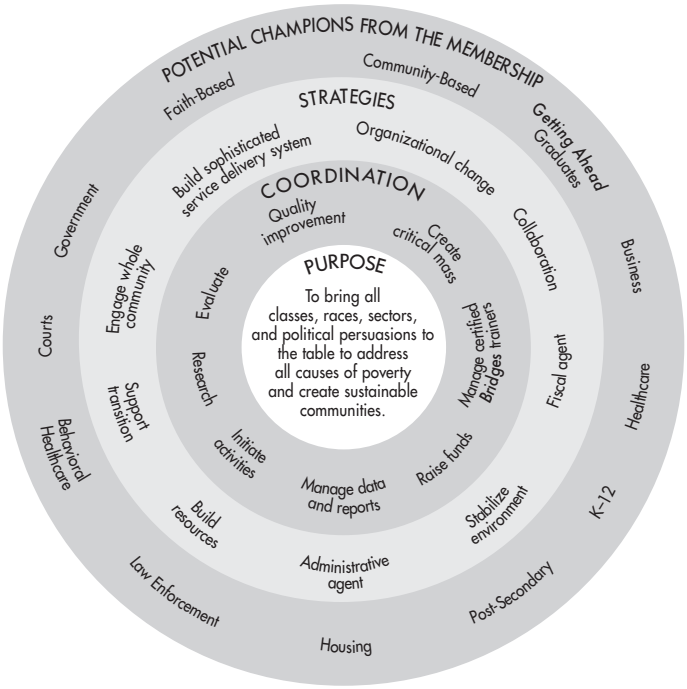
6. Bridges Steering Committees

How things are now: There are many things that make it difficult for a community to collaborate. Here's a short list: silos and funding streams that support them, competing agendas/problems/initiatives, partners that come and go as leaders change jobs, short-term planning and goals, differing perceptions regarding the problems, and a lack of common language and metrics.

DEVELOPING A BRIDGES COMMUNITY

Purpose and Function of a BRIDGES STEERING COMMITTEE



Source: Philip E. DeVol, *Bridges to Sustainable Communities,* 2010.

Context: Bridges provides a common language, core constructs, and tools that will help overcome the barriers listed above. Because poverty impacts all sectors (schools, health, criminal justice, employment, and so on), it is possible for every sector to achieve its goals while participating in a collaborative. In addition, Bridges is not a program, so its concepts can support other national or sector initiatives, such as Opportunity Nation, Healthy Communities, or Strive. In that sense Bridges is an additive that can enhance any initiative.

Core ideas: It is in communities where we can have the greatest impact. It is where we have connections, local knowledge, influence, and, above all, a reason to act. It is, after all, where we live. This tool is descriptive, not prescriptive. It helps conceptualize the work of a Bridges Steering Committee.

How to use the tool

- Communities find their own names for the groups they form—e.g., Marion Matters or Stillwater Cares.
- The "coordination" ring represents the work done by the institution or collaboratives that act in the role of catalyst, sponsor, administrative, and fiscal agent. In some communities the coordination role is shared by two or more organizations according to who the fiscal agent is for a grant or by sharing supportive services. Some communities, such as St. Joseph County (Indiana) Bridges Out of Poverty Initiative, formed a nonprofit that has paid staff, interns, AmeriCorps personnel, and volunteers managing the work under a board of directors. The membership is made up of 40-plus organizations.
- The "membership strategies" ring names some of the actions taken by organizations that are embedding Bridges concepts in their work.
- Communities will often generate champions who use Bridges so successfully that other organizations in the community and beyond seek them out as models.
- The "thinking tools" are designed to enhance the work of Bridges Steering Committees.

Learn more: Read *Bridges to Sustainable Communities,* Philip E. DeVol, 2010, Chapters 3, 5 (which contains the chart above), and 6.

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