Center for the Study of Social Policy

Making a difference in your neighborhood

A Handbook for Using Community Decision-Making to Improve the Lives of Children, Youth and Families

Acknowledgements

Making a Difference in Your Neighborhood: Using Community Decision-Making to Improve the Lives of Children, Youth and Families is based on a series of six *Building Capacity for Local Decision-Making Learning Guides* developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) in 2001. It is informed by CSSP's continued work to support local community efforts to improve child and family well-being. This handbook was authored by CSSP staff Dorothy Smith and Aysha Gregory. Additional feedback and support were provided by the following CSSP staff: Phyllis Brunson, Amrit Dhillon, Juanita Gallion, Arlene Lee, Megan Martin and Bill Shepardson.

About CSSP

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) is a nonprofit public policy, research and technical assistance organization. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., CSSP works with state and federal policymakers and with communities across the country. Its mission is to create new ideas and promote public policies that produce equal opportunities and better futures for all children and families, especially those most often left behind. Using data, extensive community experience and a focus on results, CSSP's work covers several broad areas, including promoting public policies that strengthen vulnerable families; mobilizing a national network to prevent child abuse and promote optimal development for young children; assisting tough neighborhoods with the tools needed to help parents and their children succeed; educating residents to be effective consumers securing better goods and services; and reforming child welfare systems.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Across the country, communities are working towards a common vision: to ensure that neighborhoods become places where all families thrive and have access to the supports, services and opportunities they need to ensure their children succeed. Whether inspired by events happening in your local community or catalyzed by an opportunity provided through a foundation or government supported initiative, communities like yours are working to change the future for children and families by investing in neighborhoods. In supporting these efforts of communities to transform their neighborhoods, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) has found **community decision-making** to be a powerful engine for change.

Community decision-making is a shared commitment to: achieving improved results for children, families and neighborhoods, challenging the inequities that have impacted current conditions and building local capacity and accountability to sustain improved results over time. Community decision-making is based on the notion that through effective partnerships, communities can develop and implement comprehensive plans that are calculated to ensure all families and children succeed. In this handbook, CSSP will share lessons learned over two decades about what it takes to be successful and offer tools and guidance to help your community create meaningful and sustainable change at the neighborhood level.

A community decision-making process enables your community to:

- Develop a broad, inclusive vision or agenda for the **results** you want to achieve
- Support community stakeholders as co-investors and **accountable partners** in achieving your community's results agenda
- Promote the use of timely, relevant and reliable **data** and other information to assess your community's needs, make decisions, monitor progress and ensure accountability
- Develop an **action plan** that is aligned with your community's vision and needs to ensure implementation of effective strategies
- Ensure **sustainability** and the ability to take desired programs to scale through results-driven financing strategies, strategic alliances and supportive public policies

Starting with the end in mind and engaging in a **results-driven process** is critical to mobilizing and empowering your community to ensure the well-being of all families. In addition, working at the neighborhood level can help identify and begin to address the structural inequities that contribute to and reinforce disparate outcomes. However, to live up to the promise of an agenda that seeks better *and* more equitable results, your community has to be intentional about creating and sustaining the capacity needed to create opportunities at the individual, family and neighborhood levels that are available to all residents regardless of race, ethnicity or class.

Throughout this handbook, we emphasize that residents of the neighborhood in which you are working are central to this process. They should be seen as critical co-investors in the design and delivery of the services, resources and system improvements needed to help them and their children. Developing authentic partnerships among neighborhood residents and other stakeholders can be difficult work; however, it is an essential investment in the change process. These individuals are the common thread that holds your process together and can both contribute to and support the long-term success of each step.

As you use the handbook, keep in mind that your efforts to build the capacities that are critical to success—**a focus on results, accountable partnerships, data capacity, results-driven strategies and a focus on long-term sustainability**—will not necessarily occur in linear order. Each of these capacities is interrelated and necessary for success. For example, your community is likely to return to the tools and strategies relevant to building partnerships as you develop new relationships. What you learn as you collect data over time may cause you to reformulate your strategies. Thinking about sustainability may cause you to refocus your results agenda.

While this work is challenging and complex, communities can succeed in transforming their neighborhoods with the right level of support and resources. We recognize the level of commitment many communities like yours have to making their neighborhoods places where children, youth and families can thrive, and we hope the resources in this handbook help you to achieve that vision.

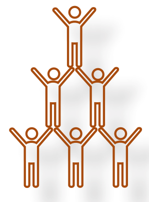
This handbook provides you with information and tools that can help you drive the changes necessary to improve the well-being of the children and families where you live. Each chapter will explore the critical capacities needed to help communities establish a decision-making process. This guide includes useful definitions, advice, examples and case studies to help you along this path. At the end of each chapter is a self-assessment tool (Where are We Now) *that will help you and your community partners assess your understanding of and progress towards implementing the key concepts in each chapter. Finally, in the Appendix, you will find more detailed tools, worksheets and samples to help your community be successful.*

As you use the handbook, we invite you share any feedback and stories about how you're using community decision-making to make a difference in your neighborhood. Please e-mail us at communitychange@cssp.org.

1 DEVELOPING A RESULTS AGENDA

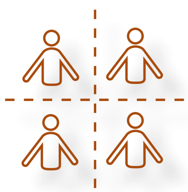
Engaging in a results-driven process will enable your community to envision what you want and focus on the solutions that are needed to get there. It ultimately helps you answer the question of **what do you really want for children and families in your neighborhood?** This is a critical step towards developing a broadly defined comprehensive plan to improve outcomes in your neighborhood.

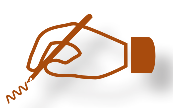
IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO:



Work together as a community to identify and agree on the results you want to achieve

Gather input from a broad cross-section of your community as you choose results





Design opportunities for all community stakeholders to be involved and share their experiences

Why Begin With Results?

When we talk about results, we are talking about the conditions of well-being your community seeks for its children and families. This requires having conversations with a wide range of people in your community to prioritize and develop consensus around the results you will pursue together. While community members can often be eager to jump right into identifying problems and solutions, a results-based process helps communities be more deliberate and strategic moving forward. This is also a dynamic process, as many communities will return to their results agenda over time as they learn more and as conditions change.

Starting with results will allow your community to:

DEVELOP targeted solutions by mapping backward from what you want to achieve. You can assess how well children, youth and families are currently doing in the areas that are most important to you, what is causing those good or bad results and what your community needs to do to improve the things you care most about.

DRAW people into the process by keeping their "eyes on the prize." Focusing on and creating consensus around a set of outcomes through a community process allows you to build and widen support moving forward.

HOLD each other accountable for the performance and impact of your efforts. Results are about demonstrating progress. Focusing on results requires monitoring achievement of and performance in trying to reach those results.

SUSTAIN your work over time. From the beginning, your community should be thinking strategically about how you will sustain your efforts. We understand how important funding is to sustainability; however, it is important not to let your work be driven entirely by this. Not only are many funding sources temporal, but the requirements attached to different funding streams may not be aligned with the direction in which your community wants to move. Working together to get clarity and consensus about the results you want to pursue first will help you to more effectively pursue financing strategies that will support your ability to achieve those results over time.

How Do We Choose Results?

A result describes a condition that you want to exist in your community. An example of a result could be *children are healthy and prepared to succeed in school.* Notice that this result is not about programs, agencies or actions but is a statement about a condition you want to achieve for children in your community. Ultimately the results the community decides to pursue should be meaningful to a range of different people in the community, commonly understood and measurable.

In developing and prioritizing the results your community will focus on, some questions to consider are:

- What do we want for children and families?
- How is that different than what we see now?
- What is causing or contributing to the current state of things?
- What is needed to change current conditions?
- What are we willing and/or able to do to ensure we made a difference?

Developing a results agenda involves the entire community. While you may be taking the lead in this process, it is important that you open this process to everyone in your community—including those voices that are not often heard—to ensure that everyone is invested. When community members feel that they are involved in the process early, they will be more likely to feel joint ownership of the results and be more willing to invest in achieving them. Engaging a broad cross-section of the community helps to build unified support around the results identified and a process for moving forward.

Be sure that you talk with people who look like the neighborhood. This means people who represent the race, culture, class and gender backgrounds of the community. Be sure to include:

Young people, including youth who attend neighborhood schools, young people who have been in trouble with the legal system and those who volunteer in the community, honor students and those who struggle in school, high school graduates and those who dropped out of school, youth working in the community and college or trade school students.

Elders, including those living alone and living with kin, people who remember when the community was different, grandparents raising their grandchildren and those the community looks up to and respects.

All kinds of families, including single parent families, those with young children or older youth, teenage parents, multi-generation households and those without children.

Both **longtime residents** who have tried to make changes in the past and newcomers who can view the neighborhood with fresh eyes.

People with a **variety of experiences in work**—including residents who own or work in local businesses, who work outside the neighborhood and who are unemployed.

Residents with **different life experiences,** for example individuals with disabilities, recent immigrants and people living alone.

People with a **range of experiences in the neighborhood**—those who live in different blocks or areas, renters, homeowners, public housing residents, people who don't participate in organized neighborhood activities and those who are very active.

In addition, community leaders and organizers, neighborhood association members and leaders, members and leaders of faith institutions, teachers, school board members, health care workers, child care providers, law enforcement and court officials and representatives of local government are instrumental voices in the community.

Tool: Sample Discussion Questions for Community Partners

QUESTIONS FOR ALL COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

What kind of community would you like to live in?

What do you need in order to provide for your family?

What are some of the assets or resources that this community provides to you and your family?

What is not available in this community that you would use if it were?

As a family or individual, what are some of the challenges you face on a day-to-day basis?

What one change in your community would make it better for families?

In what ways do you contribute to your community?

Do you feel that residents in your community support each other? What more could be done?

QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS USING SERVICES

How did your family become involved with this system?

What services do you and your children most need or use?

How have these services impacted your family?

What problems or barriers do you have when trying to obtain services?

What works best about the services you currently receive?

If you could change one aspect of the current services you receive, what would that be?

QUESTIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

How do you work with families?

What services do you provide?

How do you determine what services are needed?

What conditions contribute to families needing the services you provide?

What barriers do families encounter when they use your services?

What services, activities or policies work especially well for the families you work with?

What services, activities or policies act as barriers?

How do you measure the quality of your services?

What data do you collect about the families you are working with?

How do you know that the services you refer families to are effective?

If you could change one aspect of the current services you provide, what would it be?

How Can We Reach Out to Residents?

Residents often understand best how families are faring and can help others further their understanding of the resources available (or lacking) in the community, how families are experiencing existing systems and what solutions might best address community needs. Reaching out to residents is also a first step in building trust amongst community stakeholders and helps to bring a level of legitimacy and credibility to your efforts.

Make sure that residents know what's going on and how they can be involved. This requires reaching out to people in many different ways such as sharing information through local media, putting up notices in places where neighbors regularly gather and getting the word out at community meetings (including school board, parent-teacher or neighborhood association meetings) and through community organizations and leaders. Block parties, movie nights, local events, retreats, field trips and book clubs are also opportunities to interact with residents. In addition, social media tools can be used to keep community members both informed and connected to each other.

Different types of information will surface depending on how you talk to each other. Here are some creative ways communities have started conversations with their neighbors about results:

Story Circles
Some communities use storytelling to bring people together to talk about their concerns and hopes for their children, family and community. Getting people together in a living room, church basement or public housing meeting space has become a way to improve communication among neighbors and build a sense of community. In small groups of about eight to ten people, a facilitator guides each story circle, giving every participant an opportunity to contribute and to be heard with respect. Participants can focus story circles on any issue that interests them.

One-on-One Discussions
Some people are more comfortable talking privately rather than in a group. You may find it helpful to speak with some community members individually to get more detailed information on specific needs and problems.

Community Ambassadors
Developing an ambassadors program can be an effective tool to help residents reach out to each other and bridge the various divisions that sometimes exist in a community such as those based on race, class or geographic location. As an ambassador, a resident would be responsible for reaching out to other residents in different parts of the community or from different backgrounds to share information with each other, learn about each other's experiences and forge new relationships.

Neighborhood Surveys
Surveys are a good way to reach a large number of people. Options include door-to-door discussions, telephone surveys or distributing written questionnaires at places where people often gather, such as libraries, stores, transit stops, laundromats or community festivals. It's important to keep surveys short, to offer translations in residents' languages and to clearly explain why you're collecting the information.

Neighborhood Summits

You can also organize neighborhood meetings or summits for the entire community to discuss and build consensus around a results agenda. You'll need a comfortable meeting space, a thoughtfully constructed agenda and a facilitator who can manage questions and answers, discussion and disagreements.

For occasions where a formal meeting may be needed to draw people together, it is critical that you plan in advance to ensure a well-run meeting. Done well, meetings can accomplish goals, encourage people to share responsibilities and foster mutual respect. See ***Tips for Holding Effective Meetings*** [Appendix].

Bringing everyone together can be challenging; however, building relationships in the community is critical. Whoever takes the lead in initiating this process should ensure that all community members really understand what the goals are, how everyone can be a contributing partner and how the community will ultimately benefit. Community members will want to feel that their input is not superficial. As partners come together, issues of trust may arise. These are sometimes a result of past experiences with community change efforts or partners not feeling like they are on equal footing. It will be important to know and understand this history. Being able to communicate and work together as a team to resolve conflicts will be hugely important to addressing these conflicts and working effectively as a partnership. See **Creating Accountable Partnerships** for more information about how to effectively work together.

GATHERING RESIDENT INPUT TO IMPROVE YOUTH OUTCOMES:

The Listening Project

In 2007, Youth Services, an organization committed to providing programs and services that promote the healthy development of local youth and families in Windham County, Vermont, started the *Listening Project: Giving Voice to Adolescent Youth Living in Difficult Circumstances.* This research was part of a comprehensive Youth Opportunity Planning Process aimed at developing a strategic plan to guide the organization and the community in serving the county's youth.

The Listening Project was initiated by interviewing 20 young people from a broad cross-section of the county about what it would take to feel empowered, valued and successful in their life. The interviewers consisted of teams of trained youth and adults. In addition to data collected from the one-on-one interviews, Youth Services convened local meetings to encourage more community input for the strategic plan. For example, the Board of Youth Services, which consists of about 15 youth representatives, conducted a two-day workshop to review the research collected from the *Listening Project.* In addition, 60 community partners joined with a team of youth to hold a full day learning session with town government, state government and law enforcement around youth issues.

In these meetings, improved transportation services emerged as one of the important priorities that should be addressed in order to better support youth in the county. Partnering with the Windham Regional Commission, Youth Services began to develop a project that would improve the coordination of services amongst existing transportation services and identify what is needed for an improved transit infrastructure.

In March 2011, Youth Services and the Windham Regional Commission convened the county's four school supervisory union superintendents, school bus service providers and the region's transit providers to discuss immediate and long-term opportunities. Follow-up meetings are now taking place to explore coordination of services beginning with the 2011–12 school year. All 14 legislators representing the region are aware of this initiative and have signed on to a letter in full support of the effort.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Lawrence Community Works

Building community relationships through shared networks are a central component of Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW), a nonprofit community development corporation committed to transforming and revitalizing the physical, economic and social landscape of Lawrence, Massachusetts. According to LCW, personal relationships are the foundation to building community. "Networks" are an approach to engaging people, who may be loosely connected, in a wide variety of positive activities. Through network building, LCW aims to create a new "environment of connectivity" where residents can more easily connect to information, opportunity and each other.

NeighborCircles are LCW's principal organizing strategy. Through NeighborCircles, families in a given neighborhood come together to get to know one another and talk about what they can do to help build community in Lawrence. They begin with a resident volunteering to host a NeighborCircle in his or her own home. Over the course of a month a group of 8 to 10 families will come together at the host's home three times for dinner and conversation. A NeighborCircle can continue to meet regularly after the third meeting to address neighborhood issues or organize activities to bring neighbors together and build community. Some Circles have worked together on ally and playground cleanups, improving street lighting, safety and parking and organizing block parties. The meetings are assisted by one or two facilitators trained by LCW. The facilitators are typically volunteers who receive a small stipend for their assistance. The facilitators also receive training on facilitation techniques in this model.

Bringing the community together to both define problems and shape solutions has had a major impact on the revitalization of Lawrence and its residents. LCW has a membership of thousands of families, an energetic board and professional staff and has generated more than $25 million in new neighborhood investment, including 60 units of affordable housing on 15 abandoned and vacant parcels, a new community center, two new playgrounds and a range of family asset-building and youth development efforts, impacting thousands of families in Lawrence.

Tool: Self-Assessment: Where are we now?

CHAPTER I: DEVELOPING A RESULTS AGENDA

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Do we understand what results are?				
Do we know why focusing on results is important?				
Are we talking to a broad cross-section of the community?				
Are we creating diverse opportunities to connect with community members about their experiences?				
Are we considering ways to increase the involvement of community members?				
Are we taking steps to make meetings comfortable and welcoming for community members?				
Does our results agenda reflect the needs and desires of the entire community?				
Are we sharing our results agenda widely?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

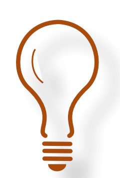
2 CREATING ACCOUNTABLE PARTNERSHIPS

This kind of work cannot be done alone. While being committed to results can serve as a catalyst for bringing people together, **the *path* to reaching those results may require you to think differently about how you work with others.** Together, community partners will have to work hard to build the skills that are needed to work effectively as a team and be accountable to your community's results agenda.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO:

Build a community partnership that is authentic in truly bringing community stakeholders together

Think about different possibilities for structuring your partnership



Build the skills you and your partners need to work together effectively

How Do We Engage the Community in an Authentic Partnership?

As we discuss in **Developing a Results Agenda**, engaging the entire community starts with a focus on results. Reaching out to all members of the neighborhood shows that you are serious about working together in new ways and that you want to share responsibility for making your neighborhood better. In order to build community support, we suggest that you:

ENGAGE a wide circle of stakeholders. Each member of your community brings a wealth of skills, relationships and experiences to the table that can help inform and strengthen efforts to create change. This makes it important to cast a wide net as you begin to partner with others. Think about whether you have the people necessary to plan, lead and implement. For example, people in influential roles like local government officials, school board members, heads of neighborhood associations, faith leaders and business leaders can be supportive allies. They, along with service agencies (including their directors, staff and boards of directors), can commit resources and energy towards implementation of strategies and evaluation of progress.

ENSURE residents are full partners. Residents should be seen as co-investors in any authentic community change effort. As integral partners they should be involved from the beginning as both participants and leaders. Local residents can often best determine the needs of their communities and the potential solutions that would have the greatest impact. They can connect each other to information, resources and opportunities. Further, having engaged and supportive residents can help hold everyone accountable to the results agenda.

LEVERAGE your relationships to build new partnerships. As you flesh out your results agenda and begin to develop strategies, others from the community may arise as obvious partners. You can leverage your existing relationships to involve and engage new partners. For example, through their relationships in the community, residents can often help to engage others and ensure that people in the community are involved.

BE CLEAR about roles. As you are building these relationships, it is important that you also be clear with others about what your partnership is trying to accomplish and how others can contribute. People want to know that their role is important and valued.

In **Developing a Results Agenda**, we provide some additional tips for how you might reach out to the community. To help ensure you have reached out to all the necessary community stakeholders, see ***A Balanced Membership*** [Appendix].

How Do We Structure Our Partnership To Ensure Shared Accountability?

You will also have to create an operational structure that supports this new way of working together by encouraging shared leadership, transparency and inclusive decision-making. Often there is one organization or core group of partners that will initiate a community change process. In your community partnership, everyone should have the opportunity to be a leader. In addition, all partners will have to be accountable to each other and the community for the commitments made towards achieving results.

While there are many ways you might organize the structure of your partnership, make sure that it supports the community's vision. Focus on the goals of your collaboration first—the results you want to achieve—and then track back to who in the partnership has the capacity to take on the roles necessary to achieve them. Many communities create formal and informal structures to carry out their work and to create opportunities for core partners to share progress with the broader community. Ultimately, you will want to 1) work with your partners to develop a shared agreement around the specific roles and responsibilities of each partner and 2) be transparent about how you will hold each other accountable to the work and the community at large.

As you begin to structure your partnerships, there are key questions your community will have to work through, including:

How Can Each Partner Contribute?
If you are taking the lead in bring everyone together, you will have to think carefully about what the specific ask of your partners will be. For example, you might ask your school partner to share data, a local community organization to share funding resources and a local government partner to begin identifying which policies and practices are not in alignment with your community's desired results. These are by no means small asks, but asking for what is really needed to achieve results from the start will help you communicate how important this work is and the level of commitment that is needed. The partnership will not be effective in achieving results if everyone prefers to maintain the status quo. Partners will have to think about how to operate differently and be open to changes that, while difficult, are necessary. All community stakeholders should understand that being a member of the partnership will require some giving, but the return are improvements that will both support their own mission as well as the lives of children and families in the community.

How Will We Make Decisions?
Your community partnership will require you to think about how to share leadership so that everyone has input into decisions. This will be a challenge. Most organizations have one leader or a small core of individuals who hold most of the power and influence when it comes to making decisions. Someone who is used to a lot of power and influence may not want to include others. Likewise, someone who doesn't have experience participating in meetings or decisions may be too quick to sit back and let others control the group's direction and decisions. You will have to work together to figure out what would work best for your community to ensure an inclusive decision-making process. How can you level the playing field to be more inclusive of non-traditional stakeholders? How will final decisions be made? By whom? How will you handle conflict? How will decisions be communicated?

What Kind of Staff/Volunteer Support Do We Need?
Consider the tasks that your partnership will be responsible for in implementing your community's results agenda. How much time and capacity will be needed? What roles and responsibilities must be allocated? Do the partners bring enough staff or volunteer support with them to support the work that needs to be done? If not, how could the partnership work towards increasing staff and volunteer support?

How Will Core Partners and The Broader Community Work Together?
When it comes to the day-to-day activities, it is likely that a set of core partners will carry much of the work forward. However, these partners are still accountable to the community. And while the broader community might not be directly involved in all tasks, they will still have an invaluable role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the work. One of the most important ways to sustain the partnership over time is to ensure that people have opportunities to contribute and understand the value of their contribution. How will this happen? You might develop committees, task forces or work groups that people participate in on a more limited basis or through which you can target people with particular expertise. Or you might think about one-time projects that people could participate in.

How Will We Sustain The Involvement of Neighborhood Residents?
In order for residents to be equal partners, they must be able to participate at all stages of the process, including in leadership positions. One way to do this is to create a structure that calls for resident participation at each level of your operations. All partner organizations should examine the extent to which they are providing opportunities for neighborhood residents to participate fully in planning, decision-making and implementation. Partners may need to re-examine their policies and practices and ensure that staff have the skills and information they need to form authentic partnerships with neighborhood residents.

You should also consider the different obstacles to full participation by residents—like work, transportation or child care. Keep in mind the responsibilities that your residents and families have outside of this work. Many communities have found it important to offer stipends or other kinds of compensation or incentives in consideration of the challenge of balancing time and responsibilities that many families face. In addition, it is critical that you work with residents to ensure they have the skills and information needed to operate on a level playing field with other partners. Work with residents to identify and develop opportunities for mentoring, leadership training and skill building that will support their full involvement in the work.

How Will We Monitor and Evaluate Our Progress Towards Achieving Results?

This question is a key aspect of accountability to the community. In **Using Data to Achieve Results**, we discuss data and evaluation in more detail, but it is important to note here that your partnership should have a clear plan for how to gather, analyze and disseminate data about your community and the progress of your efforts. What data sources should you be looking at? Who will be gathering and analyzing data? In what ways and formats can you communicate data to the community? For example, you might develop routine, periodic data collection and review plans that are shared with the community through tools such as community report cards or data dashboards.

How Will We Monitor and Evaluate Our Own Efforts?

In addition to monitoring your progress towards reaching results, you should also be monitoring the effectiveness of your work as a partnership. Is your structure effective? Is your decision-making process supporting your work? This kind of self-evaluation should be built into your structure. People want to be involved in community decision-making groups that are willing to take responsibility for their actions. Think about what needs to be in place to assess the progress of your partnership. What opportunities for feedback will you create? How will you respond to feedback? How will you regularly communicate progress both within the partnership and externally?

To ensure accountability, there should be clarity and consensus on any decisions made about how your partnerships will be structured. Everyone in the partnership should be invested in the results the community has chosen and be willing to align their interests and some level of resources, whether time or funding, towards achieving them. In some cases, depending on the nature of your partnership and the work you want to accomplish, you may want to formalize these decisions and commitments in written agreements. A partnership agreement, more formally known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), is a common vehicle for outlining the commitments and processes agreed upon by partners. This agreement would cover:

- Who will do what
- For whom
- Over what time period
- At what cost, if any
- To what standard of performance

See the activity, ***Developing a Partnership Agreement*** [Appendix] for more guidance and a ***Sample MOU*** [Appendix].

BUILDING AN ACCOUNTABLE PARTNERSHIP:

Making Connections White Center

For the last decade, *Making Connections* has been working to connect families in White Center outside Seattle, Washington to economic opportunities, supportive networks and more effective services. *Making Connections* was a 10-year initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation designed to demonstrate how communities can improve results for vulnerable children and families living in concentrated poverty. In 2001, White Center's residents founded the White Center Community Development Association (CDA), with support from *Making Connections.* The White Center CDA now leads efforts to achieve the following results in collaborating with local partners:

- families work, earn and save their way toward self-sufficiency
- young children are healthy, prepared to succeed in school and read proficiently by the end of third grade
- residents are authentic partners and leaders in family strengthening and community revitalization efforts

The CDA was able to build on the efforts of a group of partners, including local and state government representatives; service providers; grassroots community organizations; and resident leaders, that had come together to think about the conditions they wanted to change in White Center. A decision-making structure evolved over time as partners worked to align their interests towards White Center's results agenda. The partners committed to participating in small work groups formed around each result. These workgroups developed performance-based agreements that defined the targets and outcomes expected from their work. Partners also formed agreements with each other around sharing data and then analyzed the data to make decisions about aligning existing strategies and developing new ones. Residents formed a group of "trusted advocates" that worked to influence institutional partners about the needs of their community and to ensure that residents were trained and supported as full partners in the work. Staff were also assigned to help coordinate the work overall, support the work groups and analyze data.

A central value of the CDA continues to be the belief that the community itself must be the leader of any community change effort. Community partners and residents serve on the CDA board. The CDA has also instituted several different mechanisms for ensuring accountability to the community for both the services it provides and whether results are being achieved. They include:

Community planning. At the beginning stages of the work in White Center, the CDA helped to develop a comprehensive community plan that articulated the community's desired results. The CDA continues to use this as an accountability mechanism. Through an annual neighborhood plan, residents and partners continue to rearticulate their community's vision and make decisions about what supports and resources are needed to be successful.

Community building. At the heart of the CDA's work are efforts to involve residents in year-round community engagement, mobilization, advocacy and leadership opportunities. This includes an annual community summit to inform residents of the CDA's progress and receive feedback and opportunities to volunteer and network.

Community story-telling and documentation. Through ongoing evaluation and tools like community report cards, residents and partners use data to track progress, develop appropriate solutions, and influence necessary policy or systems change.

What Skills Do We Need To Work Together Effectively?

Your partnership will have to work to develop the skills necessary to face the challenges that often arise when you bring diverse groups together. There may be groups in your community who do not have a history of working together or who have not had positive experiences with each other. There may also be those in the community who don't have the skills needed to collaborate with others on an equal standing. Your partnership can build this leadership capacity and provide professional development in the community while also creating a safe space that encourages and respects multiple viewpoints and experiences.

Everyone should understand what it means to:

BE an effective collaborative leader

PRACTICE active listening, create a trusting environment and show respect when interacting with others

USE effective negotiation methods to find common ground and resolve disagreements

The community partnership can nurture and support these skills by providing opportunities for leadership development through training and workshops. This training does not have to be formal. Many communities have found creating mentoring opportunities between stakeholders within the partnership or connecting with other community partnerships for shared peer learning to be effective.

Collaborative Leadership

It is important that everyone in the partnership see him/herself as a collaborative leader. A collaborative leader understands that shared leadership and accountability are needed for the community to reach its results. An effective collaborative leader has particular knowledge, skills and attitudes. These are captured in the chart below:

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES
Collaborative leaders need to understand:	**Collaborative leaders need the ability to:**	**Collaborative leaders need to value:**
Their own strengths and weaknesses	Communicate in a non-threatening way	The local decision-making process
Their own values and interests —what they are passionately committed to creating and why	Frame an issue	A focus on results and results-based accountability
Results-based decision-making	Generate trust	Diversity and inclusion
The community's relationships, assets and interests	Facilitate meetings	The strengths and challenges of families and communities
Issues of power and equity	Create safety so that people can take risks	The experiences of those who have been part of the traditional services system
That community change is not a linear process	Use interpersonal skills to deal with all people	Youth as resources and stakeholders
The levers of change and how to move them	Relate to people	Community members as knowledgeable about what is best for their community
How systems interact in the community	Share power	Data as a means of supporting decision-making
Child, youth and family well-being	Prioritize and manage time	A range of funding and resources, including informal and in-kind supports
	Listen and hear clearly from diverse voices	Making better use of existing resources
	Speak in a way that respects the interests of others and provides clarity in the dialogue	
	Create win/win negotiation and reciprocal relationships	
	See and create diverse opportunities for people to make contributions	
	Ensure that everyone follows through on their commitments	
	Figure out where the partnership is in achieving its goals and what the appropriate next steps should be	

Active Listening, Building Trust and Showing Respect
To establish some ground rules for how you want to work together, you should have a discussion in the community about how people treat each other and how they want to be treated. Individuals often have certain values and principles in mind as they interact—even if they are unspoken. Talking about these values is an important way for people to better understand each other and to think about how they might act differently. Some important values for your partnership to embody are listening to each other, building trust, and communicating in ways that make people feel respected.

For an activity to help you and your partners practice active listening skills, see ***Listening Appreciatively*** [Appendix].

TIPS FOR ACTIVE LISTENING	TIPS FOR BUILDING TRUST	TIPS FOR SHOWING RESPECT
Do not interrupt or speak while others are talking Be attentive to the speaker Look, act and be interested Step into the shoes of the person speaking and imagine their viewpoint Ensure your understanding by asking questions and rephrasing key points	Keep in mind that trust takes time Keep your commitments and do what you say you will do. Be clear about what you are unable to do Be honest with each other about what you think or believe Agree on what is confidential and then honor that agreement Support the open exploration of ideas Support decisions that are made by consensus even if you didn't initially agree Call out activities that don't build trust such as trying to influence others for personal gain, engaging in "backroom" discussions, finding scapegoats and failing to follow through when others are depending on you	Encourage diversity of thought by showing appreciation for different beliefs, values and experiences Create opportunities for relationship building on a one-on-one level Recognize what is important to others even if you don't agree Acknowledge and celebrate cultural differences Make sure that information is available in all the languages of your neighbors Develop multilingual documents and use interpreters Acknowledge people's needs such as making arrangements for food or childcare or making sure the elderly and people with disabilities have access to opportunities for involvement Respect people's time by holding punctual, organized meetings

Effective Negotiation

Finding a solution that everyone can support, even if some people do not agree, requires working together to find common ground. By thoroughly exploring issues, concerns and viewpoints, community partners will feel that their views are heard and valued. Use win-win negotiations to reach agreements. This kind of decision-making is a way to set priorities, encourage everyone to participate and solve disagreements. It also leaves room for constructive criticism, which can be important for moving the work forward. Allowing for diverse opinions, even when there is disagreement, enables everyone to explore different views, bringing the strengths and weaknesses of people's proposals into focus and uncovering underlying attitudes and thinking. By thoroughly exploring issues, concerns and viewpoints, community partners will feel that their views are heard and valued.

Some of the key steps to effective negotiation are:

ASK PEOPLE WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO THEM. While talking about what they need and care about, people need to communicate as specifically as possible and acknowledge each others' interests. Through discussion, people note which interests they have in common and where they have differences of opinion.

AVOID TAKING STANDS. Often when people try to make decisions together, individuals feel like they have to take a stand to protect what's important to them. For example, a neighbor may feel like she needs to issue an ultimatum—what she will or will not put up with in the neighborhood. When people take positions like this, disputes can turn personal and the neighborhood can become splintered. An alternative is to explore your shared interests as well as your differences – without taking stands. By focusing on what people want – what's most important to them – you can avoid situations where individuals feel that they need to defend their positions at all costs.

IDENTIFY CONFLICTS. At the same time, the idea is not to sweep disagreements under the rug. Calmly exploring areas of disagreement and conflict helps make good decisions and prevent friction and misunderstanding later.

BE OPEN TO POSSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES. Being open to possibilities is like brainstorming: no idea is "wrong." By opening the door to a variety of possibilities and opportunities, instead of focusing on only one "right" way, a more lively and interesting dialogue will lead to a negotiated agreement.

CREATE "WIN-WIN" SOLUTIONS. Look for options that everybody can live with—that meet everyone's minimum needs. Even better, see if you can find options that will benefit everybody. Then fine-tune the strategy until everyone agrees it will work.

Tool: Self-Assessment: Where are we now?

CHAPTER 2: CREATING ACCOUNTABLE PARTNERSHIPS

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Do we understand why it is important to engage multiple stakeholders in this work?				
Does our partnership reflect the diversity of the community?				
Do we have buy-in from multiple sectors in the community?				
Do we have a welcoming and open environment?				
Are we developing an organizational and operational structure that supports our unique situation?				
Are we developing a process for decision-making?				
Do we have a system for ensuring that the lead partners are accountable to each other?				
Do we have a system for ensuring that the lead partners are accountable to the community?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

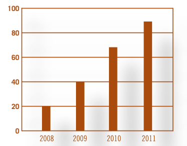
QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Are we discussing a plan for data and evaluation?				
Are we clear about the roles of partners?				
Are residents actively involved in this work?				
Are we clear about the role of residents in this work?				
Are we identifying opportunities for residents to be leaders in this work?				
Are we clear about the responsibilities of each partner?				
Is each partner contributing to the partnership's efforts?				
Do we have formal or informal agreements in place about the roles, responsibilities and contributions of partners?				
Do we provide partners and community members with skill-building on how to work together?				
Do we provide partners and community members with leadership training opportunities?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

3 USING DATA TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

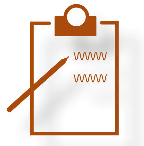
Data is at the heart of what we call community-based results-based accountability—an approach that creates a **culture of accountability in communities by ensuring that everyone takes responsibility for achieving results.** Building your data capacity is important for several reasons. Using data to understand the needs and assets of your community will help you better identify what supports and services are needed to improve well-being. Focusing on data will also ensure accountability by putting you and your partners on the hook for demonstrating the progress of your strategies and showing how your overall efforts are improving conditions in the community. By tracking the progress of your strategies you can make real-time decisions about how to best achieve results and increase your credibility in the community by showing your commitment to doing what works.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO:



Use data to help assess and analyze the needs and strengths of your community

Monitor the performance of your community's strategies



Evaluate progress towards reaching your community's results

What Kinds of Data Do We Need to Collect?

Having a discussion about results in your community will naturally raise a lot of concerns about the challenges impacting your community's well-being. To develop strategies that can make an impact, you will have to dig deep to understand what is really going on in your community. One way to do this is to undertake a **needs assessment**. This will help you understand the current conditions of people in your community as well as evaluate whether your community has the resources and opportunities available to change those conditions. Data collection is at the center of this and can be obtained from various sources. Beyond data collection, a needs assessment allows you to bring the community into a dialogue about what is going on for them and their neighbors.

As a first step, you'll need to establish a "baseline" and project trends for the conditions you are seeking to improve. A baseline is like a picture of where your community is now and projecting trends gives you a sense of where it is headed if you stay on the current course. Specifically, establishing your baseline and looking at trends enables you to:

DESCRIBE current conditions of children, families and communities

THINK ABOUT conditions historically in multi-year terms not just one year or point-to-point comparisons

FORECAST potential future directions, such as a best-case scenario, a steady-course scenario and a worst case scenario

COMMUNICATE an expectation about what could happen in the future with or without concerted action by the community

Baseline data should also show you how different populations in the community are impacted and might fare in the future, so it is important to disaggregate data based on variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, age and geographic location.

Working through the ***Data Collection Framework Planning Worksheet*** can help you think about the kinds of information you might need for each of your result areas, what timeframe you want to consider and the type of data you need to examine. The ***Data Source List Planning Worksheet*** can help you begin developing a source list for what you need. Both tools can be found in the Appendix.

As you're looking for data, make a list of any gaps. You can then use your list to make a plan for getting the missing information. You might fill in gaps by considering what information could substitute for the data you are looking for. For example, a community that was interested in measuring early literacy rates for children might look at how often parents or caregivers read to young children as a proxy as there are no standard data sources for measuring early literacy.

DEFINITION

Qualitative versus Quantitative

Understanding the different types of data that you may encounter and their limitations will be important in helping you to later analyze it.

Quantitative data answers the questions of how much or how many. This data can often be found through agencies, system partners, foundations, prior research and reports. Sometimes the quantitative data you want may be unavailable or may be available in a format that is not helpful to you. For example, information may be massed together as aggregate data, such as teen pregnancy rates for the entire population, when you really would like disaggregated data, like teen pregnancy rates for distinct categories like age or race. Keep in mind when comparing data that different systems use different data definitions or collect on different time frames.

Qualitative data is narrative information, opinions and beliefs about a given topic. This data is an important compliment to the quantitative facts, figures and statistics you collect and can help fill in information gaps. Through your conversations with community members, important or difficult issues for the community will surface, along with opportunities and ideas for how to improve family and child well-being. Qualitative data often come from interviews, surveys, focus groups and community workshops.

Asset Mapping

As you collect data, you'll also want to consider the strengths and assets that currently exist in your community. One approach for taking an inventory of your neighborhood's strengths and resources is to use **asset mapping.** Instead of focusing on what your community is missing, asset mapping helps you think about what your community has to offer. The process itself involves a careful block-by-block approach to finding out what resources might be available in the community. Your map will give you an insight into the connections or relationships between residents and the organizations and institutions that exist within the neighborhood. Typically your asset map can be divided into the following sections:

Individual Assets. Everyone in your neighborhood has something to offer. Taking the time to identify the positive individual skills, knowledge and talents of your community will be important. For example, residents may offer informal child care, check in on ill neighbors, read to others, cook meals, help each other in offices, repair cars or homes, style the hair of elders or people who have difficulty leaving their homes, play music, create beautiful artwork or organize activities. Pulling this vital information together will help you figure out what the individual residents in your neighborhood bring to the community decision-making table.

How do you keep track of individual assets? One-on-one interviews, door-to-door canvassing, small group discussions and surveys can help you discover the strengths of the people of your neighborhood.

Informal Networks, Groups and Associations. Many resident-driven efforts begin with small groups of people who already meet regularly for a specific purpose. Groups of people that get together within your neighborhood might include parents who chat in the park while their children play or people who get together to play cards or watch televised sporting events. Luckily, every neighborhood has groups that are potential sources of support for residents. These associations can help to spread the word about the results you're trying to achieve. It's up to you tap into this resource.

How do you keep track of informal networks? Gather information from participants, including the reasons they get together, their activities, locations and how many people can participate.

Local Institutions. Every neighborhood has established organizations and infrastructure known as institutions. These institutions often use, control or influence a lot of resources such as buildings, paid staff, volunteers or members, equipment, furniture, supplies and transportation and utilities. For example, residents that have joined your community effort may need a place to gather for meetings. An institution like a school or a health clinic can serve as a perfect place. Mapping the location of institutions in your neighborhood will help you to keep track of the available resources. Typically, institutions include schools, places of worship, hospitals, parks, libraries, grocery stores and community colleges. Be creative in identifying local institutions that can best support your work.

How do you keep track of local institutions? Gather a list of institutions that may be able to support your action plan even those that you might not traditionally think of as institutions like doctor's offices or health clinics. Remember, it's important to "think outside the box."

As you make plans for data collection, remember the role that your partners can play in providing data and think about what the value-add of contributing data will be for them. Having a clearer picture of what the needs and resources in your community are can have the immediate impact of revealing low-cost or no-cost strategies that your community can implement now to address an identified problem. Residents will be interested in what the data says about their experiences in the community and sharing solutions to get better outcomes for their families. Residents can also help decide what tools might be best for gathering information. If surveys are being used, community members can help determine if the surveys developed are relevant. They can offer advice and ideas about language, jargon and questions that should (or shouldn't) be used in the survey instruments. With proper training, residents can also collect data themselves within the community as you may find that some residents are more willing to share personal stories with other residents. Having better data will also help partners operating programs better understand their clients and evaluate the services they are providing. As we will discuss later in this chapter, data can also help your partners identify how they might improve outcomes for the populations they are working with and how to better align their resources with solutions that work.

How Do We Analyze the Data?

Analysis of data is as important as collection. Once you have the baseline data, you will want to understand what has contributed to this picture. To truly understand the current conditions in communities, you need to understand what happened in the past and what is happening now. Every community is the product of numerous experiences that influence and shape the conditions and opportunities available to residents. These experiences, both positive and negative, have an underlying story that may not initially be clear. This kind of analysis is called finding the “story behind the data” (sometimes more formally called a “segmentation analysis”). You’ll want to ask why the baseline looks the way it does and whether and why different groups of families and individuals in your neighborhood are experiencing similar or different results.

To answer these questions, you have to identify the root causes of the current conditions in your neighborhood. In other words, what is the primary source or origin of the issue/problem? What seems to be contributing to good results and bad? In trying to understand what the root causes are, you will have to investigate:

- The characteristics of those experiencing different kinds of results (e.g. age, gender, race or ethnic group)
- Any location in the community where good or bad outcomes seem more concentrated
- Risk factors that contribute to poor outcomes
- Promotive/protective factors that contribute to good results
- Attitudes and beliefs of community members
- Systemic or institutional practices that are correlated with good or bad outcomes for different populations

Make sure that you discuss your data findings with community partners, particularly residents. Ask them what they think the numbers mean and find out which root causes seem to be particularly relevant for the community and why. You may find gaps in perceptions between certain groups in the community, like youth and adults. Or you may find a lot of passion about an issue in your conversations after the data has been collected that was not as visible before.

DEFINITION

RISK FACTORS conditions that put children/and or families at risk and increase the likelihood of negative outcomes, e.g. inadequate health care, poverty, substance abuse.

PROMOTIVE/PROTECTIVE FACTORS conditions that help children and families develop resilience to avoid or overcome risks, e.g. a family life with a high degree of love and support, a caring and encouraging environment or strong ties to a faith community.

As you analyze the data, keep the following considerations in mind:

Look for alignment between facts/figures and perceptions/beliefs. Compare facts, figures and statistics to what families living in the area have to say about their needs, assets and dreams. When all sources of information—whether statistics, surveys, interviews or focus groups—point to the same issue, then alignment and agreement exists. Sometimes, however, the data are not in alignment. For example, certain demographic groups may experience something that is not present in the larger community—like a focus group of senior citizens bringing up concerns that are not experienced by the larger population. Don't ignore an issue just because alignment does not exist. Sometimes alignment doesn't exist because you need to clarify or gather additional information. Ultimately, the community needs to work together to understand how the data relates to the results you all want to achieve.

Pay attention to connections. During the data-collection process, some interesting information may come up that will connect issues and/or reveal unintended consequences of policies and programs that are supposed to improve results for families. For example, a workforce development council may report an increase in single mothers gaining employment while schools may report an increase in student tardiness and absences. Perhaps this indicates that previously unemployed mothers are now leaving the house earlier than their school-age children, leading to more school tardiness and absences. As information and perspectives are gathered, pay attention to their interconnectedness. These are opportunities to develop interventions across issues, not just within single issues.

Use comparative data. Comparative data are often important to truly understand how critical an issue is to the community agenda. For example, if the infant mortality rate in a particular community is 15.5 per 1,000 live births, what does this mean? Does it mean that this community has a serious level of infant mortality? To fully understand this, the information would need to be compared with population statistics for other similar communities, the state average or national statistics.

Beware of the downside of data. Just as information helps us understand an issue, data can also misrepresent or obscure the real meaning of an issue. Keep in mind certain red flags. For example, the sample group or the numbers reviewed may be too small to draw a solid conclusion about the information gathered. Or you may find that the data you are reviewing was manipulated to emphasize a particular point for political or personal reasons. Data-collection instruments may also vary in terms of how a question is posed and that can skew responses so that, even on the same topic, results cannot be fairly compared. Be sure to confirm and validate data with the community.

UNCOVERING THE STORY BEHIND THE DATA

Institutional Analysis

CSSP has found Institutional Analysis (IA) to be a critical tool for uncovering the story behind why families of color—particularly African American and Native American families – are overrepresented and underserved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. IA combines quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to understand what factors at the organizational and structural level contribute to poor outcomes for particular groups of children and families involved in these systems. Through extensive qualitative data collection and analysis, the IA process enables partners to understand what a family needs, compare that with what the agency is designed to offer, and identify what may be contributing to the disconnect between the two.

In Fresno County, California, an examination of the quantitative data from the Department of Social Services (DSS) revealed that African American children were experiencing disparately long stays in foster care. The IA team (made up of CSSP staff, leadership of the Fresno DSS and other national and local partners) decided to focus its qualitative data gathering and investigation around understanding: 1) how these long stays come about, and 2) how these children and youth's needs for stability are being met. Through exploring several cases in depth, reading multiple case files and conducting various types of interviews and observations with children, their families and workers, the investigative team formulated findings around the experiences of African American families involved with the system and the ability of the agency to meet their needs. The team found multiple problems at the institutional level, including that agency policies, rules and regulations are not designed to promote timely permanency and do not support caseworkers in being able to advocate for families. In response to the findings, Fresno County started taking action immediately to improve outcomes for African American families.

> "The Institutional Analysis showed us how and where our system could be improved. One of the biggest changes we've made is reassessing agency structure and policies to encourage maximum family engagement. That included changing visitation hours and adding locations so they were feasible for children attending school and for their working parents. The analysis continues to help us take steps toward organizational change that is helping us build partnerships, leverage resources, secure funds and ultimately empower our entire staff to better serve all communities."
>
> –Catherine Huerta, Director of Fresno County DSS

How Will We Know Whether We Are Achieving Our Results?

In **Developing a Results Agenda**, we discuss how your community can develop a results agenda that will drive the community's efforts to improve conditions for families, children, and adults. Remember that a result describes a condition that you want to exist in your community. Once you have identified your results, you will also need to select **indicators** that you can use to measure your community's progress in achieving desired results. Your indicators help you answer the question of whether you are doing that.

For any given result there are dozens of possible indicators that can be used to measure progress. For example, for the result *children are healthy and prepared to succeed in school,* one indicator might be *the percent of students with selected preventable chronic health conditions at school entry* and another might be *percent of children deemed ready by local school assessments at time of school entry.* Your community will have to work together to choose the indicators that are most relevant. We recommend that you select no more than three to five indicators per result.

In addition to being locally relevant, your indicators should represent data that can be accessed quickly and communicated to the general public. According to Mark Friedman in *Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough,* one way to think about this is to use the following criteria:

> **Does the indicator have communication power?** When the public and other stakeholders look at the data will they easily understand how the kids and youth in your community are doing?
>
> **Does the indicator have "proxy" power?** Does a clear relationship exist between the indicator and the result it represents? Does this indicator tend to move in the same direction as other potential indicators for this result area? If so, it can often be seen as a proxy for other important indicators as well.
>
> **Does the indicator have data power?** Is the data available on a frequent enough basis that you can use it to make real-time decisions about your strategies and report your progress regularly to the community and funders?

Developing your data capacity should be geared towards also helping your community track progress on its indicators and movement towards better results. You should be asking – how are we doing on our indicators? What changes are we seeing? Who are the partners that have a role in doing better? What works to move these indicators? Is there something else we could be doing?

How Do We Monitor Our Performance?

Your community also needs to use data for "performance accountability," meaning to measure and evaluate program outcomes. Performance accountability deals with how well your programs and strategies are doing. To measure performance, you should be asking questions like, how much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off? This is important to figuring out what programs and services are currently working and to be able to measure the impact of new interventions as you develop strategies to improve results.

Example: Performance Measures and Indicators Working Together

Remember that performance measures are about how well a specific program, agency or service system is working. Indicators are about measuring your progress in achieving results. Both are vital pieces of Results-Based Accountability.

RESULTS	CHILDREN READY TO ENTER SCHOOL
Indicators	What percentage of children is enrolled in pre-school programs? What percentage of young children has been immunized on time? What percentage of children is passing the kindergarten readiness test?
Performance Measures	How many children participated in mentoring programs that provided tutoring services? How many hours of mentoring per student were provided? How many students improved their test scores after mentoring? What percentage of children improved their reading level after the mentoring program?

You should have a system in place for collecting and tracking data on how your interventions are affecting those served and to evaluate your programming over time. This is about both learning and accountability. One way to track this is through a comprehensive data system. The purpose of a data system should be to help the community:

IDENTIFY existing, emerging or unmet needs in neighborhoods across the community

PLAN strategies and specify the type, scope and delivery of services, supports, and opportunities that are needed to improve specific results

ASSESS strategies and describe the extent to which they are working or not working

SUPPORT informed decisions about how to move forward

ENCOURAGE dialogue between stakeholders to explore common interests and make joint decisions about strategies and resources

To fulfill these goals and inspire confidence in the data you use to make key decisions, your system needs to be capable of producing credible, accurate and relevant reports. In addition, it needs to be user-friendly and practical to administer. Given the interconnectedness of the experiences of people in your community, you will also want a system that can be integrated with and connected to other local data systems that collect information about the community. As developing an effective data system takes time and resources, your community partnerships can play a huge role in helping to provide technical expertise to ensure that you have an integrated system.

As you begin to track performance you should think of your data in both the long-term for overall evaluation and in the short-term. Thinking in the short-term means you can use your data to make adjustments to the work in real-time to get better outcomes. Your data may also tell you how you could reallocate or realign resources to improve outcomes. By showing what's working, data can be the impetus for gaining new resources and changing the way services and systems operate in your community.

Tool: Developing a Data System

STEP 1: IDENTIFY NEEDS

What data will be necessary to regularly track and document progress towards results?

Will you need to track individual level data?

What demographic data is relevant?

Will you be able to capture longitudinal data?

Is there any other data that your community feels is important to track?

What level of staff capacity or expertise exists to manage a data system?

Who will need to input and access data?

How frequently will you need to input and access data?

What kind of security needs to be in place to protect the data?

STEP 2: IDENTIFY REQUIREMENTS

Are you under any obligations from laws or partnership agreements?

What data are required from funders?

What timing considerations exist such as budget cycles, legislative schedules or community partnership meetings?

STEP 3: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

Can you link with existing data systems of partners?

What technical expertise and support exists in the partnership or the broader community?

Is there new hardware and software technology that you can take advantage of?

Is there funding that can be accessed to support your data system?

RESIDENTS USING DATA TO IMPROVE SERVICES

The Customer Satisfaction Project

CSSP's Customer Satisfaction work is aimed at transforming residents in vulnerable communities into empowered consumers who demand quality services. It borrows from the private sector, where customers decide which companies thrive, which goods and services are available and even how they are provided. This work has three main components:

- Engaging and educating residents as consumers
- Developing a neighborhood consumer advocacy group to capture consumer feedback
- Creating partnerships between public and private agencies to use this feedback to improve services

Through this work, a new accountability system is created. Residents are asked if they got what they needed and if the services were effective and delivered with respect. As residents collect and report this data about their experiences publicly, service providers become more responsible and accountable to effectively serving their needs. Residents are trained to become empowered consumers who take action to demand quality services.

This approach has taken off in Atlanta, Georgia where residents of three low-income Atlanta neighborhoods are conducting research, collecting data and analyzing their experiences with quality of child care services and nutritional goods. Accomplishments include:

- A Customer Satisfaction Network, which provides a forum for residents to report about their service experiences and support each other in how to handle encounters with service providers. The network is monitored and supported by a Consumer Advocacy Group (CAG).
- A partnership with the Morehouse School of Medicine that has produced data showing the discrepancies in service provisions to residents in these neighborhoods, which residents can use to make the case for more quality services.
- A series of checklists for residents to use to help them understand and document whether they are receiving high quality child care services and nutritional goods and products.

> "What the Consumer Advocacy Group is doing is very important because it gives residents a voice to speak out and to say what we want in our community as far as grocery stores, child care or service providers. Some of us feel like we don't have a voice and this work is important because residents can finally speak out and be heard."
>
> –Stephanie Flowers, Atlanta Resident and CAG Member

How Do We Share Data?

The data you collect should be shared with the entire community. As we discuss in **Creating Accountable Partnerships**, this work cannot be done alone. Keeping people informed and engaged about the work is central to increasing accountability. For many community members and stakeholders, data can be a call to action, attracting new leaders who will commit to improving well-being in the community. You will want to consider multiple ways of reaching a broad cross-section of your community on a regular and frequent basis to show your progress in moving your indicators and to discuss any decisions that need to be made based on that data. When discussing your progress, be open about what is working and what is not working and use language that is easily understood and jargon free.

See ***Reporting Data Findings*** [Appendix] for different methods of sharing information with the community.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS AROUND DATA:

The Family and Children First Council in Montgomery County, Ohio

For more than a decade, the Family and Children First Council (FCFC) in Montgomery County, Ohio has collected data on the health and well-being of its residents. Established in 1995 in accordance with state law, the FCFC serves as the county's lead collaborative that addresses issues affecting children and families. The group created a set of results that captured their vision of Montgomery County as a thriving and healthy community. For each result, FCFC tracks selected indicators to measure the community's progress.

This extensive data is used to promote community conversations around what strategies or interventions are needed to improve outcomes for children, families and communities. Annually, the FCFC releases a progress report, which allows the community to consistently assess where they are in the process of achieving each desired result. The report highlights the work of the FCFC's Outcome Teams, who are largely tasked with collecting data and identifying the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the community. FCFC supports these community conversations by providing the following:

- Trendlines for each indicator
- Comparisons between local, state, and national trends
- Analyses of the stories behind the trendlines
- Information on what has (or has not) worked well in similar efforts in other communities
- Information on how to engage potential partners in the effort to achieve better results
- Support on how to build consensus for action

Tool: Self-Assessment: Where are we now?

CHAPTER 3: Using Data to Achieve Results

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Do we understand the purpose of data as a tool for accountability?				
Do we understand what kinds of data we need to collect?				
Are we developing a plan for collecting data?				
Are we identifying potential data sources?				
Do we know what a needs assessment is?				
Are we planning to conduct a needs assessment?				
Do we know the baseline data for our community?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Are we planning to examine the root causes behind issues and problems identified in the community?				
Do we understand the rationale behind asset mapping?				
Are we planning to engage in an asset mapping process?				
Are we involving stakeholders and residents in data collection?				
Are we developing a plan for analyzing data?				
Do we understand the difference between measuring progress towards our results versus measuring the performance of our strategies?				
Are we developing indicators for each of our results?				
Are we developing performance measures for our strategies?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Do we understand the importance of a data system?				
Are we developing a plan for implementing a data system?				
Do we know what data we need to track?				
Do we have staff or volunteers who can analyze the data?				
Are we developing mechanisms for using data in real time to improve performance?				
Do we know how we will share data with the community?				
Are we identifying ways that we will regularly report data to the community?				
Are we creating opportunities for the community to provide feedback?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don’t Know

4 DEVELOPING YOUR ACTION PLAN

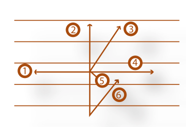
An action plan consists of a set of interventions or strategies that can improve results for your community. By doing your research and working together to think creatively and strategically about what will work for your particular neighborhood, you can come up with a plan for addressing any issue—from school dropout rates to teen pregnancy.

With this information, **you can produce a comprehensive action plan for implementing the supports, services and opportunities that your community feels are necessary to improve results.**

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO:

Involve community partners in strategy development

Find out what works by researching promising practices



Select strategies that are best aligned with your community's needs and desired results

How Do We Involve Community Partners?

In order to think about what strategies would be helpful to improve conditions in the community, you will need to understand the experiences of all the stakeholders. This means involving as many people as possible in helping to create your action plan. As discussed in **Developing a Results Agenda**, we encourage you to reach out to your community and learn more about what they need and desire. Getting everyone involved at the early stages of thinking about recommended strategies will also get people excited about helping to implement them later on.

In **Creating Accountable Partnerships** we discuss how neighborhood residents in particular are often best positioned to help understand the challenges your community is dealing with and what solutions are most needed. In addition, leaders and frontline staff of neighborhood organizations, government agencies and businesses, can and should be involved in the strategy development process. Some ways you could ensure participation is by:

LEVERAGING the relationships you have built in the community to attract others to the table;

HELPING potential partners understand the value of their involvement and how the results you are focused on are aligned with their own work; and

BEING CLEAR about the specific roles and responsibilities that everyone has agreed to.

How Do We Find What Works?

Once you have a good understanding of what services and programs already exist in your community and what the desired solutions are, you can begin to think of ways to fill in the gaps of what is needed. Research will be a key method for finding out what strategies could potentially work in your neighborhood. This will involve both gathering information on promising practices that other communities have implemented as well as analyzing the research about what is needed to improve outcomes for children and families. Local data, experience and wisdom should then inform what strategies would be most effective in your community specifically. The data you collect through the needs assessment and the asset mapping (**Using Data to Achieve Results**) will help you to identify and prioritize the strategies that would best meet the needs of your community. For example, through your asset mapping you may find that there are already existing programs in your community that are operating on a small scale but having a significant impact on the population being served. Taking that strategy to a larger scale might be what is needed to impact the conditions that your community is interested in.

When researching what has worked in other communities, the following questions can help you best assess whether these practices would meet your community's needs:

What activities and programs did other communities use to achieve their results?

- Are the other communities you are looking at focused on the same results that you are?
- Do the interventions you are considering match with what residents say that want and need?
- How did communities work together to implement these programs?
- What evidence exists to show these programs have been effective? Is there any available evaluation data? Are these programs supported by other research on improving outcomes?
- What resources did communities draw on to support these programs?

The three tools ***Researching Promising Practices*** [Appendix], ***Programs and Practices Assessment*** [Appendix] *and* ***Selecting Your Strategies*** [Appendix] can help you create an inventory of promising practices. The ***Researching Promising Practices*** [Appendix] tool will help you to develop questions to critically review and evaluate the information you gather. The ***Programs and Practices Assessment*** [Appendix] tool will allow you to describe the elements of each program or activity by compiling information such as location, population served and number of volunteers available. The ***Selecting Your Strategies*** [Appendix] tool will help you to determine what programs are already in existence and what programs and activities may be needed.

As you do your research, keep in mind your community's unique needs. Are there differences between other neighborhoods and yours such as demographics, geographic location and the kinds of resources available? These kinds of differences could have a large impact on whether certain programs would work the same or be as effective in your community. For example, what has been proven to be effective in an urban community might not work the same way in a rural community. However, even with these differences, there may be components of other interventions that you could draw on to inform your own decisions.

Tip: Examining Evidence-Based Practice

Increasing attention to "evidence-based practice" can have a significant impact on the way communities select interventions or programs. Evidence-based practice typically refers to programs, services and policies that have empirical evidence through randomized control studies. Focusing on interventions with a strong evidence base has helped many communities achieve better results while also attracting the support of public and private funders and key community stakeholders like local businesses. However, while it is always important to consider the evidence that supports particular programs or practices, remember that a comprehensive action plan should contain comprehensive strategies that reflect the unique needs and resources in your community.

Communities should therefore feel comfortable using the best research available when making the case for why certain strategies and interventions could improve outcomes. In many cases, it has not been possible to do a large scale evaluation of a program using a randomized control group and you may find that one of your proposed programs is not "evidence-based" as typically defined. However, there might be other data that demonstrates its effectiveness. For example, data from pre- and post-program evaluations is one way of showing whether or not a program has effectively produced positive outcomes for participants. Looking at what the research says about how to impact child and family outcomes could also inform your decision-making.

As you evaluate at different interventions, keep in mind the following:

- What gaps in services and resources were revealed through your needs assessment and asset mapping?
- What existing strategies, if expanded or further resourced, could fill those gaps?
- What interventions has the community identified as solutions?
- What does the research say about the challenges and opportunities that impact your results?
- Are there common themes and recommendations in the research that support your proposed interventions?
- What evidence-based practices have been proven to achieve the results you are seeking?
- Have those practices been shown to work with populations that are similar to those in your community?
- Have they been shown to work in neighborhoods that have characteristics like yours?
- Are there common elements that have made these practices successful? How would your interventions incorporate those elements?
- What kind of community infrastructure and capacity does the research suggest needs to be in place to ensure success?
- What resources would be needed to replicate the practice, bring it to scale in the community and sustain it over time?

How Do We Choose the Best Strategies?

As you begin to develop a comprehensive mix of potential strategies, each program or activity should be examined for its potential contribution to improving overall results. As you think about what might work in your community, keep in mind that putting in place new programs is not enough. Community partners need to work together to develop an array of services, supports and opportunities that are tailored to the needs of their communities.

In order to evaluate your strategies, we suggest coming up with selection criteria. Your criteria will allow you to prioritize the list of strategies that work best for you. In *Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough,* Mark Friedman suggests that the best strategies have four main criteria:

Specificity. Is the strategy about a specific action? For example, "everyone should have housing" is vague and not specific. Instead, "build 10 new units of low-income housing" is a specific action that can be implemented.

Leverage. Will it make a big or little difference? All strategies are not created equal. Some strategies will have a higher yield or a greater impact on your result. Evaluating the type of impact a strategy will have will be important.

Values. Is it consistent with your community's values? Your community may have come up with actions that are specific and have high leverage, but are not actually consistent with other values. Making sure that you select strategies that align with your desired results will be important.

Reach. Is it feasible to do it this year, next year or three to 10 years? Determining the reach of a particular strategy lets you know whether it can be done and by when. Your community should figure out a timeline for when a strategy can be successfully achieved.

As we have already emphasized in this chapter, you will also want to ensure that all community partners have the chance to give feedback on what strategies might work. Seek out those who have expertise in the particular strategies you are investigating. Talk to families as well as frontline workers that provide services about what they think is feasible and desirable. Ask residents and neighborhood leaders who have been in the community for a long time whether your strategies have been attempted in the past, and if so, what the pitfalls or accomplishments were. Ask leaders in the school district or local government what they think are the opportunities and barriers to implementation.

How Do We Put It All Together?

Careful planning takes the strategies your community has identified from the "drawing board" into operation. Your action plan is meant to be a dynamic and fluid document that will help you:

REMAIN focused on the results that your community is seeking to achieve

MANAGE programs and the supports needed to ensure effective implementation

DEVELOP timetables for when programs and activities are implemented

ASSIGN roles and responsibilities to ensure implementation

BE CLEAR about costs and resources needed to support your interventions

In developing your action plan, you should return to the results agenda that you developed and the conditions that you want to see changed in your community. Then you want to start getting very specific about how you will implement the selected strategies. One way to initiate that process is to work together to develop some criteria for prioritizing your strategies. For example, what your needs assessment and asset mapping tell you about the level of need and the resources available to certain populations in your community will help guide your decisions about how and to whom you direct your initial strategies.

Your action plan should also incorporate the tools and strategies discussed in **Using Data to Achieve Results** to make certain that you have a process in place for tracking the progress of your strategies to ensure effective implementation and improved results. In addition, as we discuss in **Focusing on Sustainability**, your action plan will be the basis for figuring out what you need to finance and where the resources could come from to do so. You'll also have to determine what potential policy or regulatory barriers would affect implementation.

These considerations will then help you think about how to implement your strategies at scale. For example, it might make sense to implement your program in phases. If your strategies are focused on children in school, based on your existing resources and capacity, your community may be more effective in implementation by starting with particular grades first and then expanding to additional grades over time. Or you could decide to follow a particular cohort of children across a developmental timeline (e.g. from kindergarten through high school), evaluating what works and then expanding your strategies to all children and youth in your neighborhood over time.

When making your decisions about your strategies, you want to be as specific as possible. Know the answers to questions like:

- What is your target group(s)?
- Will this program or activity be based in a particular location?
- What is the timing needed to operate your programs in terms of hours or length of operation?
- What quantity of staffing or client to staff ratio will be needed? What qualifications should staff meet? Can volunteers be used?

- What capacity (in terms of particular skills/expertise, relationships or resources like physical space) is needed to implement each of your strategies? Who in the community has this capacity?
- What will be the roles and responsibilities of particular partners during implementation?
- Who will provide management oversight and administrative support for implementation?

Ultimately, your goal is that the action plan be a roadmap for the neighborhood, serving as the basis for making operational, day- to-day decisions about how to deliver a system of services and supports for children and families. Remember that your action plan should be a fluid document. As your learn more through your data and as your resources expand, you will likely have to revisit your action plan and think about new and different strategies that could make a difference in your community.

STRATEGIES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

Baltimore's Leadership in Action's Success

In 2003, the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program (B-LAP) was launched in collaboration with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and New York University's Robert Wagner School for Public Service. Its mission was to accelerate the city's efforts to ensure that all Baltimore City children enter school ready to learn. Using a results-based approach, B-LAP has been tremendously successful in improving outcomes for children, families and communities.

Over an 18-month period, B-LAP participants represented more than 40 public and private organizations developed *Baltimore's Five-Year Action Plan for Achieving School Readiness.* First, B-LAP participants identified a set of results (i.e. children safe in their families and communities and children completing school) as well indicators to measure the progress of each desired result. Then, B-LAP working committees developed strategies with each committee selecting one strategy as a priority. Finally, these working committees were tasked with identifying action steps to implement each prioritized strategy. For example, B-LAP worked to achieve its prioritized strategy to conduct outreach to parents/caregivers of children under the age of five by distributing high-quality materials designed to promote early learning literacy to more than 6,000 caregivers.

B-LAP's success was noteworthy. The percentage of Baltimore City kindergartners rated as "fully ready" to learn more than doubled in three years, from 27 percent in 2003–04 to 58 percent in 2006–07, exceeding the original five-year goal of at least 52 percent by 2008–09. B-LAP was also instrumental in expanding the number of kindergarten programs in Baltimore City.

Tool: Self-Assessment: Where are we now?

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPING YOUR ACTION PLAN

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Do we understand the importance of an action plan?				
Are we involving community partners in strategy development and selection?				
Do we know how we will use data we collected through our community needs assessment and asset mapping to inform our strategy development?				
Are we surveying existing programs, services and activities to see what is already working in our community?				
Are we soliciting input on solutions from residents?				
Do we have a plan for examining the research on improving outcomes for children and families says?				
Do we have a plan for examining best practices?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Are we developing strategies that meet the community's unique situation, values, culture and capacity?				
Are we examining each strategy for its impact on each of our results?				
Are all partners providing feedback on strategies?				
Are residents providing feedback on strategies?				
Are service providers giving feedback on strategy selection?				
Do we understand the level of specificity that should be in our action plan?				
Do we know who our strategies are targeting?				
Are we identifying what staff or volunteer capacity we need to implement the plan?				
Do we know what resources and capacity we need to implement the plan?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

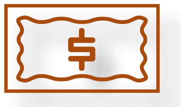
5 FOCUSING ON SUSTAINABILITY

From the start, your community should be thinking strategically about how you will sustain and take to scale your effort over time.

Ensuring sustainability requires you to be strategic and creative in using your resources and supports to achieve results.

Communities that have been able to sustain their work over time have not only focused on how to maximize and leverage financial supports but also on how to advocate for supportive policy measures and build community partnerships that can help champion their work. In this section we will focus specifically on financing and policy supports, it's important to understand that each stage of planning and implementation impacts the sustainability of your efforts.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO:



Create a financing plan that will help you sustain your work over time

Involve strategic partners in helping to sustain your work

Influence public policies to support your work

How Do We Create a Sustainable Financing Plan?

Your community will have to identify a wide range of resources to sustain your action plan. These will encompass all available sources of support for your community initiative from in-kind supports such as donated goods, services or meeting space to informal like partnerships with civic organizations or private businesses. The following steps can help you develop a plan that remains true to the results your community wants to achieve and maximizes all available resources:

1. Be Clear About What You Want To Finance

As we discuss in **Developing a Results Agenda**, having a clear vision for the results desired in your community serves as a roadmap of where your community is going and how you can get there. The plan we discuss in **Developing an Action Plan** should be clear about the activities, services and supports that you want to finance. As you refine your strategies and think about how to finance this work, some questions you should ask are: How many children and families will be served? How comprehensive will your plan be? What standards of quality are you looking for? How will you expand over time?

2. Estimating Costs Using a Results-Based Budget

Estimating costs means planning out all the expenses your community initiative will have along the way. Your program costs should include initial start-up, funds for ramping up activities, as well as ongoing operational costs. Also consider your infrastructure costs. These include: administrative, management, data and evaluation, communications, community engagement, leadership development, training and professional development and technical assistance. In addition, you should ask yourselves what capital costs you will have for facilities or equipment. Having a clear estimate of the costs of your initiative will help better identify the amount of resources you will need later on.

After you have identified the costs, your community will have to consider how to present this information in a budget. There are a number of different ways to organize your budget. A results-based budget allows you to track funding and spending along each of your result areas. It is created with the specific purpose of solely funding services, programs and activities that will impact your community's desired result. In other words, every dollar in your budget must be tied to your result. In most cases, communities use the results-based budget alongside a traditional budget or a "line item" budget.

3. Map Your Current Resources

Fiscal mapping is a process for matching current funding to results and understanding what your current resources are. It can be thought of in two parts: 1) identifying what resources currently support strategies that are producing results and 2) understanding what funding is available that could potentially be redirected to support your efforts. Combined with the cost estimates you have produced, you can use the results of your fiscal mapping to identify gaps in funding and figure out how resources can be more effectively coordinated, maximized or secured. Fiscal mapping will also help you to identify what partners need to be engaged to ensure the community's strategies are funded.

Tip: What a Results-Based Budget Can Do For You

Focus attention on results instead of separate activities or programs.

Demonstrate how resources are invested. This keeps residents and others informed of progress toward particular results.

Show that people are willing to work together to improve neighborhood results. The community has to be invested in whether resources are effectively put to use.

Understanding Existing Funding and Resources. Make an inventory of the resources you currently have to support your work. Include federal, state and local funding, private funding and in-kind donations. Once you know what resources you have, it's important to go a little deeper. What are your current sources of funding (both cash and in-kind contributions)? How flexible are these resources—are they restricted to certain programs or activities or can they be redirected to other purposes? How reliable are these resources—are they time limited or at risk of being cut or reduced? How strong is your overall funding mix—do you have a good balance of public and private funding, short- and longer-term support and restricted and flexible dollars?

Indentifying Your Core Funding Base. Existing institutional funds are often referred to as a core funding base. The core funding base consists of resources that are relatively permanent and reliable into the future. Typically, these are public resources mandated by federal, state or local governments for various services. Your core funding base might include the following funding streams:

- Local: county, public agency and school district budgets
- State: general revenue (appropriations to state agencies), other funds (fees, settlements, etc.), special funds (dedicated to a specific purpose)
- Federal: entitlement programs (Medicaid, IV E), federal block grants (TANF, child care development), grant programs, discretionary grants, loan programs, trust funds, tax credits

The ***Fiscal Mapping tool*** [Appendix] allows you to map your current resources alongside selected strategies. This process will help you to identify any potential funding gaps as well as any areas where you may be able to redirect resources.

4. Assess Your Gaps

After you have mapped out all available resources, your community should determine whether or not there are any gaps. Identify gaps by subtracting your current resources from your estimated costs. To better understand the nature of your community's resource needs, you should ask the following questions:

- What particular result areas, strategies or activities are we lacking support for?
- What categories of spending are we lacking resources for (e.g. management costs, data costs, professional development)?

- When do we see major gaps (first year implementation, a few years out, at the end of the decade)?
- Have we made an accurate estimate of both costs and current resources?

5. Identify Potential Financing Strategies

You will need to develop creative financing strategies that can help to fill the gaps you identified. As you do this, keep in mind that every neighborhood has different resource needs and your community will have to put in place the financing strategies best suited for your particular needs. Exploring all of your potential resource options will be vital to the success of your effort, particularly in a tough economic climate.

Your options include finding new funding sources as well as using existing resources in new ways that help you better achieve results. In order to identify potential new resources, you should be able to both keep track of and analyze public and private funding sources to see how they can best support your work. It is also critical that you think about how to leverage existing resources. Leveraging can take on many forms; its most basic definition is using existing funds to attract additional funds.

The following are additional options to think about:

Align resources to results. To maximize every dollar, focus your resources on what works. Invest in the strategies that your data supports. You and your partners can also leverage the funding that you all bring to the table by working together to align resource allocations to the strategies that are demonstrating success.

Reinvest savings. Identify funds that can be saved by realigning resources or reducing spending on inefficient programs and targeting those savings towards new or alternative supports and services.

Redirect resources. Restructure or repackage the use of funds or resources from one purpose to another. This especially works well for in-kind contributions. For example, a community partner may be able to devote staff time to working on the community's results agenda and strategies.

Maximize private funding. Private grants can be useful in both supporting programmatic strategies as well as helping build capacity and fill gaps not traditionally funded through public funding sources. Some federal grants also require a match from applicants and you can use cash and in-kind support from local foundations to meet those requirements. Make a list of national and local foundations that would support your strategies. Also think about what businesses in the community you could reach out to for support in terms of funding or in-kind resources.

Apply for new grants. We suggest having a process in place for keeping track of new grant opportunities as they become available. Once you identify possibilities, it's important to evaluate their usefulness. Understand what they fund, the funding cycle, any restrictions and matching requirements. Ensure that the funds can be used for the planned strategy. In your action plan, determine if the funding requires additional staff or more office overhead, reporting requirements or administrative costs.

Tool: Grant Funds Checklist

What is driving the need to apply for funding?

How would the grant impact your community now and in the future?

Would the grant impact different populations within the community?

Would community partners and leaders support a decision to apply?

Who in the community has a commitment to and an established track record of serving the grant program's target population?

Who has skills, experience, infrastructure and staff to manage and meet the required deliverables of the grant?

What Role Can Strategic Partnerships Play?

Developing **strategic partnerships** and attracting **key champions** will be an important aspect of your sustainable financing plan. Strategic partnerships can help you to advocate for a supportive policy measure or a much desired funding stream. From the outset, you should be absolutely certain that your partners' goals align with your community vision. As mentioned in **Creating Accountable Partnerships**, your community's partners should be chosen wisely. Look at the skills, experience and relationships your potential partners bring to the table. Be sure that everyone in the collaboration has a shared understanding and agreement about the specific roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Part of developing strategic partnerships is learning how to attract key champions. Key champions are individuals from various sectors of the state and local community that have power and influence over resources. They can bring in additional dollars from public and private resources or they can use their influence to increase visibility of your community change effort. State representatives, elected officials and board members are examples of those who have served as key champions in communities. When looking for champions, think about what assets (e.g. visibility, funding support, additional stakeholders) this new partner could bring to your work.

How Can We Influence Public Policy to Support Our Work?

We know that public policies can either help or hinder your ability to achieve your desired community results. This is why your community must work to build its capacity to influence as well as track and analyze public policies as they arise. Having a mobilized, unified community partnership of key stakeholders and informed residents can carry an enormous amount of influence with policymakers. Consider opportunities to use this influence and the capacity of your stakeholders to advocate for policies that are supportive of the results your community wants to achieve. Residents can also share their real experiences with policymakers about the opportunities and supports needed and how the community's efforts are really making a difference.

The following questions can help you begin thinking about how to influence supportive public policies:

- What policies—local, state and federal—are relevant to your community agenda?
- How will your community plan to track and analyze these relevant policies? What system will you use? How will you engage partners in the process?
- How do relevant policies directly or indirectly affect your community results?
- How can your strategic alliances or partnerships help you to influence public policies?
- How will you mobilize residents in the community to advocate for new policy changes?

Paying close attention to existing and proposed public policies at the local, state and federal level will be essential to sustaining your community's efforts in the long-run. For example, if your community seeks to prevent childhood obesity, you should pay attention to policies that support healthy eating or healthy community design. These policies—local, state or federal—will have a direct impact on your community effort. Use data to give concrete information on what is working on the ground and how a specific policy measure either helps or hinders the neighborhood's progress. This can help policymakers understand the level of resources needed in communities so they have more confidence that these investments they make through supportive policies are truly aligned with effective practices.

Tool: Self-Assessment: Where are we now?

CHAPTER 5: FOCUSING ON SUSTAINABILITY

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Do we understand the importance of a strategic financing plan?				
Do we have a results based budget?				
Are we mapping our fiscal resources?				
Do we know what our existing funding resources are?				
Do we know what our core funding base is?				
Do we know what gaps in funding exist?				
Are we identifying potential financing strategies to fill these gaps?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

QUESTION	Y	N	DK	What more can we do?
Are we considering a broad range of resources (e.g. public or private) to support this work?				
Do we understand the role of strategic partnerships?				
Do we understand the importance of recruiting key champions?				
Do we understand the importance of policy in sustaining out work?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don’t Know

CONCLUSION

Children do better when families are strong and families thrive in opportunity-rich, supportive neighborhoods. Community decision-making can be a catalyst for reshaping your neighborhood by building on the strengths of your community and cultivating partnerships with diverse stakeholders who are committed to success. This kind of neighborhood transformation cannot be achieved without building critical local capacities. Your community can work together to bring about change on a large scale by rallying around improving results, developing opportunities for partners to implement the community's agenda, creating mechanisms to ensure accountability and encouraging new thinking about how resources can be used.

Through your partnerships, you can begin to embed in your community a "whatever it takes" attitude about the kinds of conditions you all want to see for children and families. We know that this work can be challenging and requires considerable support and resources; but the results are transformative. We hope the resources in this guide have put you on a path towards creating and demanding greater and more equitable access to opportunities for families and children in your neighborhood.

Once again, CSSP would love to learn how your community has used this handbook to further your efforts to support child and family well-being. Please feel free to share any stories about how you're using community decision-making to transform your neighborhood. We also appreciate any feedback you have on how we can improve existing tools and resources as well as develop new ones to further support your efforts. Please e-mail us at communitychange@cssp.org.

APPENDIX

TIPS FOR HOLDING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

When preparing a meeting, always be clear about the desired results and communicate these to all of the partners invited. Be thoughtful about who you are inviting to the meeting. Meetings should be convenient for participation and everyone should be clear about how the information shared will be used. At the beginning of the meeting you should establish ground rules for how participants are going to work together. Keep track of all decisions made and proposals that were approved during the meeting. At the end of the meeting everyone should understand what the next steps are. If follow-up is required, the person responsible should be clearly identified and there should be a timeline for completing it. Make sure you start and end your meeting on time.

Thinking through the logistics of the meeting in advance, preparing an agenda and having assigned roles for those leading the meeting are also important to a meeting's success.

Planning meeting logistics. Think about the needs of those who will be attending and what you will be doing during the meeting. Some questions to consider are:

- When is the meeting?
- How long will the meeting run?
- Who needs to be in the room in order to address the results for the meeting?
- Has anyone been left out?
- What is the relationship of those you have invited to each other?
- How many people are expected?
- Does anyone have special needs?
- Will you be providing food?
- Will the meeting be family friendly?
- Will childcare be available?
- Where will the meeting be held?
- Is your venue accessible by public transportation?
- Will you reimburse people for transportation?
- What parking is available at or near the meeting's venue?
- Will you provide stipends for people's time?
- Who is the contact person?
- Who will facilitate?
- Who will present issues or proposals?
- What materials, media, supplies are needed?
- How will the meeting be advertised?

Preparing an agenda. Every meeting should have an agenda that lists the things you want to accomplish. Invite others to propose agenda items in advance and have a small group work to finalize the agenda. Discuss the results you want from the meeting and work backwards from there to put together an agenda by doing the following:

- Think about what you want to have achieved if the meeting is successful.
- Identify steps, discussions, decisions, and actions that will help achieve the meeting results.
- Put aside time on the agenda that corresponds to the importance of each step and the length and type of work/discussion it requires.
- Identify who will lead each part of the agenda.
- Figure out what information participants will need and find people or materials to provide the information.
- Try to anticipate possible conflict among participants and identify ways to deal with disagreements in advance.
- Include time at the end of the meeting for questions, to discuss next steps and to assign tasks to participants for follow-up to ensure progress and accountability to decisions made.

Assigning roles. Make sure you identify and get agreement from people in advance if you expect them to play a particular role during your meeting. Common roles include:

- *Facilitator* – A rotating position. Responsible for moving through the agenda that has been planned and for guiding discussion. The person who facilitates the meeting has two jobs: determining who talks when and encouraging discussion. The facilitator reminds people of their common goals and commitment to cooperation.
- *Doorkeeper* – Greets people as they enter and help latecomers find the place on the agenda.
- *Note taker* – Records discussions and keeps meeting minutes.
- *Scribe* – Records ideas and proposals for everyone to see (e.g. on an easel pad or whiteboard)
- *Timekeeper* – Keeps track of the time that has been planned for discussions and lets the facilitator know when time is running out.

A Balanced Membership

This activity can guide discussion on whether your partner membership is inclusive of the right stakeholders. Does it have the right composition to ensure a wide range of perspectives on issues? Use this as a guide to discuss:

Do we have a balanced membership?				How can we get a more balanced membership?
Inclusiveness: Does our membership represent:				
Discussion	Y	N	DK	Plans and Next Steps
Where residents live and work?				
Various racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds?				
A range of ages				
A mix of genders?				
Different work and life experiences?				
A range of values and beliefs?				
Passion about issues?				
Representation: Does our membership include representation from... (and are members representing their agencies or themselves)?				
Discussion	Y	N	DK	Plans and Next Steps
State government?				
Local government?				
Business?				
Non-profit organizations?				
Education?				
Service providers?				
Mental and public health?				
Faith community?				
Civic organizations?				
State or Local Government Requirements: Are there requirements that we must meet, such as...				
Discussion	Y	N	DK	Plans and Next Steps
Percentage of members from state or local government?				
Number of appointed members?				
Specific agency representation?				
Specifics in the bylaws?				
Other?				

Developing a Partnership Agreement

A Partnership Agreement works for each partner to:

- Set forth the mutual goals or results expected.
- Accept responsibility to pursue specific activities and meet obligations to the other partner(s).
- Specify which partner will do what, when, for what cost (if any) and at what standard of performance.

Key Questions to Answer	**Response**
Who are the partners entering into the agreement?	
What are the goals and expectations of this agreement?	
What are the beginning and ending dates of this agreement?	
What are the shared responsibilities of all partners?	
What are the responsibilities of each partner?	
What are the financing provisions?	
What is the method to assess progress toward goals?	
How frequently will partners meet to review progress?	
What are the steps to amend or cancel this agreement?	
Who is authorized to sign this agreement?	

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

[Name of Community Partnership]

And

[Partnering Organization(s)]

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes the [name of community partnership] between [list all partner organizations].

I. MISSION

Together, the Parties enter into this Memorandum of Understanding to mutually [describe the overall vision that the community partnership seeks to achieve].

Accordingly, [the organization(s)] operating under this MOU agree to the following:

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Describe the specific results that the partnership hopes to achieve, the target area and population that the partnership will focus on and the activities it will engage in.

III. COMMITMENTS

Each partner shall:

List all commitments that each organization must adhere to as a partner. Consider what is expected of each partner to move the work forward including time commitments and any resource commitments expected of all partners.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

List each partner and that partner's specific roles and tasks. Include specific funding and resources that the partner has agreed to commit.

V. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Insert agreements made about the data that the partnership will use to track performance and progress towards reaching results, who will collect and analyze this data, how that data will be shared within the partnership and with the broader community and how partners will use data to make real-time decisions about the partnership's efforts.

VI. TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING

The term of this MOU is for a period of [insert length of MOU], from the effective date of this agreement and may be extended upon written mutual agreement. It shall be reviewed at least [insert how often, usually annually] to ensure that it is fulfilling its purpose and to make any necessary revisions.

Insert agreed upon terms for the process of breaking the MOU agreement with any partner.

VI. Authorization

Each partner must sign their agreement to the terms of the MOU.

Your organization:

Name____ Date ____________

Title ____

Organization ____

Partnering Organization:

Name____ Date ____________

Title____

Organization____

LISTENING APPRECIATIVELY

Working in partnership with others will require you to develop your listening skills in order to build trust and make decisions. Building your listening skills will require you to be more of aware of how you listen and be cautious of actions like only hearing what you want to hear in a conversation or thinking of what to say next while someone is still speaking. This activity will help you to assess and improve your listening skills so that you are able to actively engage with others, appreciate what others are saying, and focus on fully hearing before reacting to someone's words.

1. Organize into pairs. You and your partner will take turns talking and listening.

2. Select one of the following topics and decide who will speak first.

   - What I find most difficult about working collaboratively
   - What I find most challenging about our partnership meetings
   - A day in my life with its ups and downs
   - My most unique travel experience

3. One person speaks for about 5 minutes about the selected topic and the other person listens. Then switch roles. (Topics selected may be the same or different.)

4. Each person should evaluate him/herself as the "listener," completing the first two steps of the worksheet that follows, ***Listening Appreciatively***.

5. Discuss your self-assessment with your partner.

6. Repeat the listening exercise with another topic. The "listener" should note any changes in listening behavior. Notice if you are curious about the speaker's assumptions, facts or point of view. Ask questions for clarification.

7. The listener should complete the last step of the worksheet with his or her partner. Discuss what you appreciated about the conversation. You may also want to discuss with your partner ways to improve your questioning.

8. Switch roles and repeat these steps.

9. Apply the three steps of listening appreciatively on a regular basis in your interactions with others.

Listening Appreciatively
Assessment and Discussion Worksheet

Step I: Become aware of how you currently listen.

Getting Ready to Enhance Listening Skills

Think about...

- How well do I currently listen?
- Are there times that I do not listen?
- Are there issues that cause me not to listen? Do I filter out information?
- What conversations are currently *not* working?
- What difference could my listening make in these conversations?
- If I change the way I listen, who would notice? What would they notice?
- In terms of listening, what has worked for me and what has not worked?

	Yes	No
Was I listening or reacting?		
Was I listening or thinking what to say next?		
Was I paying attention or was my mind wandering?		
Was I listening with an open mind?		
Was I curious about what was being said?		
Step 2: Recognize what to listen for.		
	Yes	No
Did I have assumptions about the topic?		
Did I make assumptions about the speaker's viewpoint?		
Did I have preconceived ideas about the topic?		
Did I jump to conclusions?		
Step 3: Use effective questions to listen appreciatively.		
	Yes	No
What inquiry questions did I use?		
Were my questions judgmental?		
Were my questions threatening?		

Data Collection Framework Planning Worksheet

This worksheet will help you to discuss, plan and capture information about community conditions. For each topic area, discuss the geographic boundaries for the search, the time frames and type of information needed. Anticipate potential challenges in obtaining available data and possible solutions.

Issue/Problem or Topic Area		
Geographic Boundaries	Timeframes	Type of Information
Potential Challenges	Potential Challenges	Potential Challenges
Possible Solutions	Possible Solutions	Possible Solutions

Data Source List Planning Worksheet

This worksheet will help you to create a list for collecting data about community conditions. Think of as many sources for the information as possible. For each source, note a contact person, the type of information available, the time period for which the information is available and the cost for retrieval (if any).

Data Source:

Contact Person:

Type of Information Available:

Time Period:

Cost to Retrieve:

Reporting Data Findings

There are many ways that you can report your progress to the community. In considering different options, make sure that you know your audience. For example, business partners tend to want the “bottom line,” whereas public services partners may be interested in more details about how the strategies work. Most families will want to know, in plain language, what the data means for their children.

Means	Purpose	When to Use
Reports	To present in-depth information regarding your work	Minimum annually; could also use to report on significant changes related to results agenda
Newsletters	To keep residents, partners, and constituents updated by developing a “following”	Monthly
Report Cards	To promote shared responsibility and establish a call for action; also ensures that indicators are visible	Annually
Conferences	To promote an agenda, build relationships, showcase practice and provide ongoing capacity building for new initiatives	As needed to focus on a particular issue related to results agenda
Websites	To serve as a readily accessible platform for showcasing data, reports and other materials	Ongoing
Community Fairs	To build relationships and reach a wide audience. Can get the word out through personal contacts, handouts, posters	At least annually
News Conferences	To put your results agenda on a public forum by announcing an achievement	Relate to current events
Community Meetings	To sustain resident involvement and engage new residents in dialogue	At least quarterly
Posters	To increase visibility in the community and raise awareness of indicators and key facts	Ongoing
Briefing Sheets	To keep stakeholders abreast of the work by highlighting strategies and on-going efforts	As needed
Slide Shows	To present information to stakeholders, policymakers and potential partners	As needed

Researching Promising Practices, Programs and Practices Assessment, and Selecting Your Strategies

The following tools, **Researching Promising Practices, Programs and Practices Assessment** and **Selecting Your Strategies** will help you create an inventory of potential strategies for your action plan. The Researching Promising Practices tool will help you to develop questions to critically review and evaluate the information you gather. The Programs and Practices Assessment tool will allow you to describe the elements of each program or activity by compiling information such as location, population served and number of volunteers available. The Selecting Your Strategies tool will help you to determine what programs are already in existence and what programs and activities may be needed to address your results. Each of the worksheets would be focused on one particular result area. Develop a timeline to guide this research and either form a subcommittee or assign specific staff to conduct the research.

Researching Promising Practices

1. **SELECT** the result that you are starting with. For example: Result: Children Succeed in School

2. **DEVELOP** a set of research questions to guide the search. What are the most promising approaches or practices for achieving this result? What evidence exists that a particular approach or practice is effective?

3. **REVIEW** high-quality research and evaluation reports. Research does not need to be exhaustive but should include reputable sources. Sources for research on promising practices include the Internet, libraries, published literature, county-to-county information, the United Way, foundations, nationally known experts and organizations related to the priority area, and local programs that have conducted evaluations. Ask local "experts" in the particular field of interest what they think are key sources of research information. Take advantage of information that has already been collected and analyzed by other groups. Be sure to seek information about the experience of those receiving services, not just about program outcomes. For example, some agencies and service providers may have qualitative data of community members' own evaluation services.

4. **NARROW** the search. The more specific you are, the more effective your research will be. For example, a general search for programs to enhance student success in school will yield an enormous number of programs, activities, opinions and speculations. Narrowing your search to focus on the issues you identified through your data collection will help you focus your search.

5. **SUMMARIZE** the findings.

Researching Promising Practices

Result

Steps	Plan	Coordinators	Timeframe
Develop a set of research questions.			
Access high-quality research and evaluation reports.			
Narrow the search based on what issues you identified in your data collection.			
Summarize the findings. Use the Promising Practices Inventory, Parts I and 2.			

Programs and Practices Assessment

For each program and activity you identify with your data and research, complete a description using the assessment.

(Circle One)
Existing Formal Program or Informal Activity or Resource
Promising Practice Program or Approach

Description	
Critical Program Components	
Evidence of Effectiveness and Supporting Research	
Implementing Organization	Location
Target Population	Maximum Service Capacity
Months/Days/Hours of Operation	Staff/Volunteers Involved
Funding Source	Years in Operation
Partnering Organizations	Program Contact
Other Notes	

Selecting Your Strategies

This tool will help you inventory what you have currently, what promising practices you might add to your plan and what is missing. Write the result across the top of the inventory. The "What Works" column is used to list promising practices. Information about existing programs, activities and resources can be added to the "What We Have" column. This will help with an analysis of "What Is Missing."

Result			
What Works–Promising Practices	**What We Have**		**What Is Missing**
	Existing *Formal* Programs and Resources	Existing *Informal* Resources and Activities	

Fiscal Mapping Tool

This tool allows you to project the total budget for each strategy of your action plan. For each strategy, write down all of the information you have on the available resources-local, in-kind, state, federal or private- in the columns provided. This process will help you identify any potential funding gaps as well as any areas in which your resources can be redirected.

	Local	In-Kind	State	Federal	Private
Strategy I Projected total budget					
Strategy 2 Projected total budget					
Strategy 3 Projected total budget					
Strategy 4 Projected total budget					
Strategy 5 Projected total budget					

Publications:

Ahsan, N. (2009). Sustaining Neighborhood Change: The Power of Resident Leadership, Social Networks and Community Mobilization. Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy (www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment/making-connections/making-connections-sustaining-neighborhood-change.pdf) This guide details the role neighborhood residents should play in community change efforts. It specifically provides examples of authentic resident voice at decision-making tables and strategies used in *Making Connections,* a decade-long initiative supported by the Casey Foundation to improve outcomes for vulnerable children in distressed communities by connecting families to economic opportunity, positive social networks and effective services.

Ahsan, N. (2010). Evidence Based Practice: A Primer for Promise Neighborhoods. (www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org/_promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org/files/PNI_Primer_&_Directory_on_Evidence_Based_Practice.pdf) This primer provides background information on evidence-based practice, which typically refers to programs, services and policies that have empirical evidence through randomized controlled studies. The primer also includes a directory of evidence based practice databases.

Butler, C.T. (1991). *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decision-making.* Takoma Park, MD: Food Not Bombs Publishing. (www.consensus.net/ocaccontents.html) This book provides presents a particular model for decision-making called Formal Consensus. Formal Consensus has a clearly defined structure that requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening, and respect for the contributions of every member.

Friedman, M. (2005). *Trying Hard is Not Hard Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities.* FPSI Publishing. This book features the Results-Based Accountability framework. It provides a method of thinking and taking action together that is simple and common sense for community members, managers and decision-makers.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (2001). Building Capacity for Local Decision-Making Series. This series of Learning Guides was developed by a consortium of partners convened by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, including Georgia's Family Connection, Missouri's Family Investment Trust and Vermont's Agency for Human Services. The Annie E. Casey Foundation supported the Center's time and publication of these guides.

Learning Guide I: Theory and Purpose of Local Decision-Making

This guide sets forth the theory and purpose of local governance. It begins with the issues and problems facing children, families, and communities and an analysis of the human services system. It proposes Local Governance Partnerships as a means of addressing these problems and improving results.

Learning Guide 2: Working with Members

This guide focuses on the roles and responsibilities for members of Local Governance Partnerships. It includes skills for building trusting relationships, negotiating with partners, ensuring effective decision-making, involving parent and community members in meaningful ways and creating racial, ethnic, and gender diversity.

Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda

This guide presents the knowledge and supports needed for creating a community agenda, focusing on developing results, indicators and community priorities. It includes identifying community conditions, gathering community perspectives, mapping community assets and building consensus.

Learning Guide 4: Strategies to Achieve Results

This guide presents the requirements for developing effective strategies. It contains knowledge and skill building activities in systems thinking, researching promising practices, and synthesizing the information collected into a comprehensive community strategy and a plan for implementation.

Learning Guide 5: Financing and Budgeting Strategies

This guide presents the basics to financing a comprehensive mix of strategies. It includes a collaborative view of financing and ways to identify existing funding and resources, develop a core funding base, obtain discretionary and grant funds, restructure and repackage resources, obtain informal and in-kind resources and develop a budget.

Learning Guide 6: Using Data to Ensure Accountability

This guide discusses how to ensure shared accountability in the Local Governance Partnership. It also describes the importance of using data to ensure accountability and how to develop a data collection system.

Websites:

Annie E. Casey Foundation (www.aecf.org)
The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. **The Casey Leadership in Action Program** (http://www.aecf.org/upload/PublicationFiles/LAP.pdf) delivers hands-on training for people from diverse fields and backgrounds who are working hard to improve results for vulnerable children and families. The program—used for agency managers, educators, business people, nonprofit leaders, public officials, parents, and child advocates—works with local groups to focus on improving a specific result, like reducing the number of low birth-weight babies or increasing the number of children ready for kindergarten.

The Aspen Institute: Roundtable on Community Change (www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/community-change)
The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change has become a core field-building organization, helping individuals and institutions improve conditions in poor communities. The Roundtable is known for its pioneering work on Theories of Change and community building evaluation. The Roundtable also documents the progress of community change efforts through its signature series, *Voices from the Field.*

The Finance Project (www.financeproject.org)
The Finance Project develops and disseminates research, information, tools and technical assistance for improved policies, programs and financing strategies. Through its resources and expertise, the Finance Project helps public and private sector leaders develop sound financing strategies that support education, family and children's services, and community development.

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (www.gafcp.org/index.php/connect/tools)
The Georgia Family Connection is a nonprofit public-private intermediary that brings together 3,000 local and state-level partners committed to strengthening children and families so they can learn from their peers, share resources and replicate best practices. The partnership also promotes the work of Georgia Family Connection- a strong, unified statewide network of 159 counties in Georgia that are committed to improving the quality of life in their communities.

The Harvard Family Research Project (www.hfrp.org)
The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) helps stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well-being of children, youth, families, and their communities, primarily around early childhood education, out-of-school time programming and family and community support in education.

Lawrence CommunityWorks (www.lcworks.org)
Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) is a nonprofit community development corporation working to transform and revitalize the physical, economic and social landscape of Lawrence. Using networks to build community is at the core of LCW, which has become one of the major forces for equitable development and economic justice in Lawrence.

National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org)
The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) is a collaborative effort by the Urban Institute and local partners to further the development and use of neighborhood information systems in local policymaking and community building. In the long term, NNIP seeks to develop cross-site action initiatives that use data to drive community change as well as expand direct technical assistance and training to support capacity building for new groups interested in starting NNIP-like initiatives.

Results-Based Accountability (http://www.resultsaccountability.com)
The Results-Based Accountability framework developed by Mark Friedman can be used to improve the quality of life in communities, cities, counties, states and nations, including everything from the well-being of children to the creation of a sustainable environment. The website provides information on publications, workshops, and examples of how communities, state agencies and private companies have effectively use the RBA approach.

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