

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
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Impact Exchange



Participant Response Report &
Thematic Analysis



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BUILDING CHICAGO'S SOCIAL INNOVATION NETWORK

Participant Response Report & Thematic Analysis

★ ★ ★ April 2026 Impact Exchange ★ ★ ★

"Stop convening. Start operating."

Chicago's social enterprise ecosystem has spoken — and this summary is your invitation to be part of the answer.

WHAT THIS SUMMARY ASKS OF YOU

Read it in ten minutes. Pick the one role that fits where you are. Take one next step.

This summary distills findings from the Social Enterprise Chicago April 2026 Leadership Exchange. Six executive-led tables examined leadership, technology, political risk, business models, capital access, and social policy.

The full Ecosystem Operating Platform Blueprint is available on request.

It contains nine phases of evidence-grounded strategy and a roadmap from Day 0 through Year 3.

This summary is your 10-minute starting point.

*The **BLUEPRINT** is where the detailed work gets done.*

THE MANDATE | What Participants Said — In Plain Terms

In April 2026, Social Enterprise Chicago convened a cross-sector leadership Impact Exchange using the World Café format. Six tables. Six executive facilitators. The findings were unambiguous: the ecosystem has outgrown passive discussion.

Participants named what they felt: frustrated ambition. The ideas and the will are there. What is missing is the structure to act on them.

6	5	8
Discussion domains examined	Facilitator source sets analyzed & synthesized	Ecosystem demand categories identified

WHAT PARTICIPANTS WERE ACTUALLY ASKING FOR

Participants did not ask for more events or better panels. Six tables surfaced one message:

- A capital activation intermediary — to reach funders organizations cannot find on their own
- Shared back-office support — so small organizations stop failing because two people try to do everything
- A readiness platform — to close the gap between what organizations can show and what funders need to see
- A coalition structure — to stop competing for the same dollars and start raising them together
- A policy voice — to turn community needs into laws and funding, not just advocacy
- An execution standard — participants said this directly: meetings must produce action, not more meetings

One participant said it directly:

*"Small organizations fail when two or three people try to do everything.
We need shared structure — not another discussion about why we need shared structure."*

— Participant, Capital Activation & Impact Investment Table (April 2026)

THE COST OF WAITING

Participants were direct: the ecosystem needs action, not another convening. Organizations that showed up in May are watching to see if SocEntChi follows through. The window is open now. It will not stay open.

Participants are asking SocEntChi to act as neutral, connective infrastructure.

Not to duplicate the Chicago Community Trust or existing thematic groups — but to link them, fill the gaps between them, and enable the ecosystem to act as one.

THE EXCHANGE | Six Discussions — One Direction

Each World Café table surfaced distinct but deeply connected ecosystem needs. They are presented here in order of consequence to SocEntChi's first actions.

Capital Activation & Impact Investment (Ralph Kindred facilitator) — Highest Priority	The most detailed table in the exchange. Participants called for a capital clearinghouse, mission coalitions, pooled funds, shared back-office support, and readiness standards. Their message was direct: get out of the meeting and into execution.
Leadership & Sustainable Impact (Adrienne Bitoy Jackson - facilitator)	Burnout is structural, not personal. It comes from being underfunded, isolated, and mission-driven without a support system. Participants called for CEO peer circles, sabbaticals, compensation benchmarks, and digital resource centers. Rest is a strategic requirement.
Driving Social Policy (Karim Pakravan - facilitator)	Good policy starts with the community. Then it needs financial literacy, legal skill, and the right sequence. Participants called for a disciplined issue-selection process, help drafting legislation, and a civic mobilization capacity SocEntChi does not yet have.
Business Model Innovation (Brooke Bechtold - facilitator)	Sustainability is an ecosystem design problem, not only a funding problem. Participants named SocEntChi's three core roles: Collaborator (connecting fragmented actors), Convener (creating neutral alignment), and Catalyst (moving from talk to action).
Political & Governmental Risk Resilience (Marc J. Lane – facilitator)	Organizations cannot react to political shocks — they must prepare before disruption hits. Participants called for revenue diversification, reducing reliance on government dollars, advocacy skills, and values-based coalitions that hold firm under pressure.
Technological Equity & AI (Keith Coleman - facilitator)	As AI becomes essential infrastructure, SocEntChi should anchor a Tech-Equity Coalition: shared tool licenses, pooled purchasing, fair access, and clear governance. (Synthesized findings)

THE ONE THING EVERY DISCUSSION AGREED ON

Policy risk affects funding. Funding affects burnout. Operational weakness affects funder readiness. Policy gaps affect capital access. Technology affects capacity. These are not six separate problems. They are one ecosystem problem with one structural solution: shared infrastructure.

THE PLATFORM | What SocEntChi Is Becoming

The Exchange produced a clear operating model. To address the four systemic gaps, SocEntChi must abandon the passive network model and adopt a high-authority role defined by three strategic pillars.

SocEntChi's unique position is as a neutral party: not duplicating the Chicago Community Trust or existing thematic groups, but linking them, filling the gaps, and enabling the ecosystem to act as one.

Pillar	Strategic Focus	Primary Objective
Convener	Trusted, Non-Partisan Space	Facilitate alignment between practitioners and funders. Standardize definitions, metrics, and shared language across the ecosystem.
Collaborator	Bridging & Resource Sharing	Connect organizations, universities, and technical experts. Build shared infrastructure and end organizational isolation without duplicating existing groups.
Catalyst	Capacity & Systems Change	Move the ecosystem from dialogue to action through capital readiness, resilience workshops, and mission coalitions. The Capital Activation Intermediary role operates within this pillar.

HOW THE PLATFORM WORKS IN PRACTICE

Each pillar is activated through thematic working groups — not ad hoc committees or one-off task forces. Working groups ensure continuous community participation without creating redundant structures. They are the delivery mechanism for every program below.

Five working groups will form in the first 90 days: Capital Activation, Policy, Technology Equity, Leadership Sustainability, and Operations.

Each working group is co-led by a Board member and a Friends of the Board volunteer. Each has a 90-day charter and a defined set of outcomes.

FOUR PROGRAMS — IN THE ORDER THEY COULD LAUNCH

Each program addresses one of the four systemic gaps participants named. Each one enables the next.

1. Capital Readiness Lab Launch first

Addresses: Inconsistent Metrics — the gap between what organizations can show and what funders need to see.

This is the blocking condition for capital access. Organizations carry expressive mission logic; funders require institutional logic. Nothing else unlocks until organizations can translate between the two.

2. Mission Coalition Program Launch alongside the Lab

Addresses: Fragmented Funding — the fragmentation of funding into isolated, small-scale grants.

Organize joint funding by issue area: food, workforce, housing, or youth development. The Coalition turns the Lab's readiness work into funded action and enables multiple organizations to approach large-scale donors together.

3. CEO Sustainability Council Launch third

Addresses: Leadership & Infrastructure — leadership burnout caused by carrying the invisible load alone.

Structured, ongoing peer learning that addresses burnout at the structural level. Leaders who burn out cannot execute anything else. Without this program, the Lab and Coalition will lose participants to attrition.

4. Shared Back-Office Consortium After feasibility study

Addresses: Weak Operational Infrastructure — the failure to provide shared operational resilience across the ecosystem.

A feasibility study to centralize finance, HR, grant-writing, and compliance. This frees leaders to focus on mission delivery rather than administrative survival. The study is the immediate deliverable — not the consortium itself.

The full Blueprint is available on request.

It covers nine phases: how to diagnose participant demand, close ecosystem gaps, underwrite every stakeholder group, build sustainable revenue, and implement from Day 0 through Year 3. Request it when you are ready to move from this summary to the detailed work.

YOUR NEXT STEP | 5 Actions — Simplest First

Every reader of this summary has one right next step. The five options below are ordered from the least time required to the most. Start with the one that matches where you are.

Validate & Prioritize

Respond to the Participant Validation Survey. Tell us what we got right, what we missed, and which three things SocEntChi should do first.
Ten minutes. Your input directly shapes the first 30-day action agenda.

Join a Thematic Working Group

Join one of five thematic working groups forming: Capital Activation, Policy, Technology Equity, Leadership Sustainability, or Operations.
Co-led by a Board member and a Friends of the Board volunteer.

Apply for Board Service

Apply for board membership to help govern SocEntChi's evolution into ecosystem infrastructure.
The application process begins with a nomination from a current SocEntChi board member

Request the Full Blueprint

Get the complete Ecosystem Operating Platform Blueprint. It contains evidence maps, revenue architecture, and a roadmap from Day 0 through Year 3.
Contact: SocEntChi Board — see footer for connection details

The strategic question is not whether to convene.

It is whether convening will become the front end of a practical implementation platform.

★ The answer depends on who shows up next. ★

PARTICIPANT VALIDATION QUESTIONS

If you participated in the April 2026 exchange, we invite you to take a few moments to validate these findings. Your input shapes what happens next.

Top Priorities	Which three issues should SocEntChi address first?
Immediate Value	Which action would create the most immediate value for your organization?
Accuracy	Did this report capture the major themes from your table?
Missing Voice	What important point is missing or underemphasized?
Working Group	Would you join an implementation working group?

Role Priority	Which platform role should SocEntChi prioritize first? Options: Collaborator, Convener, Catalyst, Clearinghouse, Civic Engine, or Capital Activation Intermediary.
Long-Term Value	Which action would create the greatest long-term ecosystem value?
Shareability	What would make this report worth sharing with funders, partners, or policymakers?

Let us know by clicking this [link](#).

Social Enterprise Chicago — Building Chicago's Social Innovation Network

Executive Audience Report | April 2026 Leadership Exchange | Prepared for Board Members, Volunteers, Members, Sponsors, and Ecosystem Partners