The Potential of the Grand Challenges for Social Work

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Why Social Work?

• **Helping People & Making a Difference:** Most of us choose social work as our profession of choice because we wanted to:
  – Help people
  – Make a difference in the world

• **Professional Discipline:** As we transferred those initial desires (to make a difference in the world) into professional discipline, we began to understand that helping meant:
  – Strengthening the social safety net
  – Fortifying the social fabric
  – Relentlessly pursuing social justice
  – Advancing social development & social progress
Why the GCSW?

Because we all believe in, and have dedicated our professional careers, to achieving:

• Individual & family well-being (for all people)
• A stronger social fabric
• A more just society
Potential of the GCSW

• Advance, protect & promote the Profession, by:
  – Educating the Public – provide a solid foundation for a more common understanding of the “grand value” that social work brings to society.
  – Advancing Social Work Competencies - in practice, policy, education and research.
  – Providing Scientific Proof of Concept - “why do we need a social worker?”
  – Documenting SW’s Contributions – documenting the profession’s contributions to society.
# The Potential of the Grand Challenges for Social Work

## “In a Nutshell”

| What the GC mean for Social Work | - An opportunity for “greater collective impact”  
- Galvanize & energize the Profession for transformative social change |
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<td>Implications for Social Work Practice</td>
<td>A better “two-way bridge” &amp; “golden cord” that “connects the distance between”...practice / research / education / policy</td>
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<td>Importance of SW Science</td>
<td>Accelerated identification and application of social progress solutions and “growth in social work knowledge.”</td>
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| Importance of New Allies & Partnerships | Acting alone, we won’t get it done!  
“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.” |
What the Grand Challenges mean for social work

“An Opportunity for Greater Collective Impact”

Collective Commitment to GCSW – can enable social work to be the engine that powers victories against our biggest social development challenging opportunities.
To Achieve Greater Collective Impact, We Need

- Extraordinary Partnerships – we need to create robust cross-association teams, Champions, and ambassadors

- An Enhanced Collaboration Model

- Uncommon Mutual Respect (it doesn’t flow naturally)

- True Commitment - to bridge the worlds of social work education, research, practice, policy, and advocacy.

- Collective Contributions - to an implementation strategy and infrastructure that sustains the effort with a steady drum beat over the next decade (including support and accountability).
Implications for Practice

“Two-way bridge & golden cord that connects the distance between...”

• Improved outcomes & effectiveness
• Contributions to a greater good (a bigger picture)
• Understanding of and impetus to connect (day-to-day, week-to-week work):
  – Case to cause
  – Case to evidence
  – Case to education
  – Clients to cause
  – Causes centered on clients & communities
  – Engagement of practitioners and clients
Importance of SW Science

“Accelerated identification and application of social development solutions”

• **Accelerated Progress** – accelerated social progress and development

• **Better Social Work Solutions** - identification of better social progress solutions

• **Leading with the Science of Social Work** – a way for social work to garner broader community acknowledgement and recognition of the true value and impact of social work
Importance of New Allies & Partners

“Acting together, we go further.”

• **Benefit of Other Perspectives** - we need the benefit of other perspectives, experience, and expertise.

• **Leverage Common Ground** - we need to leverage the common ground between our commitments and those of other disciplines and sectors.

• **Leverage Today’s Critical Issues** - we need to leverage the sense of urgency generated by the critical issues of the day.

• **Broad Base Constituency** - We need to create a broad base constituency that includes clients, communities, practitioners (*build a big tent*).
Roles NASW Can Play to Advance GCSW

• Help facilitate GCSW strategic thinking

• Be an organizing force for:
  – Strategic initiatives: garnering financial resources, developing major solutions; delivering major solutions
  – Workforce development
  – Evidence informed practice
  – Proof of social work concepts
The Five Conditions of Collective Impact Success*

Collective impact is more rigorous and specific than collaboration among organisations. There are five conditions that, together, lead to meaningful results from collective impact:

1. **Common Agenda:**
   All Participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.

2. **Shared Measurement:**
   Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.

3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:**
   Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

4. **Backbone Organisation:**
   Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organisation, with staff and specific skills, to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and to coordinate participating organisations.

5. **Continuous Communication:**
   Consistent and open communication is needed across all the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and appreciate common motivation.

*Adapted from John Kania and Mark Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011, Volume 9, Number 1.*
The Snowflake Model
Social Work, The Special Sauce

Perhaps the GC can be the special ingredient that bridges, solidifies, galvanizes and powers social work to achieve in our lifetime, a society that has:

• Individual & family well-being for all
• A stronger social fabric
• A more just society