

COMPRENDRE



CASE STUDY: FRANCE'S COLLECTIVE IMPACT EXPERIMENT



Acknowledgements:

This article was originally written in French by Jean-Marie Chapeau and Myriam Bérubé. The English translation was supported by AI tools and reviewed for accuracy and clarity by Sylvia Cheuy and Myriam Bérubé (Tamarack Institute).

Reproduction of this publication is subject to authorisation by National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (NATC) - Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires (ANCT);
contact : info@anct.gouv.fr

Publisher: Stanislas Bourron (NATC); **Publication coordinators:** Corinne de la Mettrie, Anne Beauchesne, Christine Duval (NATC); **Authors:** Myriam Bérubé et Jean-Marie Chapeau (FiL Conseil Inc.); **Editorial Secretariat:** Muriel Thoin (NATC)

Press Contact: relations.presse@anct.gouv.fr

Contact Fil Conseil Inc. (Canada), Myriam Bérubé - Jean-Marie Chapeau
Téléphone : 1+514 449 3403 courriel: myriamberube.pro@gmail.com

Cover photo credit : National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (NATC) – Collective Impact Neighborhoods National Meeting, Paris, January 2025

Dépôt légal : May 2025 **ISBN :** 978-2-492484-83-4

SOMMAIRE

INTRODUCTION..... P.6

A Favorable Setting for Experimentation..... P.6

Why Choose Collective Impact? P.6

COLLECTIVE IMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS: THE EXPERIMENTATION PROCESS..... P.8

Innovative Preconditions..... P.8

Critical Analysis Through the Lens of the Preconditions of Collective Impact..... P.8

- o A Shared Sense of Urgency
- o Influential and Locally Rooted Leadership
- o Structured Support and Initial Resources

EARLY RESULTS..... P.10

Challenges Encountered..... P.11

Critical Analysis Through the Lens of the Five Conditions of Collective Impact.... P.12

- o A Shared Vision and a Common Agenda
- o A Common Measurement System
- o Mutually Reinforcing Strategies and Activities
- o Continuous Communication and Inclusive Community Engagement
- o A Strong Backbone Infrastructure

Lessons Learned from the Experiment..... P.13

- o Community Perspective: A Gradual and Strategic Local Adaptation
- o Consortium Perspective: Capacity Building and Support
- o NATC Perspective: Toward System Change

Implications for Phase 2..... P.14

CONCLUSION..... P.15

REFERENCES..... P.16



The ability to reinforce the commitment of all stakeholders, the dynamics of cooperation and the diversification of forms of citizen participation are major challenges in the framework of the new generation of city contracts.

To fulfil this ambition, at the end of 2021, the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (NATC)¹ launched a national experiment based on the "collective impact approach" inspired by methods used in Canada, which allows to strengthen the cooperation between actors from different sectors and professional cultures.

Since 2024, which is the moment of the renewal of city contracts (*contrats de ville*) with local authorities, the "collective impact" approach appears as an opportunity to propose concrete transformations for the animation of urban policy, and to participate in systemic change. It offers to the local state, the local authorities, and the civil society the opportunity to mutually reinforce their actions.

The collective impact approach, as it was theorized and experimented in North America, aims to enable collective initiatives to move from a situation where "actions and results are fragmented" to "shared action leading to a profound and lasting collective impact". It is an integrated approach that leads to structured cooperation, whose support, in terms of engineering, is important at the beginning but which pays off over time.

This approach lies in the common vision that a group wishes to set for itself: the horizon towards which it wants to move in the long term, by getting the various actors to project themselves into the future. It implies that actors should define together the ideal situation to which they aspire and for which they wish to join their forces. This vision of change is put to the test by analysing the context as it is today: the positive factors on which we can rely to change things and the negative factors that need to be dealt with or positively modified.

Therefore, it's important to avoid building the project around problems to be solved, but rather around positive and mobilizing scenarios.

Tried out in Montreal's neighborhoods since 2016, the collective impact approach has led to significant progress in various areas: housing, food, parenting, educational success.

At the end of December 2021, the NATC launched an experiment in France by signing an agreement with a Franco-Canadian consortium of Accolades, Niska, and Dynamo, specialists in change-oriented approaches and collective impact. It also wanted to involve the centers of resources for urban policy (CRPV), key actors in terms of engineering support, assistance in setting up inter-actor dynamics, and participation of inhabitants.

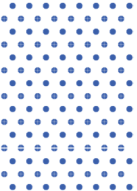
The experiment is based on a format of national training and local implementation. Thus, at the launch, three regions, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (Le Teil, Montélimar, Pont-de-Claix, Saint-Etienne), Hauts-de-France (Château-Thierry, Condé-sur-L'Escaut, Hazebrouck, Liévin), Mayotte (Koungou), were chosen as pilot territories and benefited from a year of training and support.

The first results show that the experiment in France has not only favored a transformation of practices and postures, but has also strengthened collaboration and the involvement of local actors, in a spirit of cohesion. It demonstrates its potential to mobilize new partners, generate additional funding, and establish more circular governance while placing inhabitants at the heart of the approach to varying degrees. These advances lay the foundations for an inspiring model to address complex social cohesion challenges in a sustainable and concerted way.

Thus, the NATC decided to support a second wave of incoming sites in 2024. This new phase of development of the "Quartiers à Impact Collectif" experiment had the ambition of extending the approach to new sites: in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes with 14 neighborhoods of the Stéphanoise agglomeration and 2 neighborhoods in Isère, in Centre-Val-de-Loire with 5 neighborhoods, in Hauts-de-France with 2 neighborhoods, in Ile-de-France with 2

Notes

¹ Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires <https://anct.gouv.fr/>



educational cities, in Pays-de-la-Loire with 2 educational cities, and in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur with 3 neighborhoods and 1 employment city.

The experiment is about to enter its 3rd phase of deployment. Spring 2025 will allow new sites to mobilize around the approach. To date, 23 sites have approached the NATC to express their interest, including 10 QPV from the Aix-Marseille-Provence Metropolis and 7 educational cities. A concerted dialogue will enable the sites to decide whether to embark on the experiment. A national meeting is scheduled in Marseille in early October 2025 will mark the launch of phase 3 of "Quartiers à Impact Collectif".

This article focuses on wave 1 of the "Quartiers à Impact Collectif" experiment, especially on the sites of Condé-sur-L'Escaut and Saint-Etienne. It sheds light on the first results and re-reads the pre-conditions and the 5 conditions of collective impact in a French context where the state, compared to the Canadian environment, plays a predominant role in the deployment of public policies.



INTRODUCTION

This case study documents the experimentation process of Quartiers à impact collectif (QIC) Phase 1, carried out between 2021 and 2023. The initiative was driven by the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (NATC) to strengthen cooperative dynamics in priority urban neighbourhoods under France's city policy (politique de la ville). This case study explores the following questions:

- What are the outcomes of the sites involved in the first phase of the Quartiers à impact collectif experiment?
- How has the implementation of this innovative approach helped to transform ways of working?
- What key lessons have been learned for scaling up?

A FAVORABLE SETTING FOR EXPERIMENTATION

For several decades, France's city policy has embodied the State's commitment to reduce territorial inequalities and improve living conditions and social cohesion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Despite significant investments and constant local mobilization, some challenges remain. These include: ongoing poverty, the need to strengthen citizen engagement, and the importance of adopting more collaborative approaches to ensure lasting change.

In this context, the NATC has embraced innovation by launching an experiment to rethink how the city's policy might be implemented. Specifically, the Quartiers à impact collectif initiative transforms the design and implementation of its *contrats de ville* – a key policy tool for addressing the economic, urban and social development in an integrated way – to make them more collaborative, participatory, and deeply rooted and responsive to local realities.

This unique innovation opportunity emerged as a result of a need to explore new approaches to overcome identified limitations in implementing city policy, which included: its administrative complexity, the challenge of citizen engagement, and a desire to strengthen impact evaluation. Strategic support of the NATC leadership, combined with the renewal of *contrats de ville*, laid the groundwork for in-depth reflection and paved the way for adopting the collective impact framework as an innovative methodology to revitalize public action in priority neighbourhoods.

WHY CHOOSE COLLECTIVE IMPACT?

The Collective Impact approach is a proven strategic framework, that has evolved over a decade to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and has proven effective in various contexts—particularly in North America—to address complex socio-economic challenges such as educational success, poverty reduction, employment integration, or addiction prevention (ORS Impact and Spark Policy Institute). Rather than acting in isolation, stakeholders engage in a coordinated effort aligned with a common goal, sharing responsibility for outcomes.



The collective impact framework

The Collective Impact framework is built on three key preconditions that create fertile ground for collaborative innovation:

- A shared sense of urgency that motivates stakeholders to act together;
- Influential individuals - champions- capable of mobilizing different sectors;
- Adequate resources to support collective efforts.

Once these foundations are in place, implementation relies on five essential conditions:

- A shared vision and a common action plan to guide collective efforts.
- A common evaluation system that fosters continuous learning and adaptation.
- Aligned strategies and mutually reinforcing activities.
- Continuous communication to maintain trust and engagement.
- A backbone infrastructure to coordinate and sustain the initiative.

These combined elements help design sustainable solutions tailored to the complexity of social challenges while effectively mobilizing local strengths.

For more information: [Collective Impact Forum](#)

The Collective Impact approach, initially introduced in France by [Scop Accolades](#) and its Canadian counterpart [Coop Niska](#), exposed French stakeholders to the work of the [Tamarack Institute](#) and the Montreal-based [Projet impact collectif \(PIC\)](#). This approach resonated with the NATC's identified needs for several reasons:

1. It provides a structured framework to facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration while offering the flexibility needed to adapt to local contexts.
2. It emphasizes citizen engagement and co-construction of solutions with residents, addressing a key limitation of conventional approaches.
3. It offers a compelling alternative to siloed logic and top-down programmatic approaches.

The collective impact approach and the experiences in Quebec and Canada align closely with key principles of France's city policy: an integrated approach, mobilization of diverse stakeholders, and a strong emphasis on resident participation. For example, the PIC initiative, which has been tested in Montreal neighbourhoods since 2016, has led to significant progress in various fields, including housing, food security, parenting, and educational success. These commonalities contributed to French stakeholders' interest in collective impact.

The collective impact approach has been described as "refreshing" by many French actors, offering an inspiring new perspective—more flexible and less constrained by rigid formal frameworks—to rethink existing practices.

As Christine Duval, Project Manager – Methods & Cooperation at NATC, highlights:

"The initial intentions of the experiment were based on a dual challenge: strengthening resident engagement in neighbourhoods often affected by precarious conditions and transforming professional practices by fostering a more collaborative mindset. The goal was to initiate a participatory dynamic in the development of contrats de ville, leveraging the unique characteristics of each territory rather than imposing rigid thematic frameworks."

Thus, collective impact has developed in France in an original way, thanks to its adaptation to the local context, facilitated by the Franco-Quebec collaboration. The support of a consortium of Quebecois and French organizations at both local and national levels provided a valuable balance: a perspective that was both culturally close and sufficiently external to encourage reflection, promote practice transformation, and adapt tools to the French context.



COLLECTIVE IMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS: THE EXPERIMENTATION PROCESS

INNOVATIVE PRECONDITIONS

The National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (NATC)'s launch of its Collective Impact pilot project – *Quartiers à impact collectif* (QIC) – included several innovative steps.

First, the selection process stood out from conventional approaches by avoiding a top-down method. Instead, the NATC facilitated preliminary informal exchanges to gauge territorial interest before formalizing invitations. This approach helped identify the most prepared candidate territories, where a certain level of collaborative maturity already existed. This was considered an essential condition for this experimental phase.

As a result, three pioneering regions—*Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes*, *Hauts-de-France*, and *Mayotte*, representing nine local collectives at the scale of a *quartier prioritaire de la ville* (QPV, priority urban neighbourhood) participated in Phase I of the pilot.

Second, a novel prerequisite for the experiment was the leadership structure proposed by the NATC, which was organized around a triad of key actors: the Prefect's Delegate (Central State representative), the municipality, and a community-based organization. This “*core group of courageous leaders*”, as participants called it, clearly illustrates the intent to foster shared and localized leadership from the outset, thereby strengthening the experiment's legitimacy among stakeholders.

Third, a support system was established through a Franco-Canadian consortium—including *Scop Accolades*, *Coop Niska*, the *Tamarack Institute*, and *Dynamo*. This acknowledged the critical role of capacity-building and knowledge transfer in the Pilot Project's implementation. The nine collectives were trained at the regional level in the collective impact approach before experimenting with it locally to shape their shared aspiration. They received twelve days of co-training and individual site coaching for hands-on implementation.

Additionally, fifteen regional representatives took part in a one-week immersion in Canada in October 2022, where they engaged with key stakeholders of the *Projet impact collectif* (PIC). This experience enriched their reflections and practices, preparing them for the next steps of experimentation in France's priority neighbourhoods.

At the national level, *Scop Accolades* supported the NATC team in the strategic deployment of the experiment. Furthermore, NATC facilitated national-level coordination by organizing webinars and an in-person gathering in June 2023, bringing together the nine engaged sites and urban policy resource centers (CRPV). This helped strengthen connections between national and local levels, fostering a true collective impact community of practice. The *Grande équipe* online platform also played a role in continuously supporting knowledge sharing within the network.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PRECONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The QIC experiment laid a strong foundation for implementing the collective impact approach in France, demonstrating the relevance of the three preconditions in the French context:



1. A Shared Sense of Urgency

The experiment involved neighbourhoods that voluntarily joined the initiative, indicating a collective awareness that change was needed to drive deeper social and economic transformations. Initial collaborative maturity allowed stakeholders to unite around priority issues, although this sense of urgency was not always uniformly felt across all sites.

2. Influential and Locally Rooted Leadership

The triad structure—State delegate, municipality, and community organization—enabled inclusive and representative leadership, balancing institutional authority with deep local knowledge. However, its effectiveness depended on strong collaboration among members, especially in contexts with preexisting tensions.

3. Structured Support and Initial Resources

The Franco-Canadian consortium provided significant support and training from the outset, enhancing local capacity to implement the approach. However, the lack of a sustainable local backbone infrastructure to support collective efforts in the long run remains a challenge. Ensuring continuity and resource availability will be essential to embed collective impact into long-term local practices.

EARLY RESULTS

The collective impact projects implemented across different territories reflect the diversity of issues addressed by urban policy while approaching them in an innovative and collaborative manner. Some territories have chosen to focus on social cohesion by developing initiatives that strengthen the local associative fabric and enhance the social and cultural life of neighbourhoods, notably by working for and with young people. Others have centered their efforts on ensuring families can access their legal and social rights (e.g., access to social services, welfare, healthcare, and other government entitlements). Other projects have prioritized living environment and urban renewal issues, working collectively on improving housing and public spaces. Lastly, some have made economic development and employment their priority by fostering innovative partnerships between employment integration agencies, local employers, and residents.

Based on information collected from the NATC and local representatives, several levels of results from the experiment can be identified:

Transformation of Collaborative Practices and Network Expansion

The experiment has fostered better coordination among local actors and the gradual expansion of partner networks. Pascal Blaszczyk, Director of the Condé-sur-l'Escaut Social Center, testifies: *"The Collective Impact approach has transformed our way of working by encouraging us to adopt a long-term vision and to continuously expand our network of partners. This radical change contrasts with traditional approaches, which are often siloed and short-term-focused."*

Other stakeholders echo this sentiment, citing situations where actors working on the same social issues had never had the opportunity to collaborate before. Additionally, there has been closer engagement between institutions and residents regarding access to rights, facilitated by improved coordination and knowledge sharing. The emphasis from the outset on building trust, fostering co-responsibility, and encouraging various forms of collaboration has contributed to strengthening partnerships both within the core group of project leaders and between this group and other actors in the local ecosystem, including elected officials.

Strengthening Collaboration rather than Competition over Financial Resources

The absence of additional funding dedicated specifically to launching pilot projects made it possible to establish a common vision before seeking financial support, fostering more authentic collaboration. Several partners highlight that the lack of new funding helped shift priorities away



from competition and towards actor alignment, reinforcing trust and coherence among stakeholders. This shift is particularly evident in the transition from a "call for projects" approach to a "call for collective vision", which helped overcome the adverse effects of competition for funding.

Leveraging Impact to Secure Additional Funding

Once the foundations for collaboration were established, collective maturity, a shared vision, and the strategic positioning of partners served as a lever to attract additional funding. One respondent noted that using Collective Impact as a "label" of quality and credibility helped secure financial support from various funders.

Strengthening Relationships with Residents

The Collective Impact approach has enabled several neighbourhoods to move beyond symbolic engagement practices and establish a genuine dialogue with residents. This outcome is based on both a transformation in the attitudes of stakeholders —considered an essential condition of the process — and an evolution in consultation, facilitation, and collective ideation practices with residents. The involvement of residents has been intentional and comprehensive from the early stages of project development, including in the initial Collective Impact training sessions offered to each site.

Adopting a More Circular Governance Model and Improving Coordination Across Local and National Levels

The collaborative approach promoted by collective impact has led stakeholders to reflect on their professional roles and adopt more circular practices. For example, the role of a prefect's delegate has often shifted from enforcing national directives to becoming an active partner in the "core group of courageous actors," engaging in project implementation and mediating between the State, local governments, and associative representatives.

During the experiment, different levels of intervention have been coordinated with a sense of fluidity. For instance, NATC teams trained in Collective Impact alongside local actors and actively participated in discussions about emerging projects.

Knowledge Appropriation and Shared Reference Points

Support from the training consortium has enabled stakeholders to develop common reference points and adopt shared tools, strengthening their ability to work towards a long-term vision in a more aligned and coherent manner.

These initial results show that the Collective Impact experiment has not only fostered a transformation in practices and mindsets but also strengthened collaboration and engagement among local actors in a spirit of cohesion. The approach has demonstrated its potential to mobilize new partners, generate additional funding, and establish more circular governance—all while, to varying degrees, placing residents at the heart of the process. These advances lay the groundwork for an inspiring model to tackle complex social cohesion challenges in a sustainable and concerted manner.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

The experiment also revealed several challenges, highlighting the adjustments needed to maximize the impact of the approach.

The mobilization process often took longer than expected. At the national level, the mobilization phase was considered a crucial step requiring special attention to explain the approach to local territories and ensure their commitment to the experiment. Where two months had been initially planned, it sometimes took up to four months to fully engage local stakeholders. At the local level, partners showed enthusiasm during training sessions, but maintaining this momentum required ongoing efforts, especially in a context where key actors - such as prefects' delegates with limited-term mandates - may be replaced along the way.



It is worth noting that while time constraints are seen as a challenge for sustaining local momentum, they are also viewed positively, as partners are positioning themselves with a long-term impact perspective. This allows them to take the necessary time to build the foundations for achieving meaningful outcomes.

Regarding project timelines, resident involvement remained a consistent challenge in some neighbourhoods, where residents feel they are not yet fully engaged in the process.

The intensification of collaboration has sometimes reignited historical tensions among local partners, complicating the implementation of certain projects. In some cases, this led to the temporary abandonment of initiatives, underscoring the need for stronger support to overcome these obstacles and foster more harmonious relationships.

Furthermore, the experiment demonstrated that the Collective Impact approach is not suited to all contexts. In Mayotte, conditions of humanitarian urgency and significant local instability made implementation difficult, as the approach relies on a certain level of stability and long-term efforts.

Lastly, the experiment largely focused on territories that already had strong potential, with motivated actors and a history of collaboration. While this strategy facilitated early successes, in a scaling-up context where neighbourhood participation is expected to grow through a positive spillover effect, the mobilization phase—informing, taking time, and validating needs—will remain crucial for ensuring the success of future projects.

These challenges highlight the importance of continuously adapting the Collective Impact approach to local realities, strengthening stakeholder support, and ensuring a rigorous assessment of prerequisites before deploying the initiative.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE FIVE CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The experiment in France provides a valuable opportunity to assess the progress and limitations of applying the five conditions of the Collective Impact framework, considering that this was a pilot phase.

1. A Shared Vision and a Common Agenda

The French experience highlights the interdependence between a shared vision and the development of concrete strategies that are mutually reinforcing. Rather than working on these elements separately, an ongoing iterative dialogue was necessary to align collective ambitions with realistic actions. This interdependence improved coordination among stakeholders, although building this shared vision was sometimes slowed down by local governance structures, historical tensions, or differing priorities.

2. A Common Measurement System

The initial discussion on defining success and the change strategy helped local partners understand the importance of measuring progress and capturing lessons learned. The formative aspect of evaluation and the concept of a feedback loop are well understood. However, the practical implementation of evaluation and continuous improvement based on learning is not yet systematically integrated into all projects.

3. Mutually Reinforcing Strategies and Activities

While the experiment demonstrated strong coordination among usual stakeholders, it faced challenges in integrating partners outside the typical urban policy networks, such as less visible community organizations, the economic sector, and the cultural sector. This limitation could



hinder the transformative potential of the approach, which relies on inclusive, cross-sector collaboration.

4. Continuous Communication and Inclusive Community Engagement

One of the experiment's strengths lies in the work on strategic stakeholder mindsets. Adopting attitudes of humility, agility, and recognition of each actor's role—including residents—was identified as essential. However, resident engagement remains a challenge, as some territories have not yet fully integrated local communities into the process.

5. A Strong Backbone Infrastructure

A robust support infrastructure is a key condition for the success of Collective Impact collaborative work. This infrastructure includes a team, ideally independent from the participating organizations, responsible for planning, supporting the initiative, measuring impact, facilitation, and coordination.

The triads (prefect's delegate, municipality, and community actor) played this crucial role, supported by external facilitation. However, since these actors have other primary responsibilities, their ability to fully dedicate themselves to fostering collaboration is limited. This constraint could result in a lack of continuity and resources to sustain the initiative in the long run.

Nonetheless, the French approach, which relies on diverse local institutions (social centers, urban policy resource centers, municipal actors, etc.), holds great potential for developing strong and sustainable backbone structures capable of ensuring the shared governance of projects. The CRPVs (Urban Policy Resource Centers), in particular, given their extensive experience in facilitating and training urban policy actors, could play a crucial role as a support infrastructure.

The French experiment demonstrates that the Collective Impact approach can be adapted to different contexts while maintaining its core principles. It also reveals valuable lessons for the second phase of the experiment, particularly in establishing a shared evaluation system, integrating external actors, and developing a solid backbone infrastructure tailored to the French partnership context.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIMENT

Community Perspective: A Gradual and Strategic Local Adaptation

The Collective Impact experiment in France reveals strong potential for adapting the approach to local realities while preserving its core principles. Focusing on building a shared vision for social transformation helps overcome obstacles associated with conventional project-based approaches (hierarchical structures, competition, silos) by fostering greater recognition of each actor's role, establishing a common language, and clarifying how each participant can contribute to the desired transformation in the community.

This collaborative approach helped direct energy toward solutions better suited to the actual needs of the area, rather than solely focusing on financial constraints. According to Rémi Seux, Prefect's Delegate for Urban Policy in Saint-Étienne, Loire, this pragmatic approach encouraged rapid cycles of action and reflection, making the approach more fluid and adaptable to local specificities: *"By adopting the role of catalyst, facilitator, and mediator—without directly providing funding—I focused on co-constructing a shared vision and action plan with partners, creating a real sense of collective ownership. We avoided theoretical debates and instead prioritized concrete cycles of action and reflection. Expanding to ten priority neighbourhoods is an ambitious challenge: maintaining this commitment while delegating more responsibilities, with tailored support for each territory."*



Consortium Perspective: Capacity Building and Support

The training and capacity-building organizations involved from the outset played a key role in deploying the Collective Impact approach in France. This network proved essential in training and continuously supporting local actors, ensuring both an understanding of the principles and their practical application in real projects. Beyond training and guidance, these organizations also generated enthusiasm, encouraged curiosity, and fostered innovation.

The experience shows that the Collective Impact approach can be taught and applied in diverse contexts and that the role of facilitators could be expanded within the CRPV network, complementing other training and support resources.

NATC Perspective: Toward System Change

The NATC has initiated internal transformations to embody the principles of Collective Impact within the State administration. Creating an internal *Collec'TiC* - a collaborative to oversee the initiative - is a concrete example of this commitment to changing internal practices. These organizational changes demonstrate that Collective Impact can catalyze systemic shifts within public administration by promoting a more collaborative and interconnected approach that integrates funding, support, and capacity building.

As Matthieu Piegay, Collective Development Advisor at SCOP-Accolades and Niska, explains: *"Changing the paradigm of cooperation involves making explicit processes that have long been implicit and unfunded, in order to go beyond simple coordination or collaboration. Cooperation, in essence, is akin to a shared endeavour that requires real consultation and collective effort. This shift also necessitates valuing the journey taken, not just the results achieved, to build public policies that emphasize both deep transformations and measurable outcomes."*

IMPLICATIONS FOR PHASE 2

Building on the lessons from the pilot phase, the NATC launched a second phase in May 2024 with a greater number of participating territories. This experiment and its scaling-up process are unprecedented.

The expansion from 9 to 30 Collective Impact neighbourhoods in this next phase reflects the approach's potential for growth. Several structural developments have been implemented to support this scaling process:

1. Creation of a pool of French trainers to provide continuous training for local actors;
2. Gradual integration of Collective Impact principles into other initiatives, such as *Cités éducatives* and *Cités de l'emploi* (Educational and Employment Districts);
3. Establishment of a national steering committee involving local stakeholders to reinforce local commitment.

These innovations contribute to the ongoing enrichment of practice and collective learning, which are essential for scaling and the gradual mainstreaming of the approach. Moreover, the integration of Collective Impact principles into institutions such as *Caisses d'Allocations Familiales* (Family Benefits Funds) demonstrates the growing interest in this model.

This expansion signals both a broadening influence of the approach into other public frameworks and a potential for systemic impact on policies and institutional structures.

By remaining attentive to key factors—such as community engagement, evaluation and learning, and the strategic roles of leaders—Collective Impact could prove to be a particularly effective approach for addressing challenges in French communities in the coming years, including social cohesion, education, and even climate transition.



CONCLUSION

The Collective Impact experiment in France has revealed several promising innovations for implementing public policies as illustrated by the urban policy. Originally developed in a North American context, the approach has demonstrated a strong capacity for adaptation to the French system. Rather than being a one-size-fits-all model, Collective Impact has proved to be a flexible framework that can be adjusted to local specificities.

Contrary to initial expectations, the French administrative system has shown unexpected flexibility, opening new avenues for collaborative practices.

Shared leadership, embodied by the triad of actors (*State delegate, municipality, and community organization*), was a key success factor. This French model effectively combined institutional and community perspectives while remaining grounded in territorial realities. Examples from Saint-Étienne and Condé-sur-Lescaut illustrate how shared leadership can drive deep and lasting transformations in collaborative practices.

A unique feature of the French experiment was the institutional impetus provided by the NATC. While many Collective Impact initiatives emerge from grassroots efforts, notably in Canada, the French experience demonstrated that a State institution can act as a catalyst while respecting principles of co-construction and collaboration. Some stakeholders have even referred to this approach as a “*French pathway*” that could serve as a model for other national contexts where public institutions play a central role.

Finally, this experiment presents promising future prospects. The Quartiers à impact collectif initiative offers valuable insights into the evolution of the approach, particularly regarding the balance between national impetus and local innovation, and the role of public institutions in collaborative initiatives. These lessons could inspire other countries seeking to implement similar approaches while adapting to their own cultural and institutional contexts.



REFERENCES

Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. "Collective Impact." *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, no. 1 (2011): 36–41p. <https://doi.org/10.48558/5900-KN19>.

ORSImpact, Spark Policy Institute, When Collective Impact Has an Impact, (Seattle, WA - Denver, CO 26 Octobre 2018), 124p.
https://www.orsimpact.com/DirectoryAttachments/10262018_111513_477_CI_Study_Report_10-26-2018.pdf.

Ressources Urbaines. "Qu'est-ce que la politique de la ville ?" Ressources Urbaines. Dernière modification le 26 octobre 2023. <https://ressources-urbaines.org/definition-quest-ce-que-la-politique-de-la-ville/>.

Isabel Heck, avec la coll. de Yannick Sanschagrin, Mariane Rail, Cassandre Ville, Éric Joly et Raphaëlle de Albuquerque. Innover et apprendre pour mieux soutenir la lutte contre la pauvreté dans les quartiers montréalais – bilan du Projet impact collectif Phase 1, Les Cahiers du CRISES, Études de cas, ES2301, (Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales (CRISES), 2023), 162 p. https://crises.ugam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Cahier_ES2301.pdf

Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires, Politique de la ville - Site Internet. <https://agence-cohesion-territoires.gouv.fr/politique-de-la-ville-97>

Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires, *Quartiers à Impact Collectif, Renforcer les coopérations*, Dépliant promotionnel Phase 2, (Paris, 2024), 2p.

Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires, *Quartiers à Impact Collectif, Bilan par site, Phase 1*, (Paris, France, 2023), 8p.

Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires, *Quartiers à Impact Collectif, Cadrage de l'expérimentation et feuille de route*, (Paris, France, 2022), 11p.

Interviews

Avelange, Émilie, Cooperation Officer, City of Dreux, Eure-et-Loir, France. Interview by Jean-Marie Chapeau, October 11, 2024.

Blaszczyk, Pascal, Director, Social Center of Condé-sur-l'Escaut, France. Interview by Jean-Marie Chapeau, October 4, 2024.

Boudreault, Félix, Collective Development Advisor, SCOP-Accolades & Niska, Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada. Interview by Jean-Marie Chapeau, October 21, 2024.

Duval, Christine, Project Manager – Methods & Cooperation, National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (NATC), France. Interview by Myriam Bérubé and Jean-Marie Chapeau, September 20, 2024.

Piegay, Matthieu, Collective Development Advisor, SCOP-Accolades & Niska, Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada. Interview by Myriam Bérubé and Jean-Marie Chapeau, December 2, 2024.

Seux, Rémi, Prefect's Delegate for Urban Policy, Saint-Étienne, Loire, France. Interview by Jean-Marie Chapeau, September 27, 2024.

COMPRENDRE

Theorized and experimented in North America, the collective impact approach aims to enable collective initiatives to move from a situation where "actions and results are fragmented" to "shared action leading to deep and lasting collective impact."

Building on the initial experiments launched in Montreal, the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (NATC) decided to launch a national experimentation "Quartiers à Impact Collectif" in April 2022, which allows to strengthen the dynamics of cooperation between actors from different sectors and professional cultures for the benefit of resident participation.

In this moment of deployment of the new generation of urban contracts, the "collective impact" approach appears as an opportunity to propose concrete paradigm transformations for the animation of urban policy, and to participate in systemic changes. It offers to the local state, the local authorities, and the civil society to mutually reinforce their actions.

This article, written by two Canadian specialists in resident participation, focuses on wave 1 of the "Quartiers à Impact Collectif" experimentation. It sheds light on the first results and re-examines the conditions for the collective impact of the approach in a French context where the state, compared to the Canadian environment, plays a predominant role in the deployment of public policies.

CASE STUDY: FRANCE'S COLLECTIVE IMPACT EXPERIMENT

