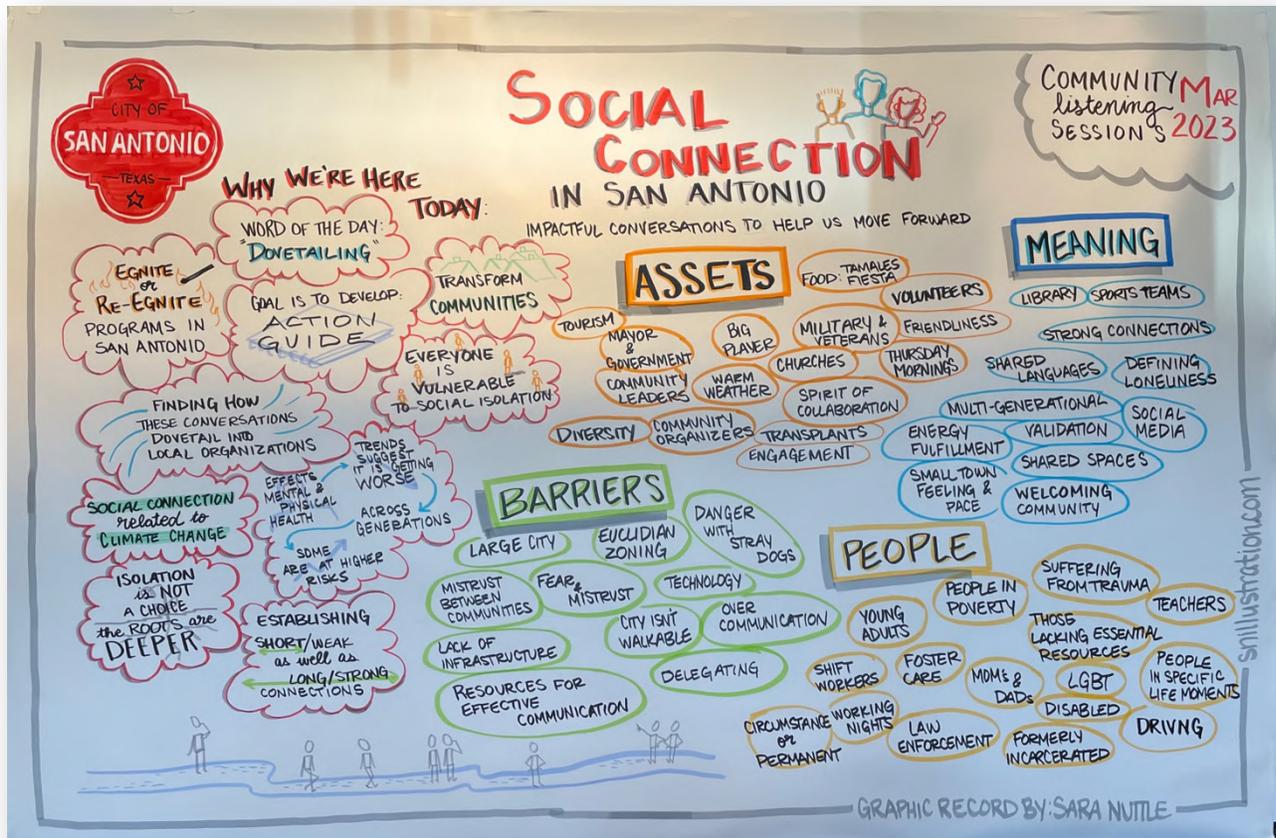
The words collaborate and compassion share the same root. To collaborate is to ‘work together’ and to experience compassion is to ‘feel together’.

Collaboration to foster compassion is a community initiative bringing together head, heart and hands. We wanted to learn about

how intentional alignment between compassion and collaboration might create integrated and impactful local changes. And we also wanted to learn the key factors for success when a community intentionally seeks to collaborate to foster greater compassion.



¹ [ProSocial World](#), a research and education non-profit whose mission is to work together to facilitate and inspire positive cultural change using evolutionary and behavioral science, partnered with [Compassionate San Antonio](#) to conduct this study.



While the San Antonio Mayor’s election cycle is every two years, these Collaboratives have staying power. Three powerful tethers appear to help hold these Collaboratives together:

- They have a shared purpose and strong group identity.
- They have a deep desire to improve the lives of San Antonio’s citizens.
- They are committed to the Collaborative’s mission and to their other team members.

Five key themes emerged that keep the Collaboratives strong, cohesive, and active.

1. **Autonomous and Adaptable:** These Collaboratives are self-governing. They make their own decisions about how to carry out their respective missions. Thus, these Collaboratives are able to quickly adapt to changing needs, growing demands, and any internal or external upheavals. Almost all (90%) of the survey respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree to both of the following statements:
 - *I feel that my voice and ideas are respected in the group.*
 - *I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake in the group.*

"We are unified by a shared vision and a sense of urgency to help those in need. We are agile and make moves organically. People are open to each other's ideas; it's very encouraging."
- Volunteer, SACRD Collaborative

2. **Listen to Community:** The members of the Collaborative created channels whereby they can listen to the unique communities they are each serving and find creative and meaningful ways to meet those needs. They also worked hard on cultivating compassionate listening as part of their culture. Listening to and then responding to community needs are central to the work of the Collaboratives. A survey administered to the interviewees collected data on individual psychological characteristics that contribute to active and effective listening. Research participants were asked about the frequency of certain experiences in the last seven days:

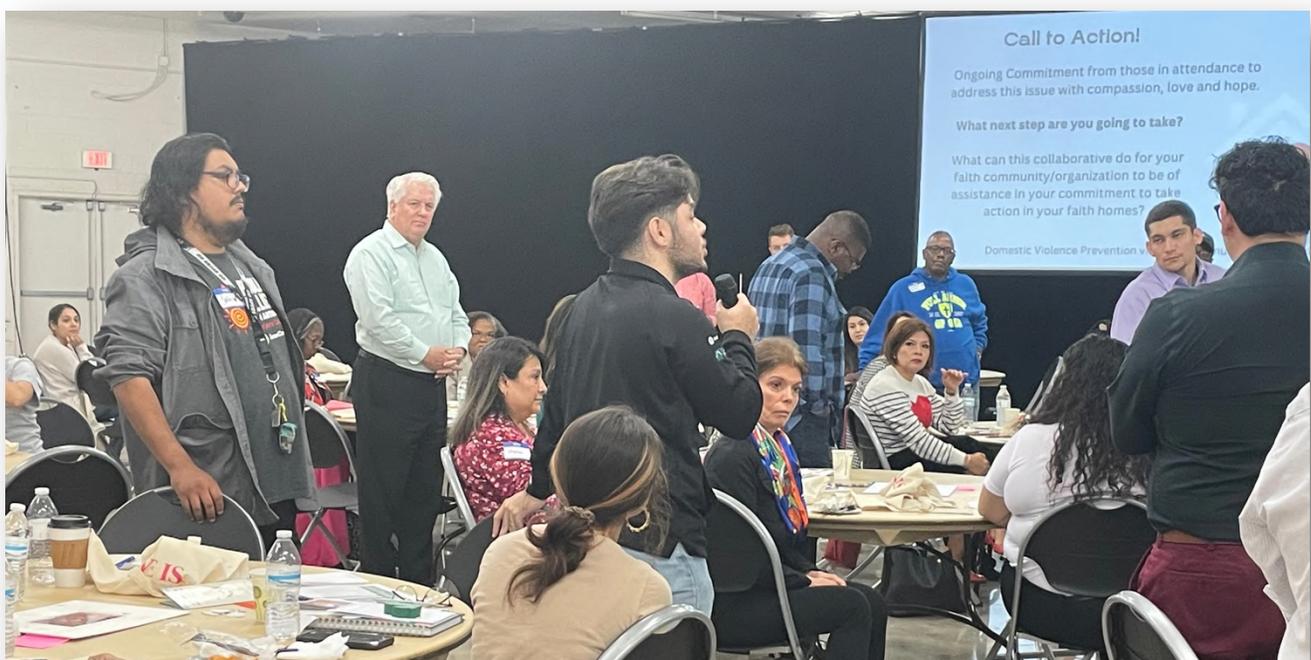
- Being present. *Even if I am somewhere else with my thoughts, I can focus on what's going on in important moments.*
- Being engaged. *I engage thoroughly in things that are important, useful, or meaningful to me.*

Again, the vast majority of the survey respondents, 87% and 97%, respectively, stated "often" or "very often" to these two characteristics.

"Listen. Learn. Ask Questions with Respect." - Volunteer, VISTA Collaborative

"I think we're often very quick to dismiss somebody if they don't agree with our view. But I think compassion has to be part of taking a pause and stepping back and really trying to listen and understand their perspectives."

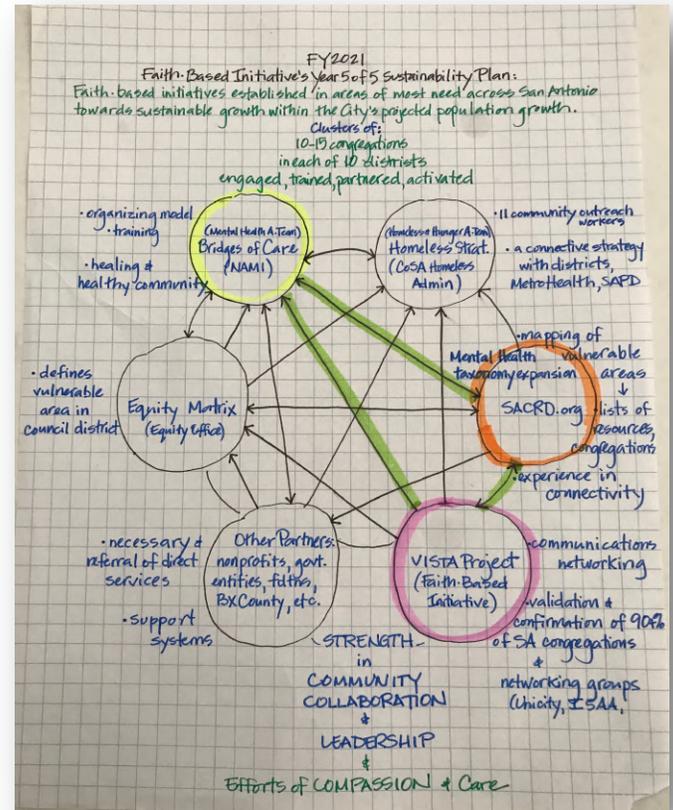
-Volunteer, EcoSA Collaborative



“Often people convey frustration because they have not received the help they needed in the past. So, from your first contact, whether on the phone or in-person, you show you are someone who wants to listen.”

- Staff, The Health Collaborative

3. **Group Collaboration:** It was observed that the San Antonio Collaboratives are already practicing many evidence-based principles of effective group collaboration. One such set of principles is informed by evolutionary theory and defined by Elinor Ostrom’s eight Core Design Principles (CDPs) for the design of the ‘commons’ – the good of the group – as articulated by ProSocial World. The researchers referred to these principles to help make sense of their interviews. The Collaboratives scored highly on most of the principles of effective group collaboration (see Figure 1 on next page).



The most fundamental core design principle is CDP1 - *shared purpose and identity*. This was a particular area of strength and focus for the collaboratives. Their own skill sets and group instincts helped them form Collaboratives that work well as a group with a shared mission. This, in turn, helped them network with other groups.

“We have a commitment to shared goals. We are responsive to community needs. We emphasize mutual respect and clear communication.” - Volunteer, SACRD Collaborative

“Success is only going to come through collaboration and so we're showing up and taking a chance and putting ourselves out there. I've never really worked in a collaborative space like this and so I'm learning. It seems to be just creating that space and that structure and that fluidity to allow conversations and to allow conflicts and to see what comes of it.” - Volunteer, VISTA Collaborative

“Good leadership encourages people to do positive things, linking their talents together, and that multiplies the possibilities.” - Volunteer, EcoSA Collaborative

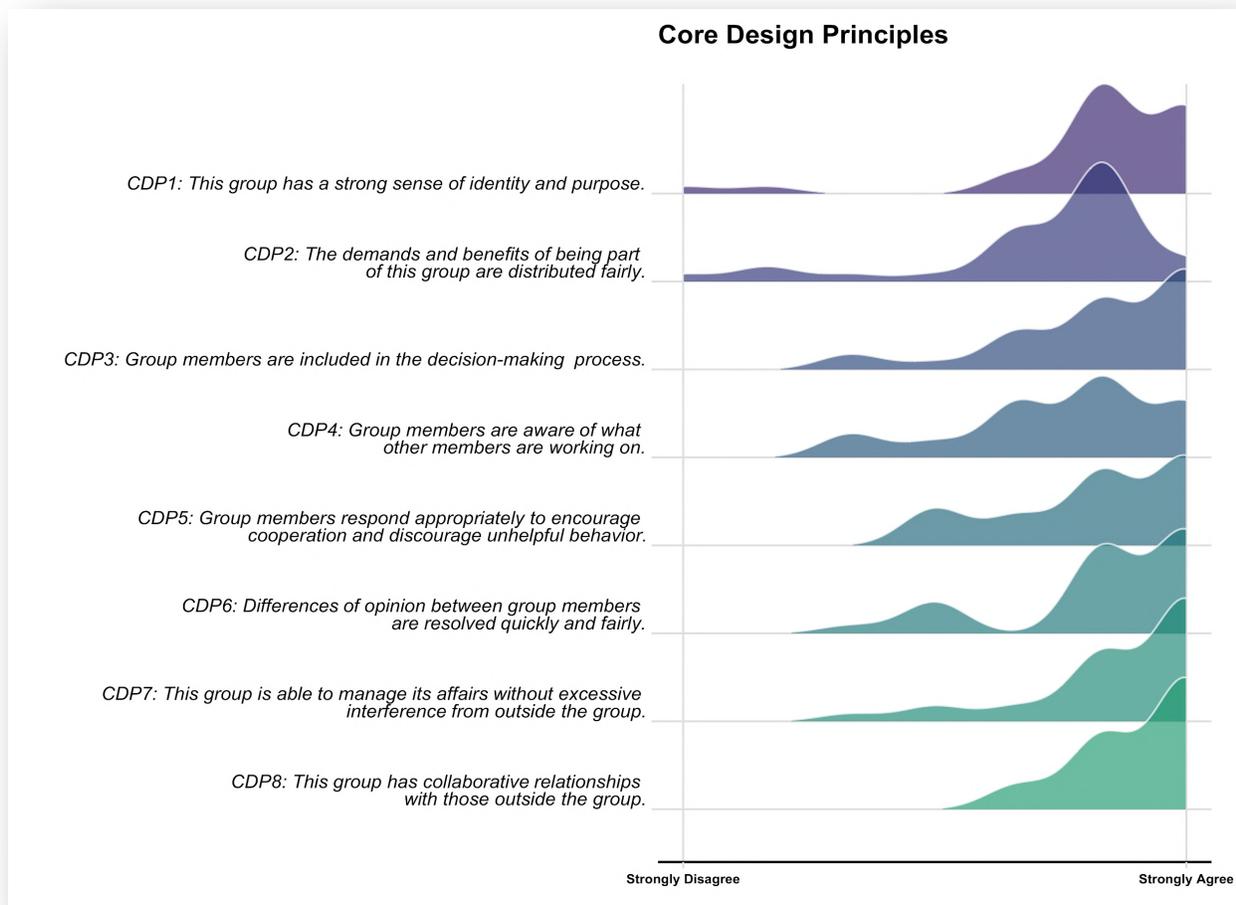


Figure 1. Core Design Principles - Collaborative Ratings

- 4. Trusting Relationships:** The Collaboratives work to build strong bonds of trust internally through processes of shared vulnerability, caring and transparency. One Collaborative starts their weekly meetings “with a check-in to see how each person is doing” because everyone matters. Another Collaborative meets in different locations to change-up the energy of their gatherings. The trust they have in each other helps to create caring cultures within the Collaboratives.

“We can’t move forward without respect and trust; everyone belongs because everyone has a cause and has the capacity to have compassion for the earth and nature.” - Volunteer, EcoSA Collaborative

Each person in the Collaborative matters! If you want to keep people involved for 25-30 years, you need to make room for them and their lives. This weaves a level of trust that endures for a long time. ... This isn’t cheap or easy – it requires investment of time and heart.

- Volunteer, Compassionate SA Community Collaborative

“Compassion is our process to build trust. It is treating our clients like our own family members. When clients make appointments on the phone, we try to convey caring, honesty and transparency”.

- Staff, The Health Collaborative

“The one thing that I found is [the importance of] informal meetings. Like we meet at a bar, or we meet at a restaurant, or we meet once a week over breakfast. And to me, those kinds of relationship building are just a container in which anything that’s uncomfortable can pop out.” – Volunteer, SACRD

Strong relationships and a clear sense of purpose help the collaboratives work through times of difference. There is a sense that shared identity and purpose act as a protective factor for difference in conflict... A lot can be forgiven if you have this to come back to.

5. **Centered on Compassion:** Like a north star, the ethic of compassion served as a guide for orienting the members of the Collaboratives. Many of those interviewed in these Collaboratives talked about the importance of “loving their neighbors” and caring for those who have less (opportunities, food, housing, healthcare, education, etc.). And those interviewed said repeatedly that they were striving in their own way to make San Antonio a better and more compassionate city in which to live.

“Compassion is like water; it gets through the cracks down to the level of need. It is like a soothing tea when you are sick.”
- Volunteer, VISTA Collaborative

“Wendel Berry said ‘You won’t save what you don’t love’. It is important that we are “in love” with the planet, creation and all creatures and the human family. Out of that deep love, we want to act as compassionately as possible.”
- Volunteer, EcoSA Collaborative

“Compassion is empathy in action. It is the bedrock of this Collaborative.” - Volunteer, SACRD Collaborative

“Compassionate accountability is what makes a Collaborative work and remembering there is a difference between working with love and kindness and being nice for the sake of not making waves. Waves make sure we are breaking down the cultural norms that separate us, and working on equality, and changing our cultural narrative to compassion.”
- Volunteer, Compassionate SA Community Collaborative



So What? Suggestions for Action

A primary aim of this report was to reflect what we had learned to: 1) help San Antonio deepen and expand its efforts, and 2) offer a blueprint to other cities on how they might organize their compassionate initiatives. The authors have identified main suggestions for actions for the Collaboratives, the City of San Antonio, and other US Cities that might want to adapt the San Antonio model of engaged citizens in service to others and compassionate actions. Suggestions were based on survey results, community voices, interviewer observations, as well as the researchers’ analysis of the broader evidence concerning principles of group effectiveness.

Suggestions for San Antonio Community Collaboratives

1. Continue to make compassion-in-action a topic of discussion and a central part of the purpose of the Collaboratives as that appears to be key to their success in San Antonio. The desire for a more compassionate city serves to motivate the Collaboratives' work and direct their purpose in dynamic, measurable, and sustainable ways.
2. While holding compassion at the core, other values and principles arose in collective sensemaking including equity, inclusion, transparency, and restorative justice (both within and between groups). These values were also deemed to be key components that strengthened collaborations within Collaboratives and with other groups. Making room for discussion of these and other shared values is an important component of the continuing success for Collaboratives.
3. Hold an in-person conference where all of the Collaboratives gather so that they may learn from each other and deepen their collaborations inspired by key values. And/or create an online community where the members of the Collaboratives may connect and network.
4. Ensure that Collaboratives have at least a few members with lived experience regarding the issues that are the focus of the Collaborative. This helps sustain the culture of compassion, and orient action toward key areas of need. "Nothing about us, without us."

Suggestions for the City of San Antonio

1. Find creative ways to fund the needs of these Collaboratives. A few mentioned that additional funding would help them expand their reach and services.
2. The City Staff Liaison is a critical position. Consider making this a two-person team for continuity and to spread out the workload. This key staff person initiates and coordinates relational collaborations within the governmental system and between the community at-large (faith community, nonprofits, neighborhood associations, businesses, schools, etc.)
3. Potential for more research into the effectiveness of the Collaboratives. This research looked at their function and composition. The next phase of research could evaluate community perceptions and effectiveness.

Suggestions for Cities in the USA

1. Use the Collaborative blueprint of San Antonio to inspire and empower groups of people in other cities to gather around their passions and then give them the autonomy to run their groups as they see fit.
2. Take advantage of the newly created *Compassionate USA* materials, videos, and resources available for every city to use. <https://compassionateusa.org/> and become a Compassionate City with the Charter for Compassion. <https://charterforcompassion.org/communities/overview>
3. Find a way to hire a City Staff Liaison to support the work of these volunteer groups.
4. Create ways for lessons learned in San Antonio to be shared with other interested cities.

Introduction

The main purpose of this action research project was to discover what the collaborative network of San Antonio's non profit organizations referred to collectively as "Community Collaboratives" could teach us about *collaboration to foster compassion*. This network of heads and hearts has embarked on a grassroots movement to have San Antonio, Texas, designated as a world-class compassionate city: one where the civic government, the religious and volunteer organizations, the businesses, the community, and its educational institutions come together to recognize the importance and value of compassion in the life of a city and by doing so create an ethos of compassion and a safety net for its most vulnerable citizens.²

[ProSocial World](#), a research and education non-profit whose mission is *to work together to facilitate and inspire positive cultural change using evolutionary and behavioral science*, partnered with [Compassionate San Antonio](#) to conduct this study. Using an appreciative inquiry research method described further in this report, the researchers aimed to capture data surrounding the key factors for creating impactful collaboratives in San Antonio and assess the ability of San Antonio's Compassionate Collaboratives model to be replicable and scalable. To achieve this, we identified the following:

- Qualities of systems, practices, policies, and networks that have supported the development of compassion and cooperation within the participating collaboratives.
- How groups engaged in this socio-cultural system have collaborated in a way that moves toward co-creating a more effective and integrated network.
- Which processes and principles were employed within their group to move towards their shared purpose.
- Additional needs and values of the collaborative network.

The data, stories, and anecdotes shared within this case study report are intended to: 1). Make visible significant changes resulting from efforts to make San Antonio more compassionate; 2). Build a network of people interested in conducting citizen-based science to evaluate their own groups and initiatives; and 3) Assess if the implementation of key collaborative principles and theories could contribute to building impactful compassionate cities. What has emerged from this project is a glimpse into how compassion is a driving force, how shared purpose is the glue for collaboratives, and how autonomous groups of citizens can impact their communities in a positive way.

Need

In the U.S., there are growing concerns about the fraying of the social safety net and about people in poverty falling through the administrative cracks of the U.S. social programs.³ In 2021, over 25% of Americans deemed to be suffering income poverty receive no help from food stamps, subsidized housing, social support or other

² (<https://charterforcompassion.org/san-antonio-tx-usa>)

³ B. Tonn, B. Hawkins, E. Rose, M. Marincic. Income, housing and health: Poverty in the United States through the prism of residential energy efficiency programs. *Energy Research & Social Science*, Volume 73, 2021, 101945, ISSN 2214-6296, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.101945>. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214629621000384>)

case benefits.⁴ General poverty is conventionally defined in terms of income. However, strict income-threshold definitions of poverty hide the economic hardships, the non-income components of poverty; such as, material deprivation and subjective financial stress. Poverty could be defined as the deprivation of a person's capabilities to live the life they have reason to value or simply the broader notion of 'inability of living a decent life'.⁵ Poverty is a social determinant of health inextricably linked to health and well-being, with persons of color suffering disproportionately from health disparities.

Globally, access to affordable food, adequate housing and healthcare, and reliable energy should be acknowledged as a human right; as designated in the United Kingdom international human rights law, for example. The UK government is legally required under the international human rights law to secure the human right to adequate food, housing, for everyone in the UK. The United States federal government refuses to ratify international human rights treaties.⁶

Governments have the potential to remedy or reinforce inequality. History makes clear that people—when they have the ability to organize, speak up, and engage—have the potential to hold their leaders and institutions accountable. Meaningful civic engagement is an antidote to inequality, with rich potential to empower underrepresented and marginalized communities that have too often been excluded. So what makes for meaningful civic engagement and compassionate collaboration?

Recent U.S. Census Bureau data suggests that San Antonio, Texas is the most impoverished large metropolitan area in the US.⁷ Data indicates that 14.2% of residents in San Antonio were living below federal poverty level (FPL)⁸, the highest percentage in the country's 25 most-populous metros, with Hispanics and African Americans disproportionately affected. The City of San Antonio's Human Services Department and Metropolitan Health District describes the landscape of poverty in its 2022 *Status of Poverty Report*⁹:

Economic segregation in San Antonio is deeply entwined with racial segregation, much of which can be traced to historical policies and practices that resulted in an urban core of concentrated poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage. While these practices have faded, they created a profound and ongoing effect on the racial/ethnic and regional disparities in poverty that are still evident in San Antonio today.

The report also states that, in general, residents north and northwest of downtown are more financially secure, have higher education, and better health outcomes, while lower-income residents in central and areas immediately east, west and south of the city center have less education and suffer disproportionately from morbidity and disease.

Despite these statistics, in 2018, San Antonio was still named one of the 15 best cities in the country to live in.

⁴ T. Jan, 13 million people in poverty are disconnected from the social safety net. Most of them are white. The Washington Post, Feb. 4, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/13-million-people-in-poverty-are-disconnected-from-the-social-safety-net-most-of-them-are-white/2019/02/04/807516a0-2598-11e9-81fd-b7b05d5bed90_story.html.

⁵ P. Townsend. *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1979.

⁶ <https://globaljusticecenter.net/blog/773-u-s-aversion-to-international-human-rights-treaties>

⁷ Poverty related data for the City of San Antonio is based on information collected in the 2016-2020 timeframe by the American Community Survey (2020 ACS 5YE) conducted by the Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/all?q=metro+areas>

⁸ FPL: poverty threshold of \$26,500 for a family of four.

⁹ <https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/HumanServices/FaithBased/2019PovertyReport.pdf>

Context

In 2010, a 501(c)3 community collaborative established in 1995, the peaceCENTER, through its community organizing and engagement efforts slightly shifted its path and started “doing business as” Compassionate San Antonio. This was done intentionally in recognition of the fact that compassion is the path to peace. This intentional collaborative approach, or philosophy, was guided by the ‘PEACE paradigm’, conceived by the peaceCENTER back in 1995 when they originated.

- P = purpose: *a “Compassionate San Antonio”*
- E = education: *compassion and integrity training*
- A = action and agency: *join change efforts and start from the bottom up*
- C = connections: *engage every possible network, especially those with community organizing models*
- E = enthusiasm: *follow the energy; remember to celebrate*

The PEACE paradigm provides a roadmap to compassion and reflects that community efforts must begin with the identification of a need and a purpose. In San Antonio, for the community collaboratives, combating poverty is the need and co-creating a “compassionate San Antonio” is the purpose. We could also say compassion is the northstar.

Over the years from 2010 to 2017, a group of collaboratives known, collectively, as the Compassionate San Antonio (SA) Community Collaborative formed. It took seven years for this larger collaborative to become deeply rooted at the community level. Compassionate SA then submitted a city council resolution for San Antonio to officially become a “Compassionate City” among ~100 other cities globally. In 2017, the City Council Resolution was signed by San Antonio Mayor Nirenburg. The peaceCENTER transformed, specifically to implement the Resolves of the resolution.¹⁰

With what I know about these dynamics, by very intentional observation over the years, any city really clear on [PEACE] could move mountains in 7 months instead of 7 years with a strategic plan at the beginning - which could take 7 intentional days. - City of San Antonio, Staff Liaison

The first intentional collaboration after the resolution took 3 years to develop to full systemic engagement: the San Antonio Community Resource Directory ([SACRD](#)). Over the next 2 years through the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022), 16 other intentional community collaborations formed. The last one formed in 2 weeks with the largest number of people involved in any existing Collaborative. Organic strategic action steps within this collaborative were able to be formed in 2 intentional hours.

Collaborative efforts moved forward in designing and coordinating the first San Antonio Compassion Institute in 2020.¹¹ The institute started offering Compassionate Integrity Training (CIT), a multi-part training program that cultivates basic human values as skills for the purpose of increasing individual, social and environmental flourishing – compassion for self and others, common humanity, interdependence, systems mapping and discernment. The mayor has taken this training. Combating poverty has been the “central focus” of San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenburg’s agenda, according to a statement he submitted to the local newspaper, the San Antonio Report, in March 2020.

¹⁰ <https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/HumanServices/FaithBased/CompassionateSanAntonioResolution.pdf>

¹¹ <http://sacompassion.net/saci2020/>

The following is an indicative list of activities initiated by the city over recent years as a direct result of their focus on compassion.

- [Compassionate USA](#) – a learning journey, a campaign for compassion education launching locally and gifted nationally to every mayor of every city, town, and territory in the U.S.
- [SA Forward](#) – Local health department's equity focused strategic plan, the “Equity Atlas”.
- [2022 Affordable Housing Bond](#) – \$1.2 billion – based on SA’s Equity Atlas and those most in need.
- [The Climate Sustainability Fund](#) – \$10 million for each of the next 5 years.
- ‘Resiliency Hubs’ – located in near-proximity to cohorts of congregations, schools, local businesses, community organizations, etc. All resiliency hub volunteers receive 20 hours of no-cost mental health training, and the 2nd year they can receive CIT training.
- [The Welcome Walk](#) – 2nd annual welcoming event to honor and celebrate the journey and cultural heritage of immigrants and refugees who have made San Antonio their new home (walk with others the way you wish others will walk with you).
- [Migrant Resource Center](#) – over 200,000 clients in 2022, 10 times more than in 2019, working efficiently, effectively, and compassionately.
- Ready To Work Program – (RTW) is San Antonio’s education and job placement program with \$229 million in funds.

Policies and procedures, conversations and collaborations all had to be shifted and engaged for these positive change efforts to happen. All activities and outcomes above had a community collaborative - backed by Compassionate San Antonio - form around them to address an identified need and fueled by compassion. All the above efforts have led up to the 2023 Compassionate USA campaign.¹²

Theoretical Frameworks

All positive change efforts are attempts at conscious cultural evolution. Until recently, however, these efforts have not been explicitly framed as a cultural evolutionary process. [ProSocial World](#) brings the latest developments in evolutionary science to bear upon the theory and practice of conscious cultural evolution in real-world settings. Because of its general theoretical framing, the practical methods of ProSocial World can be applied to any social context (e.g., economics, education, health, the environment) and any scale (e.g., small groups, smart cities, bioregions, nations, and global governance).

The approach ProSocial employs has demonstrated that gaining trust, perspective on future goals, and ultimately building the collaborative capacity of an organization or a multi-stakeholder system to improve performance, follows from a formal, planned, hit-the-ground-learning approach. This is contrasted with

¹² *Compassionate USA is a six-part learning journey designed to teach self-compassion and community well-being that honors our common humanity & affirms the beauty of our differences. We seek to help people develop foundational skill sets, a shared vocabulary, and common practice for all people to ultimately decrease violence and trauma and increase individual and collective healing* (<https://compassionateusa.org/>).

informal, ad hoc, hit-the-ground-running approaches typically taken. The idea is to hit the ground learning rather than running. Effectively this is an orchestrated series of conversations that effectively shape, mold and sustain the morale and ethical normative environments required for civilization to flourish. Broadly this involves five broad processes.

Five broad ProSocial World processes

1. **Cultivating psychological flexibility:** Creating a fertile environment for change to occur and building individual skills in resilience, psychological flexibility and listening to enable better dialogue
2. **Creating a sense of shared vision:** Taking perspective on and mapping your way to a preferred and probable future
3. **Creating opportunities for change:** Establishing a healthy, normative environment that builds and maintains trust and reciprocity
4. **Prioritizing opportunities** - according to their impact and capacity to deliver
5. **Action learning:** Ongoing exploration and refinement with experience

These five processes comprise contextually situated, structured, and facilitated dialogues designed to guide change agents to reflect, with their people, on what is important personally and professionally to them and how they can effectively shift behaviorally towards what is valued in the long run. Those involved are introduced to a suite of simple, yet powerful, tools for exercising psychological flexibility and taking choices for action toward things that fundamentally matter at each level in the system. Importantly, these facilitated discussions and reflections are complemented by fieldwork and action learning in order to reinforce and embed desired change within the life and institutions of those involved.

Cultivating psychological flexibility

This personal and transformative reflection is designed to have those involved take perspective on their efforts to live in line with what is intrinsically important and actively move towards what is valued. Here people learn how to exercise psychological flexibility – defined as “contacting the present moment as a conscious human being, fully and without needless defense – as it is and not as what it ‘says’ it is – and, depending on what the situation affords, persisting with or changing a behavior in the service of chosen values”.¹³ Essentially, this involves reflecting on personal efforts to live the values and virtues that are intrinsically important within the various domains of daily life. As a consequence of these reflections and related activities, the capacity for self-determined intentional and positive change within life, relationships and work with others is significantly enhanced.

Creating a sense of shared vision

This is an active inquiry into and consideration of what a preferred future could look like within a select sphere of influence. For example, within families, communities, organizations, or society more broadly, considering the disciplines and practices of relevance. This conversation is designed to access the wisdom of those involved by having them take the perspective of the other individuals and groups they will be striving with to create that preferred future. This involves contemplating the factors that will likely determine what a healthy,

¹³ Hayes, S. C., Pistorello, J., & Levin, M. E. (2012). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy as a Unified Model of Behavior Change. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 40(7), 976–1002. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000012460836>

harmonious and prosperous world would look like should it evolve in time within a collective sphere of influence. The output of this inquiry is a much clearer understanding of the systemic trends and drivers shaping the behavior of the people in the system and the consequences of organized and coordinated effort in the service of the chosen cause. This leads to the identification and benchmarking of opportunities and innovations that could become the seeds of positive, system-wide, trans-generational transformational change.

Creating and prioritizing opportunities

In this part of the conversation, those involved are introduced to a set of **Core Design Principles** (outlined below) for good civic behavior based on the prize-winning work of Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom. These principles have been shown to underpin the formal and cultural normative practices that sustain effective inter-related teamwork over extended periods and distances required for a successful enterprise. Intact teams are invited to reflect on how to best guide and support their groups or organizations to employ these principles and cultivate more effective, trusting, and collaborative working relationships. This discussion reflects upon how each community or organization could more successfully interface and interact with the broader society it is an integral part of. With this framework, those involved are further equipped to cultivate a healthier cultural environment and successfully develop collective best practices at every level of the system.

Eight Core Design Principles (CDPs)

1. **Strong sense of identity and purpose** - as bounded groups responsible for *working together*
2. **Demands and benefits are distributed fairly** - mobilize available resources to *meet needs* while ensuring derived benefits are matched as fairly and equitably as possible.
3. **Fair and inclusive decision-making** - processes that include *all those impacted* by the outcomes of our endeavors.
4. **Transparency** - feedback loops, adaptability, peer-monitoring and *learning the effects of our actions and choices*.
5. **Appropriate responses to encourage helpful and discourage unhelpful behaviors** - mechanisms that allow us to grow in our ability to *live our values and be effective in the pursuit of our goals*.
6. **Differences of opinion resolved fast and fair** - approaches based on *restorative justice principles*
7. **Authority to self-govern** - sufficient *local autonomy* from other groups to enable choice and internal decisions.
8. **Collaborative relations with other groups** - that embody the same principles thus enabling the *interdependent and sustainable use of resources to be scaled up* to larger systems.

Action learning

Structured opportunities to continue learning how to implement the CDPs, solidify a shared vision and purpose, identify strategies, and co-create effective and collaborative networks.

Conversations exploring the 5 broad prosocial processes build capacity for values-directed action at each level. The processes outlined above cultivate the ability to think strategically about changing future contexts and contribute professionally and influentially to establishing the collaborative and productive cultures capable of bringing about desired change. ProSocial's work with the Charter for Compassion was an introduction to these

programs. The aim was to seed subsequent action and to further equip those involved to successfully respond to the natural rhythm of life while pursuing what is possible - together.

The broad Prosocial process is described in Figure 2 below.

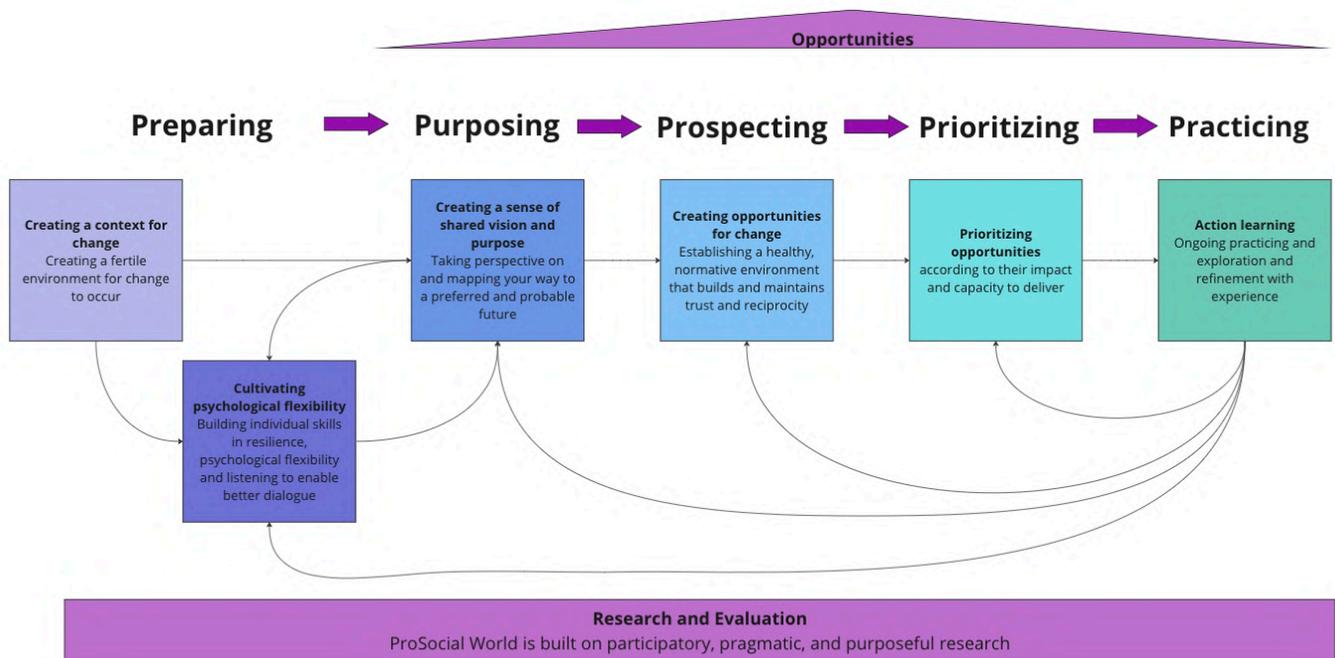


Figure 2. Broad Prosocial Process

Community-led Action Research

By pursuing a systematic data collection and feedback process, change agents learn how the same organizational / systemic issues can be viewed in different, conflicting ways by key stakeholders who hold the power to enhance or impede the effectiveness of a collaborative endeavor. Facing these conflicting differences forces recognition of the actual complexity of what initially appears to be a simple situation and signals the need to stop and learn together before acting. The resulting collective reflection on current practice sets the stage for new thinking that leads to new organizational behavior.

Community conversations for evaluation purposes are used to obtain in-depth information from individuals about their experiences, actions, beliefs, attitudes, decisions, and motivations for choices. Using deep listening skills assists with building trust and identifying needs, values, and strategies – characteristics of good listening is a combination of perspective taking, empathy & transcendence. Good listening has been shown to underpin a tendency to care about others.

Deriving questions from the 4 categories of ‘Powerful Questions’ is part of an ‘appreciative inquiry’ approach to interviews (discussed in more detail in the Appendix). Using this framework helps understand the rationale for the question and can contribute to better listening.

- **People-Questions** because you must understand what people care about and how they think and feel about their work, the issue at hand and the organization or community they are a part of – in order to earn their trust and gain credibility.
- **What-Questions** because you must understand if key people think the organization or collaborative effort is headed in the right direction and pursuing that direction in the right way – in order to shape (with them) a direction for the organization or community.
- **How-Questions** because you must understand whether or not the organizational or community infrastructure works and engage others in fixing it – in order to implement a vision successfully.
- **Leadership-Questions** because you must understand the field of expectations for collaborative leadership – in order to consciously make the right match between what leadership is needed and what you have to offer in order to bring about change.

The community conversations were conducted by a group of participants (“co-researchers”) investigating San Antonio’s system of Collaboratives alongside ProSocial World facilitators and research staff. The co-researchers heavily contributed to the action research design and developed the following five interview questions.

Primary Interview Questions

1. *What inspired you to dedicate your time and energy to this collaborative and how has it engaged the community you serve?*
2. *What role does compassion play in the work of the Collaborative?*
3. *How does your collaborative go about developing a deep sense of purpose and identity? And is this working well?*
4. *If you could change one thing structurally or culturally about your Collaborative, what would it be and why?*
5. *What are the most inspiring examples of leadership in your Collaborative?*

The co-researchers conducted the interviews looking through a prosocial lens (deeply listening with perspective, empathy, transcendence, and love) and actively contributed to the sensemaking sessions.

The research project had 4 phases that are described in more detail below:

1. Participant recruitment
2. Training workshops
3. Data collection: community conversations and surveys
4. Collective sensemaking and reporting

Recruitment

A critical component of the recruitment and sampling phase was the support of a long-standing, highly respected Staff Liaison with the City of San Antonio. An outreach flier was circulated at several city functions to recruit 15-20 volunteers to participate and explore the overarching research question: *“What are the key factors for creating impactful collaboratives in San Antonio?”* See Appendix for a copy of the outreach flier.

A “purposive” sampling approach was used for greater contextual diversity. Cases were selected from a number of criteria to enable a rich and detailed picture to be built across the network.

Co-researcher candidates were selected based on the following criteria:

- Involved with or aware of Compassionate San Antonio initiatives
- Motivated to learn and have an interest in conducting interviews
- Have some experience listening carefully and recording impressions
- Able to commit to research project requirements

The subgroup of Collaboratives listed below were selected for variety based on the following criteria:

- Age of organization - differing years of formation
- Diversity of Collaborative focus and mission
- Willingness of those within Collaboratives to be interviewed

Four to five interviewees were selected from each of the five selected Collaboratives:

1. Compassionate San Antonio Community Collaborative - formed in 1995 - 28 years ago
2. The Health Collaborative: Bexar County’s Community Health Leadership - formed in 1997 - 26 years ago
3. Vista Collaborative: Congregational Cohort of NAMI’s Bridges to Care - formed in 2008 - 15 years ago
4. San Antonio Community Resource Directory: SACRD.org (pronounced like sacred) formed in 2017 - 6 years ago
5. EcoSA Community Collaborative: Not even a year old. The first gathering of this collaborative-information was in November 2022

Training Workshops

Three 1.5-hour online training workshops were conducted in February 2023 that introduced:

- Prosocial lenses/preanalytic assumptions described earlier to shape interview inquiries
- Informed consent processes for ethical research
- Deep listening skills, Appreciative Inquiry approach, and the 4 Powerful Questions
- Methods to “make sense” of the interviews (i.e., identify broad themes)

Community Conversations and Surveys

Twelve co-researchers each conducted community conversations with 3-4 stakeholders in the Collaborative system in March/April 2023. A total of 42 in-depth interviews were conducted. Co-researchers were asked to

record notes after each interview indicating the context, the key themes extracted from the conversations, and their reflections on how the prosocial lens affected the quality of the experience.

Interviewees also volunteered to complete an online survey in advance of the interview. A total of 35 surveys were completed. The survey aimed to capture the climate and culture of the Collaborative, group member satisfaction, trust, and perceived functioning as well as individual flourishing and values.

Survey respondents were majority white, non-Hispanic, and female. There was a fairly even age distribution with a small percentage under 30 years of age - 25% were 70+ years of age.

Collective sensemaking and reporting

To produce collective new thinking and build consensus for inquiry findings, data must be shared and made sense of collectively. Two active sensemaking sessions were conducted with the co-researchers to discuss mutual experiences, impressions, and reflections that emerged from community conversations. As a group we:

- Identified key themes in the data
- Confirmed points of view that did not have larger significance
- Questioned embedded assumptions, beliefs, and values
- Developed a shared perspective on context and meaning

Word clouds were generated from the co-researchers' reflections (n=22) on two questions:

- What were the three most important themes that emerged from the community conversations? (Figure 1)
- How did deeply listening affect conducting the interview? (Figure 2)



Figure 1: Key Themes



Figure 2: Impacts of Deep Listening

Research Findings

“What are the key factors for creating impactful collaboratives in San Antonio?”

This section presents the findings from both the qualitative (community conversations and co-researcher’s post-interview reflections) and quantitative (survey for Collaborative representatives) research efforts. Data selected support the research question above. Findings are organized by the 5 key factors that emerged from survey data and collective sensemaking sessions.

5 Key Factors for Impactful Collaboration

- **Autonomous and Adaptable** – The Collaboratives are self-governing, make their own decision about how to carry out their respective missions, and are able to quickly adapt to changing needs, growing demands, and internal or external upheavals.
- **Listen to Community** – Collaborative members work hard to cultivate compassionate listening as part of their culture and be responsive to the unique communities they are each serving. Listening to and then responding to community needs are central to their work.
- **Group Collaboration** – Many Collaborative members shared that they were drawn together for a cause. They recognized a need and came together based on that need. They formed groups with strong identities and shared purpose.
- **Trusting Relationships** – Collaboratives members work hard to build strong bonds of trust, internally, through processes of shared vulnerability, caring and transparency. The trust they have in each other helps to create caring cultures within the Collaboratives.
- **Centered on Compassion** – Like a north star, the ethic of compassion serves as a guide for orienting the members of the Collaboratives. The value of compassion oriented the head, heart and hands of the members interviewed.

The factors identify which processes and principles were employed within their group to move towards their shared purpose - and the qualities of systems, practices, and players that have supported the development of compassion and group collaboration within the participating Collaboratives. (Note: “group” refers to whatever Collaborative the survey respondent was a part of at the time of the interview).

Without even knowing about Ostrom’s 8 Core Design Principles (CDPs), as presented in the Theoretical Framework section above, the San Antonio Collaboratives were practicing many or most of these principles of group efficacy and collaboration (see Figure 3). The sections below highlight CDPs in action, when observed. It should be noted that survey responses related to the CDPs reveal that the Collaboratives recognize areas where the organizational structure and systems could be improved.

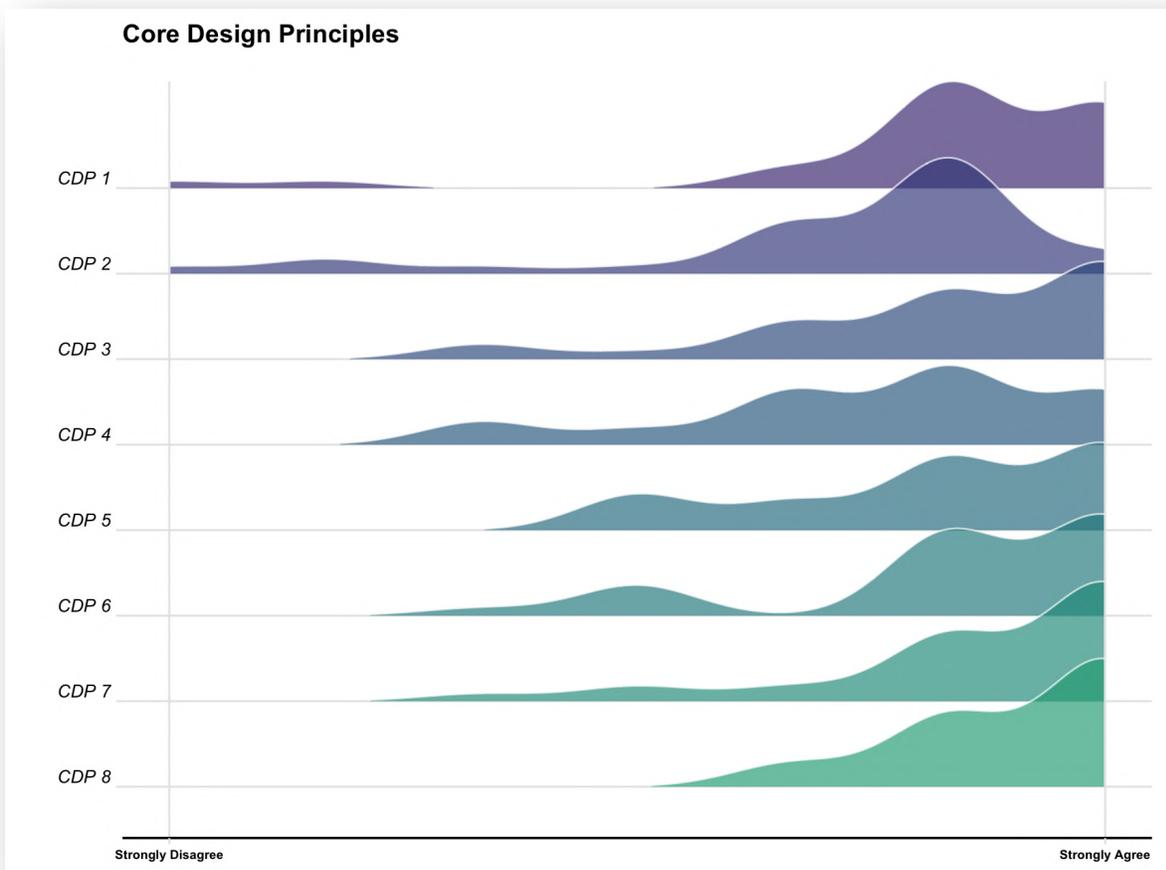


Figure 3. Core Design Principles - Collaborative Ratings

Findings from this research demonstrate a virtuous cycle of volunteering, as conceptualized in Figure 4 and discussed further in the conclusion of this section. In this cycle, representatives of the Collaboratives (staff and volunteers) help fulfill their personal psychological needs such as autonomy and belonging.¹⁴ This, in turn, is evidenced to increase group commitment,¹⁵ and with it, the authors hypothesize, their intrinsic motivation to serve as social change agents.

¹⁴ Martela, Frank and Richard M. Ryan. (2021). In selecting measures for a comprehensive assessment of well-being, it is essential to include indicators of psychological need satisfaction. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, Volume 23, 2021, 101474, ISSN 2211-3355, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2021.101474>.

¹⁵ Van Der Vegt, G., Emans, B., & Van De Vliert, E. (2000). Team Members’ Affective Responses to Patterns of Intragroup Interdependence and Job Complexity. *Journal of Management*, 26(4), 633–655. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600403>

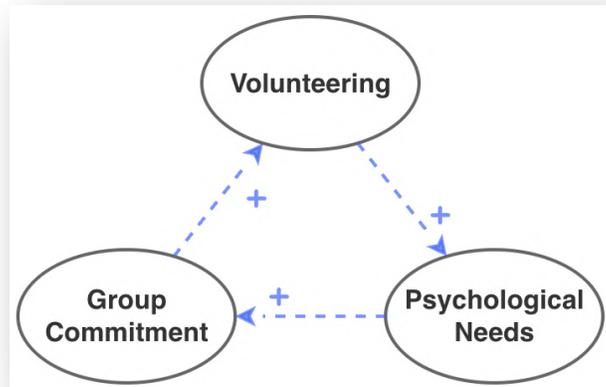


Figure 4: A Virtuous Cycle of Volunteering

Autonomous and Adaptable

“Be responsive to changing needs...quickly adapt to make space to adjust what may feel rigid.”
- Volunteer, SACRD Collaborative

“Give everyone a chance to be the natural leader they already are but don't know it.”
- Volunteer, Compassionate SA Community Collaborative

Evidence exists that when comparing teams that are relatively autonomous with those that exist within more traditional hierarchies show that “empowered” teams were “more productive and proactive than less empowered teams and had higher levels of customer service, job satisfaction, and organizational and team commitment.”¹⁶ Chamberlin et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis (N = 53,200) and found that empowering people and giving them a voice improves job performance.¹⁷

Overall, the Collaboratives were observed to be self-organizing with distributed power (**CDP 7**). It was stated often in the interviews that the Collaborative staff have the freedom to make decisions within a system of collective ownership and leadership - input was of equal importance and stature.

Survey findings indicate that participants did feel a high level of autonomy and adaptability - this data supports the qualitative findings. Figure 5 shows that almost all (90%) of the survey respondents stated that they agree or strongly agree to both of the following statements:

- I feel that my voice and ideas are respected in the group.
- I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake in the group.

¹⁶ Kirkman, B.L. & Rosen, B. (1999). Beyond self-management: Antecedents and consequences of team empowerment. *Te Academy of Management Journal*, 42(1), 58–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/256874>

¹⁷ Chamberlin, M., Newton, D.W., & LePine, J.A. (2018). A meta-analysis of empowerment and voice as transmitters of high-performance managerial practices to job performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(10), 1296–1313. doi: 10.1002/job.2295

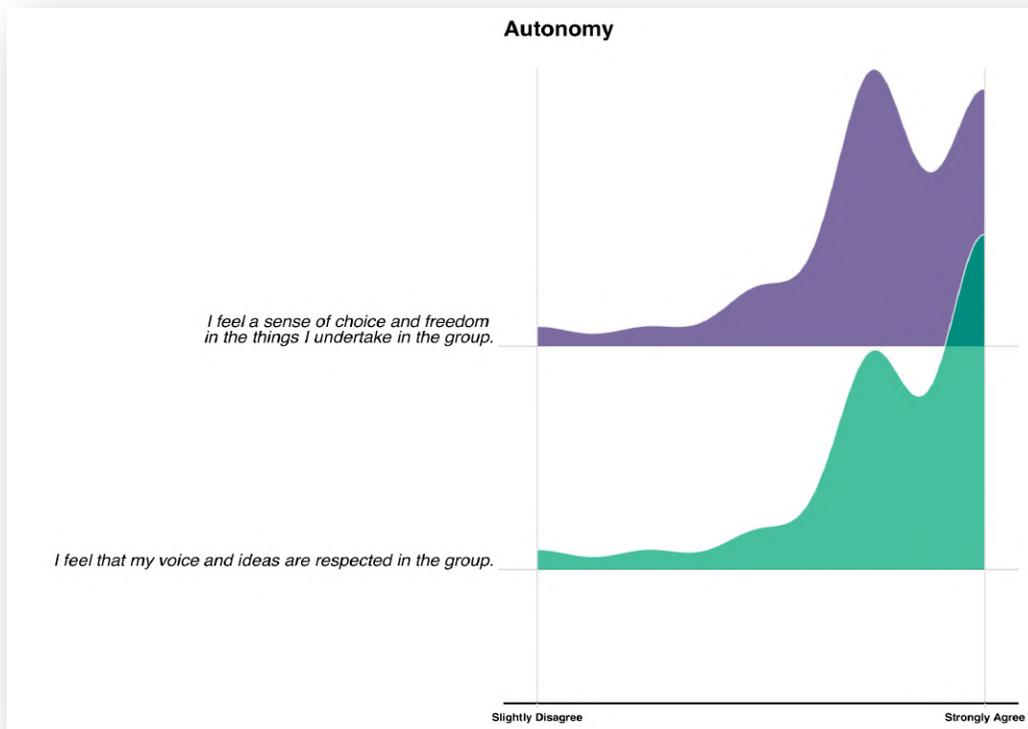


Figure 5. Measures of Autonomy

When asked questions that indicate an individual’s capability for being adaptable (see Figure 6), the vast majority of survey respondents (~85%) answered “definitely true” to the four statements below:

- There are lots of ways around any problem.
- I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.
- I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.
- Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.

Another survey question asked the respondent how much they agree to the following statement:

“This group learns and adapts well to changing circumstances” – 80% expressed that they agree or strongly agree.

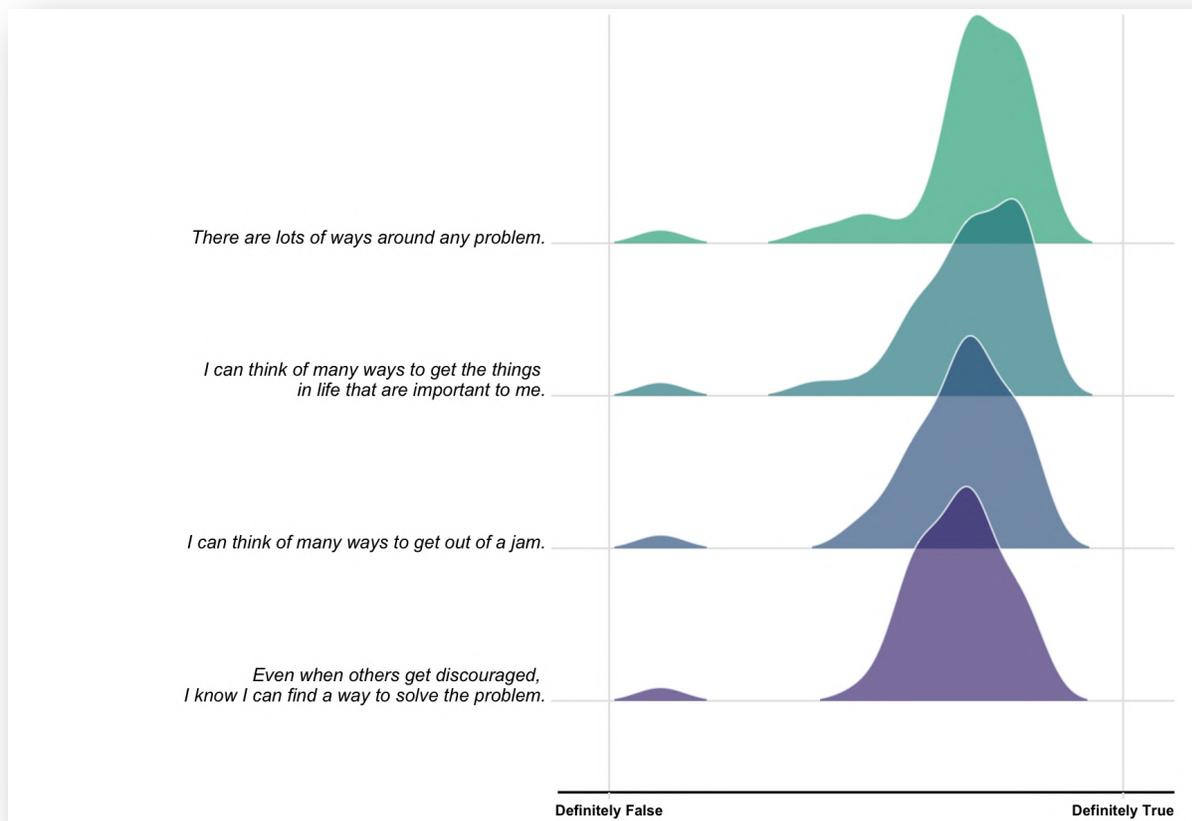


Figure 6. Measures of Adaptability

Listen to Community

“Listen, learn, ask questions with respect, be responsive to community needs, have mutual respect and clear communication.” - Volunteer, VISTA Collaborative

“Meaningful impact comes from focused support.” - Staff, The Health Collaborative

Connecting to the community is central to addressing community needs - this is the work of the Collaboratives. Connection results from meaningful and compassionate conversations that include trust and transparency (**CDP4**), sharing of knowledge, being present and engaged, asking questions with respect, and listening deeply (i.e., prosocial behaviors). It is important to appropriately reinforce these prosocial behaviors among groups - peer-to-peer monitoring (**CDP4**) and being more psychologically flexible/resilient - “moving towards what matters.” Studies have shown that group transparency and peer monitoring is key to system health and improved performance.¹⁸

¹⁸ Bernstein, E.S. (2017). Making Transparency Transparent: The Evolution of Observation in Management Theory. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 217. <http://annals.aom.org/content/11/1/217.abstract>

The survey collected data on individual characteristics of psychological flexibility¹⁹ demonstrating the frequency with which the interviewees engaged in meaningful conversation and practiced active listening. (Figure 7). Respondents were asked about the frequency of certain experiences in the last seven days:

- **Being present.** “Even if I am somewhere else with my thoughts, I can focus on what’s going on in important moments.”
- **Being engaged.** “I engage thoroughly in things that are important, useful, or meaningful to me.”

Again, the vast majority of the respondents, 87% and 97%, respectively, stated often or very often to these two ways of being. Data also shows that these respondents, in general, are socially active and do meaningfully connect with people often. Over the last 6 months 75% reported that they experienced a ‘great deal’ of meaningful and sustained conversations, with the same percentage stating they hardly, or not at all, felt isolated or lonely. Despite this, CDP 4 (*Group members are aware of what other members are working on*) was rated lowest of all CDPs - 58% agree with this statement (Figure 8).

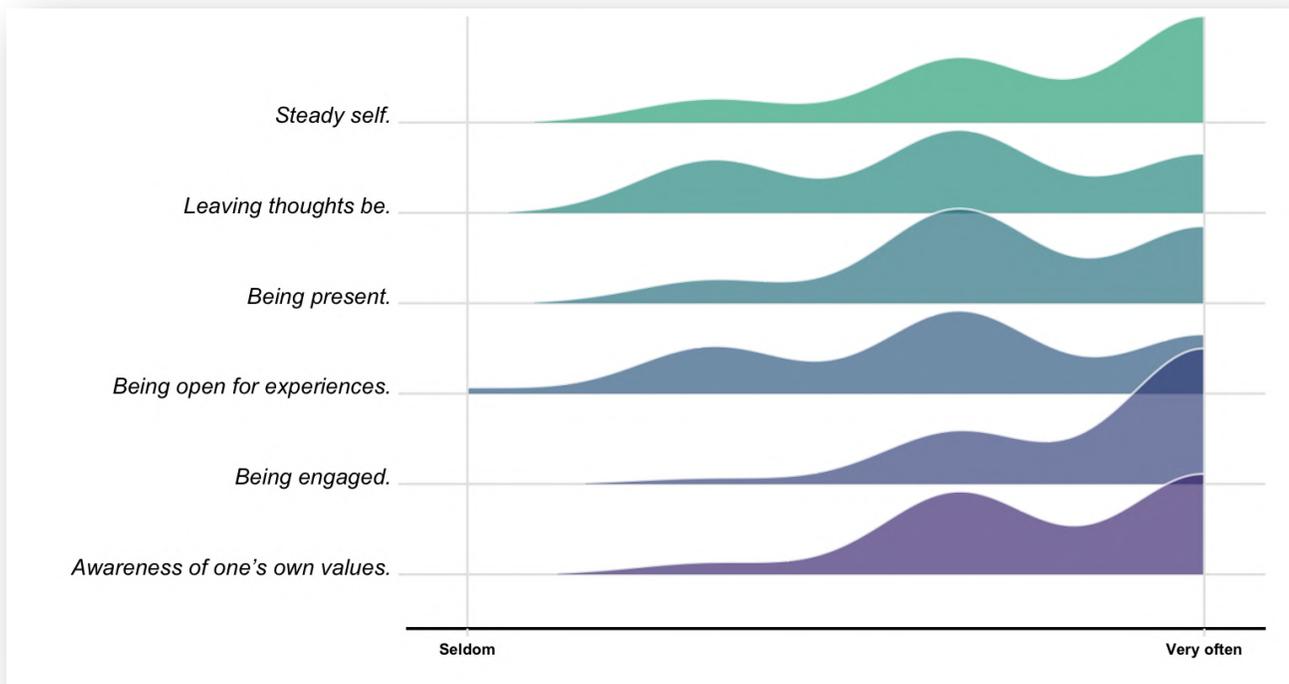


Figure 7. Indicators of Psychological Flexibility

¹⁹ Gloster, Andrew T., Victoria J. Block, Jens Klotsche, Jeanette Villanueva, Marcia T.B. Rinner, Charles Benoy, Marc Walter, Maria Karekla, Klaus Bader (2021). Psy-Flex: A contextually sensitive measure of psychological flexibility. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, Volume 22, 2021, Pages 13-23, ISSN 2212-1447, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2021.09.001>.

Group Collaboration

“We are stronger together.” - Volunteer, Compassionate SA

Previous research shows that having a shared purpose (**CDP 1**) has a range of positive effects upon group members and groups. Workers whose purpose matches that of their organization produce 72% more output than unmatched workers.²⁰ Mathieu et al. (2015) demonstrated that more cohesive groups perform better over time and better performance also enhances cohesiveness.²¹ There are also impacts at the personal level. Group members feel more personal meaning in life when there is a strong sense of belonging in a group, because it expands their awareness to include a cause larger than themselves.²²

“We are unified by a shared vision and a sense of urgency to help those in need. We are agile and make moves organically. People are open to each other’s ideas, [it is] very encouraging.” -Volunteer, SACRD

Many of the interviewees shared that they were drawn to a cause, they recognized a need and came together based on that need. Within the non-profit Collaborative space, it is not a surprise that most (but not all) agree or strongly agree on their organization having a strong sense of purpose and identity (**CDP 1**) (Figure 3).

“So, they’re not like making a whole bunch of money. They are very passionate about the work that they do. And they want to affect change. And then organizationally, it appears as though it’s pretty clear that everybody is aligned around the idea that they are to give access to underserved, underrepresented, under resourced communities. And that requires at times that they go above and beyond and, you know, work a little bit longer and stay a little bit later.” - Co-researcher

The reliance on and importance of creating collaborative networks (**CDP 8**) rated the highest, on average, of all CDPs - 89% agree or strongly agree that “this group has collaborative relationships with those outside the group”. The ProSocial model framing of CDP 8 is that principles 1–7 will also work at systemic levels. That is, to work effectively, groups of groups must also have shared purpose, equity, inclusive decision-making, transparency, effective feedback, effective conflict management and appropriate autonomy from broader systemic forces in order to cooperate effectively.

²⁰ Carpenter, J. & Gong, E. (2016). Motivating agents: How much does the mission matter? *Journal of Labor Economics*, 34(1), 211–236. doi:10.1086/682345

²¹ Mathieu, J.E., Kuenberger, M.R., D’Innocenzo, L., & Reilly, G. (2015). Modeling reciprocal team cohesion-performance relationships, as impacted by shared leadership and members’ competence. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 100(3), 713–734. doi: 10.1037/a0038898

²² Lambert, N.M., Stillman, T.F., Hicks, J.A., Kamble, S., Baumeister, R.F., & Fincham, F.D. (2013). To belong is to matter: Sense of belonging enhances meaning in life. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(11), 1418–1427. doi: 10.1177/0146167213499186

Trusting Relationships

“We can’t move forward without respect and trust; everyone belongs because everyone has a cause and has the capacity to have compassion...” - Volunteer, VISTA

Interviewees expressed that this work has to be based on building trust and developing relationships both within the community and within their group. Cooperative behaviors - such as, discussing problems openly (**CDP6**) and being open to opinions and advice (**CDP 3 and 5**) - lead to a climate of cooperation, trusting relationships, pride, and commitment.

“If you want to keep people involved for 25-30 years, you need to make room for them and their lives. This weaves a level of trust that endures for a long time. It’s like a family reunion when people see each other after some time away. They will always be part of the Peace Family. This isn’t cheap or easy – it requires investment of time and heart.” - Volunteer, Compassionate SA

*“We are truly committed to peace and justice so we work through the hard stuff.”
- Volunteer, Compassionate SA*

“Everyone is passionate about the goals and programs going on...people are all in, always positive, welcoming, open to knowing everyone’s story. Everyone is treated equally and everyone’s words matter. Everyone feels valued and known.” -Volunteer, VISTA

With regards to perceived trustworthiness, 85% agree or strongly agree that people could rely on each other in their group. Figure 8 shows that the majority of respondents agree or strongly agree to measures of trust and cooperation²³ within their group. For example:

- Most people in this group are open to advice and help from others (75%)
- In this group we discuss and deal with issues or problems openly (72%)

Figure 9 shows that the majority of survey respondents agree or strongly agree to questions related to pride and commitment²⁴. For example:

- I am willing to exert extra effort to help this group succeed (85%)
- I feel proud to belong to this group (88%)
- I feel very committed to this group (88%)

²³ Costa, Ana Cristina & Anderson, Neil (2011). Measuring trust in teams: Development and validation of a multifaceted measure of formative and reflective indicators of team trust, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 20:1, 119-154, DOI: 10.1080/13594320903272083

²⁴ Van Der Vegt, G., Emans, B., & Van De Vliert, E. (2000). Team Members’ Affective Responses to Patterns of Intragroup Interdependence and Job Complexity. *Journal of Management*, 26(4), 633–655. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600403>

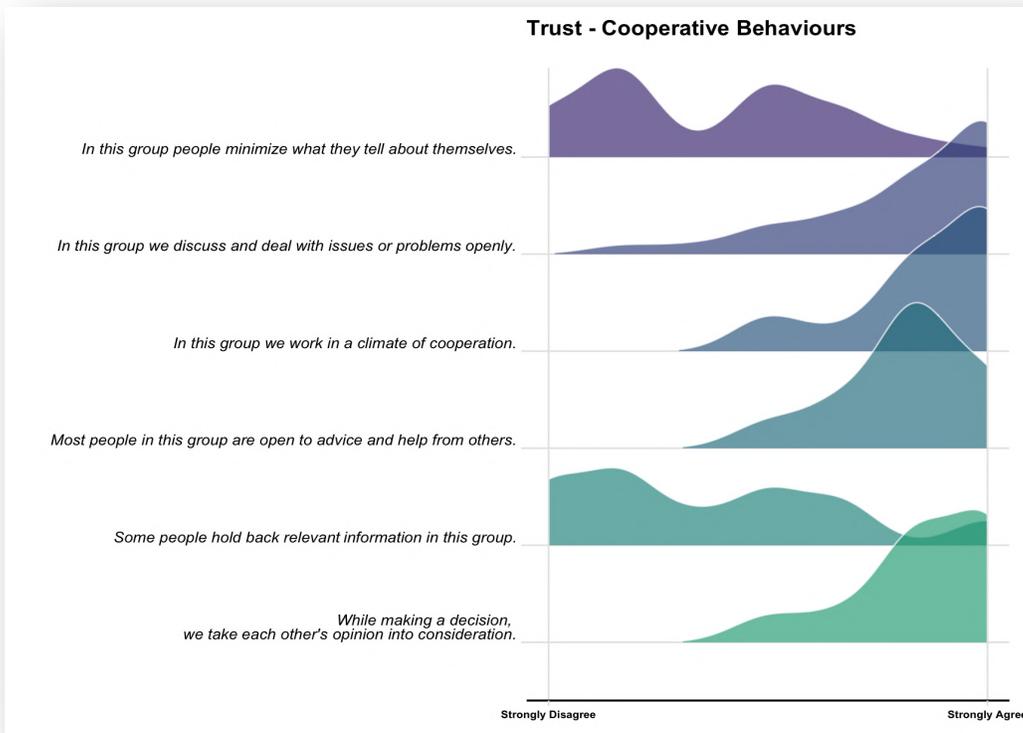


Figure 8. Measures of Trust



Figure 9. Measures of Commitment

Centered on Compassion

“Compassion doesn't always look positive; it's more about being genuine. Showing up as you are and continuing to work through problems in collaboration with persistence, relationship, and honesty.”

- Volunteer, SACRD

“Compassionate accountability is what makes a Collaborative work and remembering there is a difference between working with love and kindness and being nice for the sake of not making waves. Waves are what make sure we are breaking cultural norms that separate us and working on equality and changing our cultural narrative to compassion.” - Volunteer, Compassionate SA

“I think compassion has to be at the heart of all action and sustainability. Compassion for ourselves...our present selves, our bodies, our mental health, compassion for our families, compassion for our colleagues and our friends, compassion for the stranger, the person we may never meet but who inhabits our world and is affected by our actions.” - Volunteer, EcoSA Collaborative

“If you have compassion for others then one way that you exemplify that is by listening to them, by giving them that space to develop their ideas.” - Volunteer, VISTA

Overwhelmingly the interviews flowed over with love, compassion, and empathy – even more than expected, as a compassionate bunch. Individuals who are drawn to non-profit work and volunteering have a propensity to exhibit prosocial virtues. One hundred percent agree that “the typical person in this group is sincerely concerned about the problems of others.” The survey asked questions related to aspirational virtues²⁵ that can be seen as indicators of the capacity and desire to embody love, compassion, and empathy:

- Have you consciously incorporated systems of practices into your life to cultivate the following aspirational virtues? (Figure 10)
- How frequently do you practice these aspirational virtues? (Figure 11)

²⁵ Teasdale, Wayne. 1999. *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions*. New World Library: California.

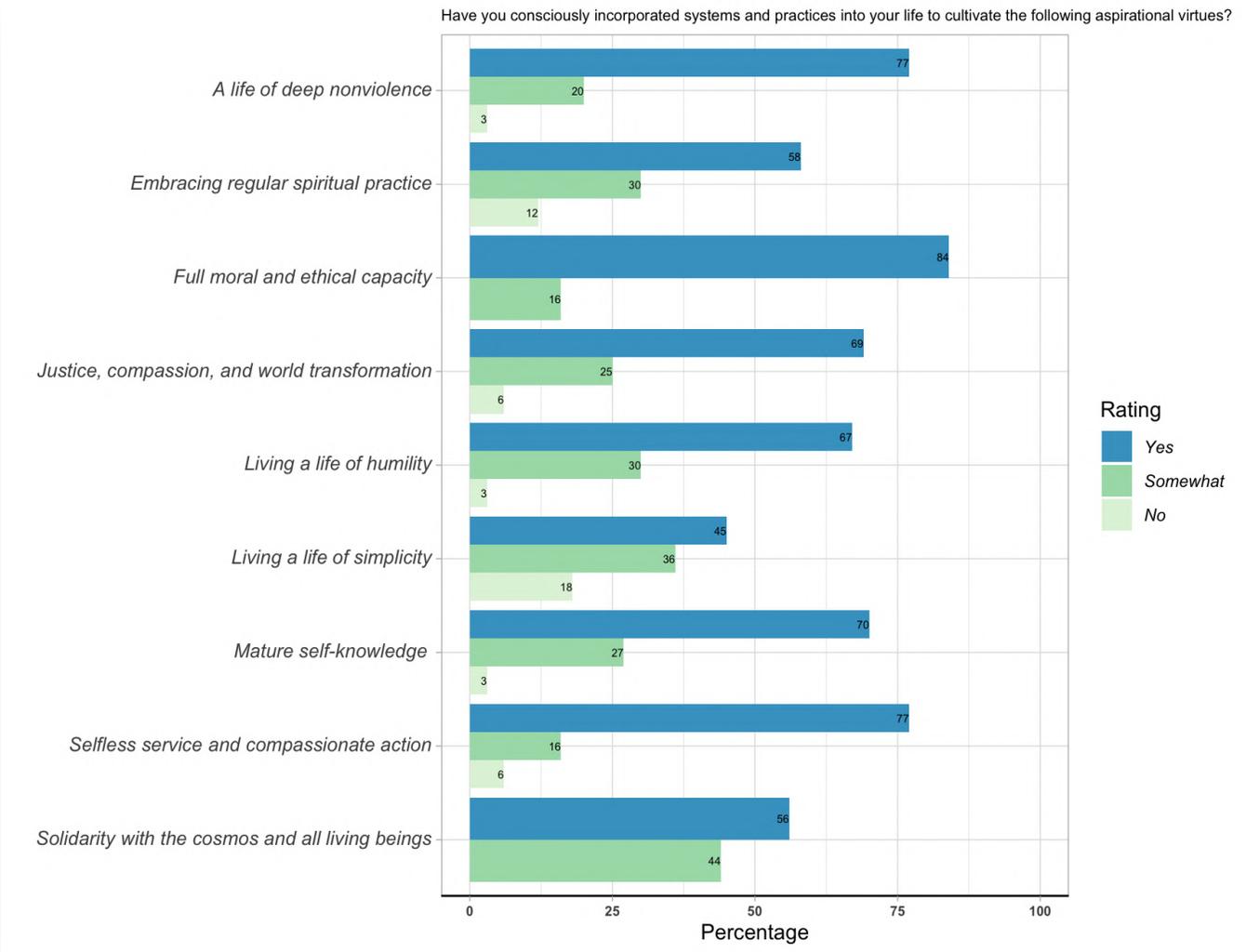


Figure 10. Aspirational Virtues - Consciously Incorporated

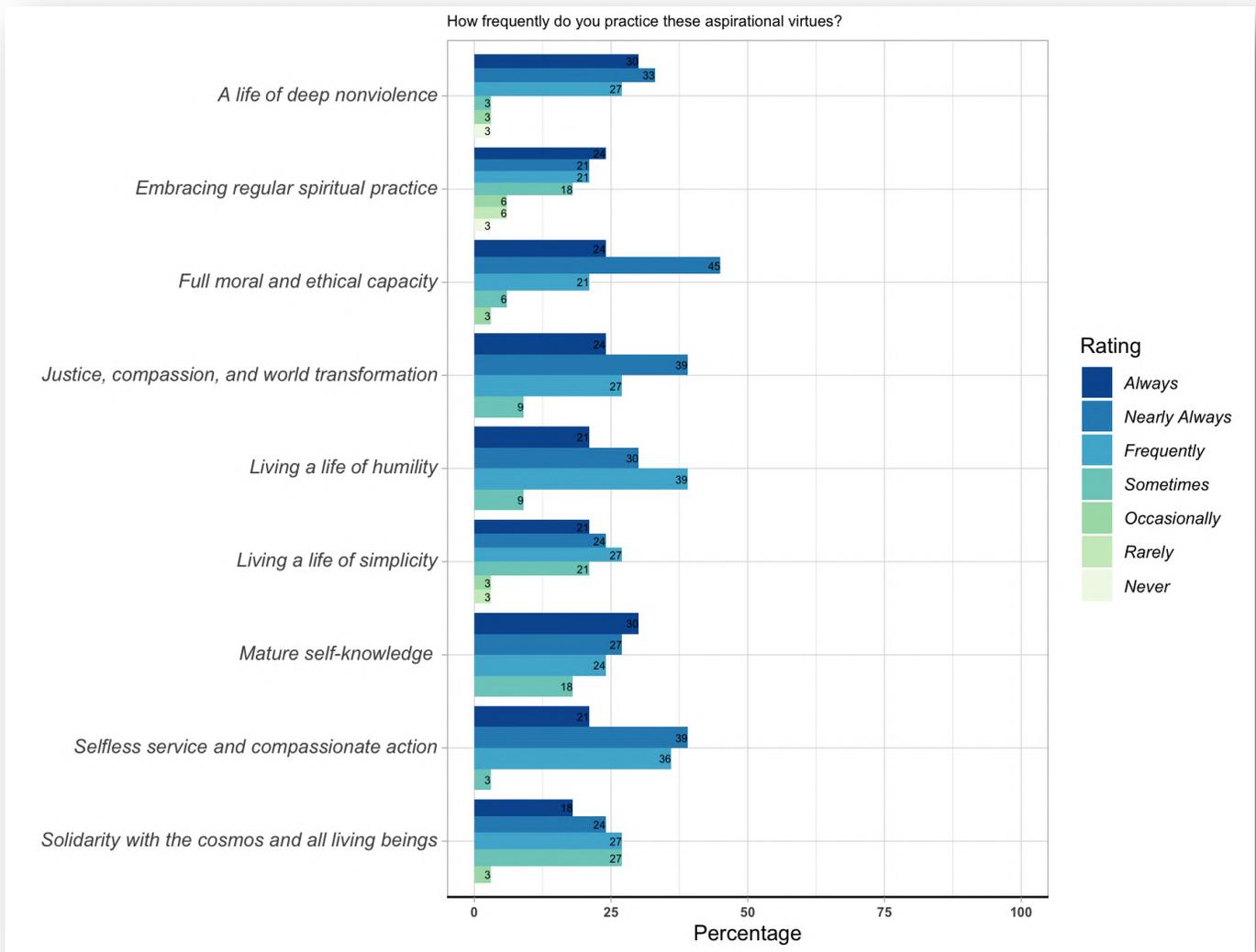


Figure 11. Aspirational Virtues - Frequency of Practice

Observations

Although this research consisted of a small sample, existing psychological research supports similar reinforcing positive relationships between acts of volunteering, psychological needs, and group commitment.²⁶ The San Antonio Collaboratives thus serve as a living model of successful, purpose-driven collaboration. By creating these unique socio-cultural environments, these groups are contributing to their shared purpose of increasing compassion and their shared need to promote social change, all while supporting the well-being and motivation of their individual members.

The rest of this section highlights the findings that support these dynamics.

²⁶ Silverberg, K., Marshall, E., & Ellis, G. (2001). Measuring Job Satisfaction of Volunteers in Public Parks and Recreation. *Journal of park and recreation administration*.

The Role of Psychological Flexibility

Psychological flexibility, as discussed earlier in this report, is a key skill for navigating difficult situations such that one is able to persist or change behavior in service of chosen values. Our findings indicate that the participants rank high in psychological flexibility (Figure 7), and that psychological flexibility is also positively correlated with psychological needs and group commitment (see Figure 12). The longevity of the Collaboratives in maintaining their virtuous cycle of volunteering may be, in part, due to their skillful expression of psychological flexibility.

Correlation Analyses

Figure 12 shows that survey responses related to measures of psychological needs (autonomy, belonging, and competency)²⁷ are positively correlated with measures of group commitment²⁸ (commitment, trust, and satisfaction) and that these are also positively correlated with psychological flexibility. The size of the square and number indicate the strength of the correlation between pairs of survey measures. Strong correlations (values close to 1 or -1) mean that as one measure changes the other measure changes as well, although not necessarily at the same rate.²⁹ When correlations are close to 0, it means that the pair of measures do not relate to each other directly. The sign of the number indicates the direction of this relationship, where positive correlations indicate that participants answered survey questions with similar scores (“agree” and “agree”) whereas negative correlations indicate that participants answered pairs of survey questions with inverse scores (“agree” and “disagree”).

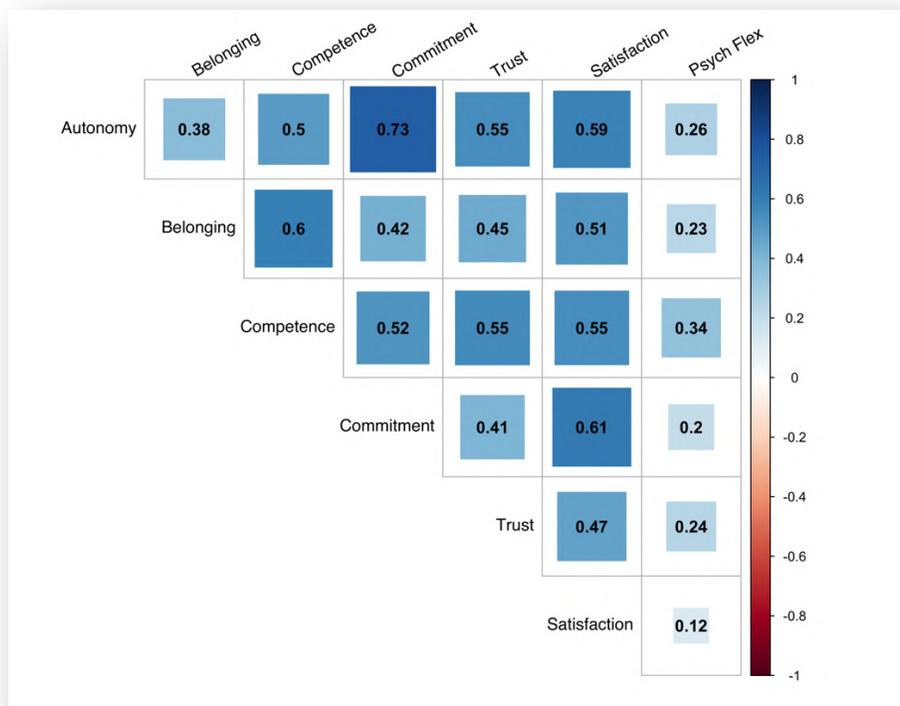


Figure 12: Correlation Heatmap for Virtuous Cycle

²⁷ Martela, F. and Ryan, R.M. (2016), The Benefits of Benevolence: Basic Psychological Needs, Benevolence, and the Enhancement of Well-Being. *J Pers*, 84: 750-764. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12215>

²⁸ Van Der Vegt, G., Emans, B., & Van De Vliert, E. (2000). Team Members' Affective Responses to Patterns of Intragroup Interdependence and Job Complexity. *Journal of Management*, 26(4), 633-655. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600403>

²⁹ Also known as a monotonic relationship. Correlations were calculated using a Kendall rank correlation coefficient.

Figure 13, below, highlights a broader set of correlations between many of the constructs discussed earlier in this report. Of particular interest are the relationships between composite scores for financial stressors³⁰, psychological flexibility (Figure 7), and hope³¹. As financial stressors increase, feelings of hope and psychological flexibility decrease. On the other hand, psychological flexibility and hope are positively correlated, and as these increase, the effects of financial stressors are decreased.

Psychological flexibility, which encompasses adaptability and resilience, serves as a valuable resource in managing external circumstances, including financial challenges. The presence of high levels of psychological flexibility among the participants indicates their capacity to navigate financial stressors, aligning with the aim of these groups to assist individuals in navigating challenging situations and addressing multiple needs.

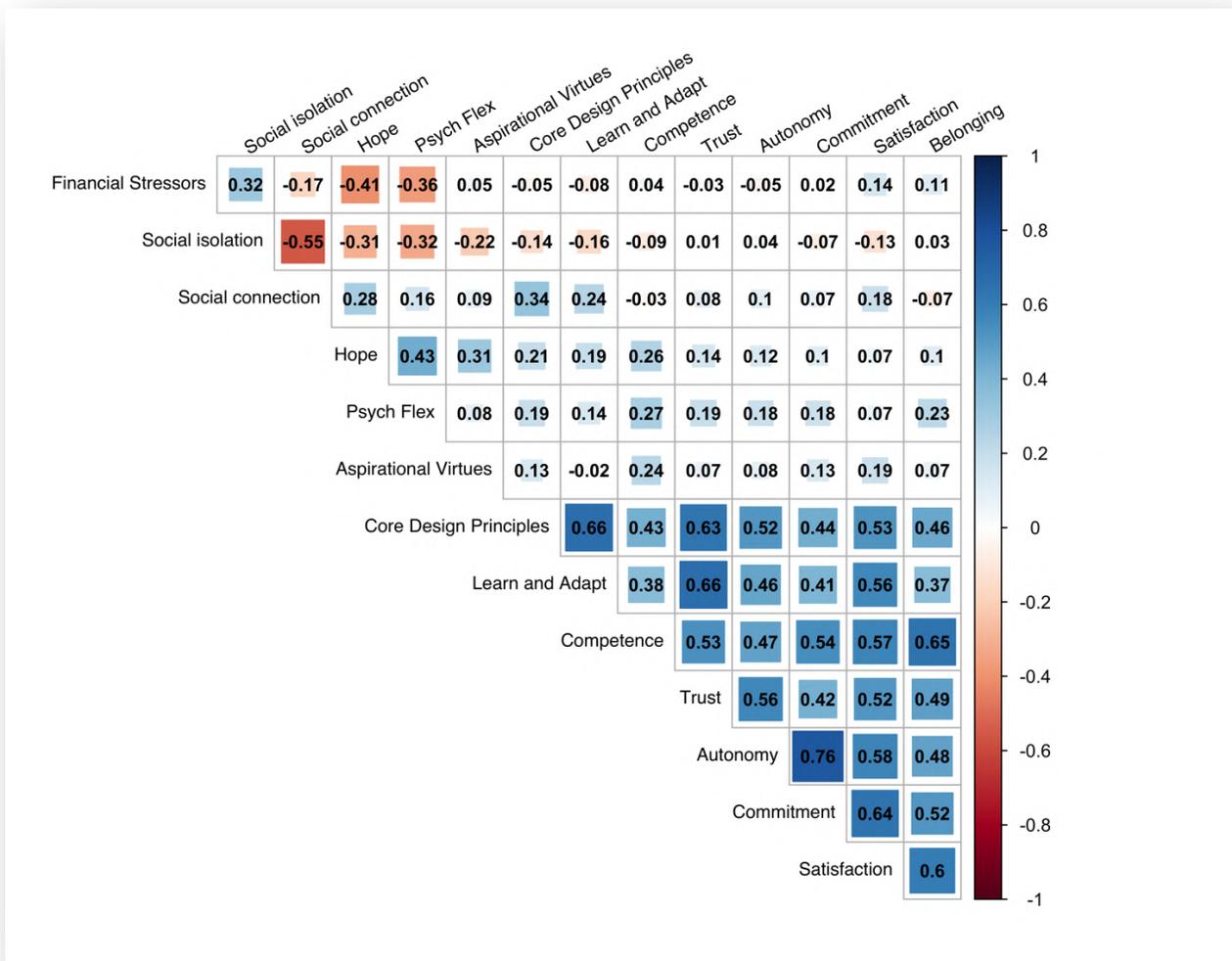


Figure 13: Overall Correlation Heatmap

³⁰ During the past 6 months, how much have you worried about being able to afford the following (“a great deal” or “some”): childcare (0%), healthcare (24%), household bills (44%), necessary prescription medicines (16%), or nutritious and well balanced meals (15%).

³¹ Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., et al. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 570-585.)

Conclusion

“You cannot make the lasting change needed without policy makers and leaders that believe in compassionate relationships and a compassionate city.”

- Volunteer, Compassionate SA Community Collaborative

A primary aim of this report was to reflect back what we had learned through this action research project: 1) to help San Antonio deepen and expand its efforts, and 2) to offer a blueprint to other cities on how they might organize their compassionate initiatives. The following 5 key factors were identified

5 Key Factors for Impactful Collaboration

- Autonomous and Adaptable
- Listen to Community
- Group Collaboration
- Trusting Relationships
- Centered on Compassion

This project included the recruitment of community stakeholders (n=12). These co-researchers were trained by ProSocial’s facilitation team on the ProSocial approach (see Theoretical Framework section) and to use the appreciative inquiry method (see Appendix) to conduct in-depth interviews (n=42) with a sample of the 18 San Antonio community collaboratives (n=5). The interviewees also completed a survey (n=35) aimed to capture the climate and culture of the Collaborative, group member satisfaction, trust, and perceived functioning as well as individual flourishing and values.

Without even knowing about Ostrom’s 8 Core Design Principles (CDPs), as presented in the Theoretical Framework section above, the San Antonio Collaboratives were practicing many or most of these principles of group efficacy and collaboration (see Figure 3). We discovered that the San Antonio Collaboratives are robust and vibrant because of their compassion-in-action lens, their commitment to improve life in San Antonio, and their cooperative and trusting group dynamics that are rooted in a shared purpose and strong group identity (CDP 1). See Theoretical Framework and Appendix for more details on CDPs.

Over time, volunteering can sometimes lead to burn out, where there are feelings of helplessness or detachment, particularly when individuals are driven by a sense of obligation to others or a need for approval. In the case of these Collaboratives, burn out does not seem to be a problem, especially given the strong sense of reported autonomy and commitment. However, even the most intrinsically motivated groups can experience it at some point. In many cases, groups with strong intrinsic motivation may be most vulnerable, as individuals are more willing to sacrifice their own well-being due to their commitment and perceived responsibility to the group. The more established Collaboratives may be able to offer valuable insights to the

younger groups into managing this dynamic. Overall, the findings emphasize the secondary benefit of volunteering in meeting individual psychological needs and fostering group commitment.

"We're working on trying to make a regenerative system, a social system, civic system locally, that addresses needs, and includes equity and inclusion balances, decision making, and all the like."

-Key stakeholder (co-researcher)

We set out to learn how intentional alignment between the heart (compassion) and the head (collaboration) might create integrated and impactful local changes. What we found was even more powerful than we hypothesized. The foundation of a community intentionally seeking to collaborate with others while focusing on compassion and serving others is as solid as granite. It maintains a firm surface for those who want to work together, play together, and make their city better.

This action research project produced several additional analytical insights.

- 86% of survey respondents stated that their group had a shared purpose and identity
- 87% feel very committed to their group
- 77% consciously incorporate selfless service and compassionate action in their daily life
- The research was able to measure the strength of correlation between autonomy (CDP 7) and group commitment - .73 correlation coefficient (see Figure 12).
- The research indicates that psychological flexibility and hope are positively correlated, and as these increase, the effects of financial stressors are decreased.
- The research indicates that measures of psychological needs (feelings of autonomy, belonging, and competency) are positively correlated with measures of group commitment (trust, and satisfaction).
- The research was able to measure perceived trustworthiness - 85% agree or strongly agree that people could rely on each other in their group.
- Lastly, we measured how powerful the feelings of belonging and commitment are in those who are volunteering to make San Antonio a more compassionate city.

Suggestions

The authors have identified key suggestions for actions for the Collaboratives, the City of San Antonio, and other US Cities that might want to adapt the San Antonio model of engaged citizens in service to others and compassionate actions. Suggestions were based on survey results, community voices, interviewer observations, as well as the researchers' analysis of the broader evidence concerning principles of group effectiveness.

San Antonio Community Collaboratives

We suggest that they keep doing the fine work they are committed to and continue to make compassion-in-action a central part of their purpose. And we hope they will emphasize equity, inclusion, transparency, and restorative justice (both within and between groups) in their Collaboratives. One suggestion that came from them was a desire to connect to people in the other Collaboratives. This could be done via online gatherings and in-person meetings.

Lastly, again from the interviews, the desire was expressed for each Collaborative to have a few members with lived experience in the Collaboratives and on the boards in order to sustain the culture of compassion, and orient action toward key areas of need.

*"Structurally we are missing lived experience on the board - we need that perspective."
- Volunteer, SACRD Collaborative*

City of San Antonio

We suggest that they find creative ways to fund the needs of these Collaboratives. Also, consider making the City Staff Liaison a two-person position in order to spread the workload and have a plan for continuity / succession. Last, these Collaboratives are ripe with research opportunities, including measuring community perceptions of the Collaboratives and their effectiveness in addressing the needs of the community.

Cities in the USA

We suggest that volunteers and city teams look at the Collaborative model of San Antonio as a possible blueprint for organizing and addressing pressing needs. Also, engage with and promote Compassionate USA. Their website has materials, videos, lessons, and resources available for every city to use: <https://compassionateusa.org/> and become a Compassionate City with the Charter for Compassion: <https://charterforcompassion.org/communities/overview>. For cities really serious about using the Collaborative model, consider hiring a City Staff Liaison to support the work of these volunteer groups. They will play a critical role in keeping the Collaboratives focused and in touch with city departments.

Appendix

City Resolution Affirming ‘Compassionate San Antonio’

A RESOLUTION

AFFIRMING THE CHARTER FOR COMPASSION, FACILITATED BY CITIZENS OF SAN ANTONIO COMMITTED TO COMPASSION, AND AUTHORIZING THE REGISTRATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR COMPASSIONATE CITIES.

* * * * *

WHEREAS, compassion is a purpose, principle, and unifying value that guides and compels people of all backgrounds, perspectives, creeds, and cultures to treat all human beings with justice, equity, and respect; and

WHEREAS, research demonstrates that practicing compassion produces positive benefits in all sectors of civic and community life, including safety, public health, and physical, mental, and spiritual well-being; and

WHEREAS, the International Campaign for Compassionate Cities is a global movement inspired by the Golden Rule, or Ethic of Reciprocity, which calls on each person to treat others as he or she wishes to be treated; and

WHEREAS, residents of the City of San Antonio demonstrate this ethic daily in their homes, schools, places of faith, businesses, community organizations and on our streets; and

WHEREAS, San Antonio continues to exemplify compassionate values in many forms, from its five-time NBA championship team, the Spurs, who play, mentor and lead with compassion, to its hosting of the largest Martin Luther King, Jr. March in the country and its welcoming and support of 35,000 evacuees who sought refuge after Hurricane Katrina, that show a living example of compassion to the world; and

WHEREAS, San Antonio continues to strive to advance the quality of life for all their residents and in all their communities, without partisanship, and with the conviction that people can and do have the capacity to improve their lives and make a positive difference in the lives of others; and

WHEREAS, San Antonio was founded in faith almost three hundred years ago by our foremothers and fathers, and the city continues that tradition today through its Faith-Based Initiative by exploring and actualizing collaboration across faith and civic lines to promote the greater good; and

WHEREAS, many expressions of compassion take place in our city on a daily basis facilitated by dedicated community organizations working to lift up our neighbors by ensuring equality and promoting the human potential of our community; and

WHEREAS, the Charter for Compassion is active in nearly 50 countries with initiatives in hundreds of cities and communities, both large and small, including Austin, Dallas, Houston and our sister city of Monterrey, Mexico, each with their own unique way of expressing compassion and exploring the use of compassion as their overall strategic lens within complex urban growth and conflicted times; **NOW THEREFORE:**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO:

SECTION 1. The City recognizes that its constituents are modeling actions and attitudes that reflect the Golden Rule as expressed in the International Campaign for Compassionate Cities’ “Charter for Compassion”.

SECTION 2. The City encourages San Antonio's institutions of learning to have all ages explore and teach compassion, based on the understanding that extensive research and resources validate the full spectrum of the benefits of compassion, from being good for the bottom line of business to being a part of the human DNA.

SECTION 3. The City supports groups and initiatives that will make San Antonio a more compassionate City, and through its Faith Based Initiative the City will work with the community and neighborhoods to foster compassion in a reasoned and coordinated manner.

SECTION 4. The City accepts the support of other public, private, community and faith-based organizations that wish to improve the quality of life for all residents of San Antonio and to generate compassionate action through local initiatives, policies and programs.

SECTION 5. The City recognizes, records and celebrates acts of compassion among members of the San Antonio Community.

SECTION 6. The City affirms the Charter for Compassion and authorizes the City's registration with the International Campaign for Compassionate Cities through Compassion Action Network International.

SECTION 7. This Resolution is effective immediately upon the receipt of eight affirmative votes; otherwise, it is effective ten days after passage.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 22nd day of June 2017.

MAYOR

Ron Nirenberg

Ostrom's Eight Core Design Principles - Detailed Description

1. **Shared identity and purpose.** A group functions best when its purpose is clearly understood and perceived as worthwhile by its members. A group also functions best when it offers a strong group identity, such that members are proud to belong and enjoy their time together. Prosocial is about creating cultures that constantly reflect on the “towards” move dynamically.
2. **Equitable distribution of contributions and benefits.** Most people have a strong sense of equity that is violated when someone receives benefits disproportionate to their contributions. Perceived fairness is essential for high group performance. Often this is about balance of effort (workload) and reward. Perceived unfairness is sometimes ‘undiscussable’ in groups and sometimes it is discussed endlessly but in ways that do not lead to positive change.
3. **Fair and inclusive decision-making.** If you want good decisions and motivated people, group members need to be involved in making the decisions that affect them, particularly agreements about how the group runs. This can take the form of consensual decision making but in some circumstances consultation with a designated leader/representative, voting or even the opportunity to make objections (veto powers) can be enough and more efficient.
4. **Monitoring of agreed behaviors (Transparency).** Self-serving behaviors increase when there is a lack of transparency. Monitoring does not need to be coercive. It can be as simple as having regular check-ins or meetings to discuss progress. Research shows monitoring is usually better performed by peers as part of the normal interaction of group members.
5. **Graduated responding to helpful and unhelpful behavior (Feedback).** Effective groups have in place responses to transgressions ranging from open, compassionate conversation to find out what happened, through to sanctions or even, ultimately, exclusion from the group. Research shows trust increases in groups when sanctioning occurs for unhelpful behaviors. But sanctions alone are not enough. To create enjoyment, belonging and engagement with the group, helpful behaviors must also be appropriately encouraged. Typically this can be as simple as expressing gratitude for helpful acts or it can be built into more formal recognition systems.
6. **Fast and fair conflict resolution.** Any group that involves committed individuals acting authentically will inevitably encounter conflict as people have different interests and information. It is best to plan for conflicts and their resolution from the beginning by building conflict resolution skills among group members and creating helpful, flexible processes for conflict resolution.
7. **Authority to self-govern.** Every group is embedded in a larger society that can limit its ability to govern its own affairs. These constraints can interfere with the objectives of the group and the implementation of design principles 1-6. For example, the context might impose excessive regulation on how the group behaves (e.g. when Human Resources departments constrain conflict resolution to formal procedures) or minimize the capacity of the group leader to act as a leader. Groups must be able to implement principles 1-6, without excessive interference, to function effectively.
8. **Collaborative relations with other groups** (using principles 1-7). If we are to build systems of cooperation, a group must relate to other groups using principles 1-7. This can go wrong in two ways: a) other groups may not cooperate with you (e.g. they don't include your group in important decisions, behave in ways that can't be monitored, and so on), or b) your group may not cooperate well with other groups. In this fashion, the same design principles are relevant at all levels of a multi-tier hierarchy of social units. For example, groups cooperate well when there is shared purpose, equity, inclusiveness in decision making etc between groups as well as within groups.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a proven, collaborative, strength-based approach to facilitating positive change and building capacity in organizations, groups, and communities. AI begins by identifying this positive core and connecting to it in ways that inspire action for change - it does not ignore the negative; rather it shifts our basic orientation from problem-focused to possibility-focused.

Step 1: Plan Appreciative Inquiry

Designing an appreciative approach begins with the end in mind, focusing on what will be achieved, especially through collaboration and constructing a means to that end. The appreciative inquiry details who will be consulted, about what, and when, using open-ended questions such as those described in a later section. It expresses a commitment to the value of fair and equal access to those creating the process; doing so builds more trust and decreases competition in advance of co-designing a larger process to strategically position and scale up best practice. Activities included:

- Co-creating the plan with key individuals / groups to get feedback and revise the plan based on new information and reasoning.
- Co-creating outreach material for key interviewees in the form of a meticulously crafted memo that lays out rationale, processes, timelines, and confirm participation.

Step 2: Generate Data Systematically

By generating data systematically trust, respect, and credibility follow as people feel those leading change will take time to understand them and their work from the “inside out” before making critical decisions. Activities included:

- Creating interview questions, focusing on people, place, and performance.
- Publishing a list of interviewees and interview questions so stakeholders know what to expect.
- Interview key individuals in leading positions.

Step 3: Make Sense of Data

To produce collective new thinking and build consensus for the inquiry findings, data must be shared and made sense of collectively. As a group we:

- Identified and tested patterns in the data.
- Questioned embedded assumptions, beliefs, values, etc.
- Developed a shared perspective on the contingencies that have each organization, community, and the system as a whole.

Underlying the action sequence outlined above is the assumption that when we go into the business of change, we are engaging in a process of learning and improving performance. We do so out of necessity because of the cultural forces that influence all organizations and communities; forces of increasing diversity, interdependence, complexity, and rapidity of change. These forces require people and organizations to adapt constantly or perish.

When starting a new change initiative, then, the strategic question is: *If we must continually change and improve how we collaborate, how do we position ourselves to do so successfully, right from the very start?* The answer to the question presented in the *Appreciative Inquiry Plan Approach* is – by using a systematic, strategic methodology that rests on several key assumptions about power and authority, change, leadership, and learning:

About Power and Authority

- We establish authority by sharing our power with others involved in a coordinated effort to improve performance rather than by having answers (or bluffing).
- We must use our authority to mobilize the resources at our disposal along with others to put in place the collaborative sense-making processes required to improve performance in a way that lasts.

About the Nature of Change

- We cannot make change that lasts without an intimate knowledge of the setting, including how the people in the setting construe it, and without gaining that knowledge in a way that produces trust.
- We cannot by ourselves make change that lasts. It takes place only through a partnership with the people in the setting, or, in other words, through collaboration.

About Leadership

- We provide leadership for change by avoiding the extremes of “I have the answers, and I’ll tell you what to do” or “You have the answers, and I’ll support you in finding them,” and, instead, exercising leadership that operationally expresses collaboration – “figuring it out and improving it together.”
- We must make learning an integral part of our leadership because many problems we face, certainly those having to do with change, simply do not have easy technical answers. The intractable problems we face require that the participants in the problems rethink their current thinking in order to solve them. That rethinking must be reflected in new collective behavior if we are to change our organizations and communities in ways that matter and last.

About Learning

- We must learn and re-learn the hard lesson that two people (or more) can view the same event differently and neither one be right nor wrong. That realization immediately renders reality more complex and invalidates jumping to easy problem definitions and solutions.
- We need continuous performance feedback because we are all blind to discrepancies between what we think we do (which is work collaboratively) and what we actually do (which is work unilaterally). Knowing that we are blind to discrepancies between our intent and our practice, we must continuously struggle to invite and use feedback to interrupt our unilateral, reflexive problem-solving.

The list of questions below are representative of those central to a change agent’s Appreciative Inquiry Plan, data generation and related reasoning – the source for new thinking. During the course we will adapt these to the organizational or community cultures you will be interacting with. Importantly, they are chosen with a rationale in mind, without rationale, you will not know how to listen to responses. There are four kinds of questions:

- ***People-Questions***, because you must understand what people care about and how they think and feel about their work, the issue at hand and the organization or community they are a part of – in order to earn their trust and gain credibility.
- ***What-Questions***, because you must understand if key people think the organization or collaborative effort is headed in the right direction and pursuing that direction in the right way – in order to shape (with them) a more integrated higher order vision and direction for the organization or community.
- ***How-Questions***, because you must understand whether or not the organizational or community infrastructure works and engage others in fixing it – in order to implement a vision successfully.

- **Leadership-Questions**, because you must understand the field of expectations for collaborative leadership – in order to consciously make the right match between what leadership is needed and what you have to offer in order to bring about change.

Examples

“People-Question” – *how do you think and feel about your work and the organization or community?*

- Tell me about yourself, including how long you've been here, what positions you've held, and how you think and feel about your work, including what you take pride in and what you find unsatisfying.
- I would also be interested in how you see opportunities for learning and growth in the context of our organized effort.

“What-Questions” – *what is your business, are you aimed in the right direction and pursuing your goals properly?*

- What is the key issue in your job/role, currently, and how are you handling it?
- If we implement change, will we be headed in the right direction, and pursuing it in the right way? How do you know?
- What single decision would have the most impact on improving performance in the shortest time? How do you know?
- What is your organization's / communities core strength? How do you know?

“How-Questions” – *how does this place work, by what explicit rules, unspoken norms, tacit agreements, processes, and procedures?*

- Have you faced change like this before? What were the issues and how did you wrestle with them? With what result, and how did you feel about it? How did others react?
- What was the biggest conflict in the organization / community (during your tenure) and how was it handled and resolved? Who were the players? How should it have been handled and resolved?
- What network(s) of people in the organization / community act to influence what gets done and how things get done? What do the people have in common? What networks of individuals and organizations external to this organization / community exercise the greatest influence on what we do and how we do it?
- If we implemented change, how would the organizational infrastructure work to support it, including – policy, roles and responsibilities, and processes, such as decision-making, coordination, and communication processes?

“Leadership Questions” – *what do I need to know to make the right fit between our collaborative effort and how change is led?*

- What's the one thing I/we might do (apart from blatant incompetence) that would make me/us fail in this job? Succeed?
- What kind of leadership are you looking for from me/us? What will be the cues that tell me/us if I am/we are on or off track? What are the norms for giving feedback here?

Recruitment Flier



Compassionate San Antonio Seeking Co-Researchers Come collaborate with us!

**International Charter for Compassion¹ and Prosocial World²
are seeking 15 volunteers to participate in local action research.**

Research Objectives:

- ❖ Identify and map the qualities of systems, practices, policies, and networks that have supported the development of compassion and cooperation in San Antonio, TX.
- ❖ Assess the ability of San Antonio's compassionate cities model to be replicable and scalable.

What we are asking of you:

- Attend three 2-hour training workshops - 6 hrs
- Collect data through participatory action research (interviews) - 8 hrs
- Participate in a collective sense-making exercise to extract data themes - 8 hrs
- Contribute to final report* - 2 hrs

**What are the key
factors for creating
impactful
collaboratives in
San Antonio?**

Time commitment:

- Approx 24 hours over four months
- January 2023 - April 2023

What you will get out of it:

- New skills! Workshops include trainings by Prosocial World.
- Expand your network
- Increase your group's visibility

*Data presented within this report will be drawn from by Mayor Ron Nirenberg at the U.S. Conference of Mayors in June 2023

2023 Calendar:

January/February

- ❖ Training workshops from 7 pm - 9 pm (CT)
(Jan 31, Feb 2, Feb 7)
- ❖ Recruit interviewees and coordinate interviews

March

- ❖ Conduct 3-4 interviews (60-90 minutes each)
- ❖ Validate data

April

- ❖ Participate in 2 active sense-making sessions
- ❖ Contribute to final report

We invite co-researchers who:

- ❖ Are motivated to learn
- ❖ Value effective listening skills
- ❖ Actively collaborate in group settings
- ❖ Have an appetite for inner, personal growth
- ❖ Have a passion for San Antonio's collaboratives

For more information, contact:

- Ann Helmke, City of San Antonio,
ann.helmke@sanantonio.gov
- Susan Soleil, Prosocial World,
Susan.soleil@prosocial.world



¹ <https://charterforcompassion.org/>
² <https://www.prosocial.world/>



Interview Protocol

During the conversation / interview, please practice reflective listening and ask additional questions for further insights. As a general guide, this will be a 90/10 interview. Ideally, they will talk for 90% of the time. In the remaining 10% of the time, you might ask questions to clarify your understanding, or to explore topics as outlined in the possible follow-up questions. Or you might summarize what you have discussed so far. For example, “let me check if I understand what you are saying...” (and briefly play back the key points as you understand them). Or say, “Tell me more about...”

Read or improvise your opening statement below to what feels comfortable to you.

Hello ____, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the research being conducted on five Collaboratives that are part of Compassionate San Antonio. Before we get started with the interview, do you have any questions for me?

[Additional information if they are asking:] *The goal of this study is to learn more about your Collaborative and the larger sociocultural system that supports or holds back your work. We also want to hear about the ways that you are trying to influence/change that system. This research is being conducted in collaboration with ProSocial World, an international research and educational non-profit and Charter for Compassion international and is funded by the John Templeton Foundation.*

[Get verbal consent to record the interview]

[After you have hit record read the following sentence at the beginning of the interview]

Do I have your consent to record, and transcribe, this interview and to use content in presentations, reports, and other written products?

[Additional information about the use of the recording if they are asking:] *Only the research team and I will have access to the recordings. The tapes may be transcribed by the researcher and if so will be erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased if you wish to withdraw your consent to taping or participation in this study.*

If you do not have any further questions from me, is it okay to start the interview

Interview Questions

Main Powerful Questions (The follow-up questions we all created together are listed at the end of the document):

Note to Co-Researcher: The questions below are optional. You don't need to ask all of them or in this order. Use this as a guide. Know that you can pause, if you want, to take notes during the interview. You may also deeply listen for the entire interview and come back and fill out this form after the interview.

- What inspired you to dedicate your time and energy to this Collaborative? And how has it engaged the community you serve?
- What role does compassion play in the work of the Collaborative?
- How does your collaborative go about developing a deep sense of purpose and identity? And is this working well?
- If you could change one thing structurally or culturally about your organization, what would that be and why?
- How has your Collaborative handled change and challenging situations successfully?
- What are the most inspiring examples of leadership in your Collaborative?
- Imagine that anything is possible. It is now 2030. What would your Collaborative be doing, seeing, impacting, and influencing?

Potential follow-up questions

Community:

- Tell me about the range of populations you impact and what can you tell me about them?
- How would you describe your Collaborative to a stranger?
- How do people in your Collaborative engage with your community?
- What does your collaborative do in the community and what special skills do you bring?

Compassion:

- Have your expectations been fulfilled? Where may you have been disappointed?
- What do you see working beautifully, where you say there is magic in the interactions?
- As a person who values compassion, what drew you to this Collaborative?
- What benefit do you see compassion having in your work?

Mission and strategy:

- How do you feel about the direction this Collaborative is headed?
- Tell us about your Collaborative and why it formed.
- What are some of your success stories?
- What do you need most to accomplish your mission and are you getting it?
- What paradigms or worldviews are shaping your job performance?
- What role (if any) do politics play in the work / success of your Collaborative?

Operations:

- How do you accomplish your vision successfully?
- How is the community centered in your work?

- How do you think the community members make your Collaborative successful?
- How do you get the resources you need to be successful? How would more resources make you more successful?
- Does your infrastructure work / not work? Where is there room for improvement?
- In what ways is your Collaborative growing?
- Does your Collaborative use Compassionate Integrity Training (CIT)? If yes, how did you sell it to senior decision makers?
- How would you determine the readiness of a city to engage with a Collaborative like this one?
- How have we included those most impacted by your actions in your decision making?

Leadership:

- If you are collaborating with other organizations, how has this collaboration enhanced or detracted from the nature of compassion?
- How might your Collaborative be a more effective leader in the Community?
- How might your Collaborative be improved?
- What advice would you have for another city thinking of creating a Collaborative like this one?
- Who are the biggest champions of CIT in your Collaborative?



PROSOCIAL WORLD

[ProSocial World](#) is a nonprofit research and education organization that applies cultural evolutionary theory and principles to catalyze positive change in real-world settings. The principles that ProSocial World base their approach on has been evidenced to gain trust, autonomy, adaptability and ultimately build the collaborative capacity of an organization or a multi-stakeholder system to improve performance. Because of its general theoretical framing, the practical methods of ProSocial World can be applied to any social context and any scale from small groups, smart cities, and governance.

For more information on this research study, please contact:

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**CHARTER FOR
COMPASSION**