

Getting Ready To Launch Collaborative Action Networks

Introduction: This document outlines the key items that need to be in place so that communities can successfully begin to form Collaborative Action Networks.

Community Level Outcomes (Theory of Action: Pillar II): Community level outcomes are academic points along the cradle to career education continuum that are proven to be key levers that need to be moved in order to achieve the cradle to career vision and goals. Community level outcomes are selected by the key leadership members, and typically range from across the cradle to career continuum. Below is a list of outcomes that are highly recommended to be a part of a Partnership’s selected outcomes when committed to a cradle to career collective impact approach:

Cradle to Career Outcome Areas:
Kindergarten Readiness
Early Grade Reading
Middle Grade Math
High School Graduation
Post-Secondary Enrollment
Post-Secondary Completion

Often, newly formed community partnerships are full of excitement and ambition, and may find themselves taking on more than they can realistically handle at one time. To avoid taking on too much, it is recommended that no more than 6-8 are identified, and using criteria can often assist in narrowing the focus. Some common criteria recommended for narrowing down and selecting outcomes:

- Leadership interest
- Community ownership
- Staffing capacity exists or can be identified to lead work related to every outcome
- The community level outcome is measurable and data is readily available
- There are specific Core Indicators that directly represent how the outcome can be measured (*see Core Indicators description below*)
- The community level outcome is within the sphere of influence of the partnership’s members and within the “cradle to career” scope.

Outcomes Checklist: Use this tool to determine the strength of the outcomes selected:	Yes	No
1. Do the outcomes represent the overall Leadership’s interest?		
2. Will the outcomes be understandable, clear and compelling to community members?		
3. Is the number of outcomes manageable or is there a plan to eventually have sufficient capacity to work on every outcome?		
4. Is there an existing way to measure the outcome		
5. If so, is this data readily available?		
6. Are the outcomes within the influence of the partnership <i>and</i> within the “cradle to career” scope?		

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Core Indicators (Theory of Action: Pillar II): Core Indicators are specific measures that are being used to track progress on moving the community level outcomes and have been agreed upon to be the main metric, or one that directly measures an outcome. Below are example core indicators for the following outcomes:

Outcomes:	Example Core Indicators (Measures)
Kindergarten Readiness	Percent of students assessed as ready for school at Kindergarten
Early Grade Reading	Percent of students proficient+ in third grade reading
Middle Grade Math	Percent of students proficient+ in fifth grade math; Percent of students proficient+ in eighth grade math
High School Graduation	Percent of students who graduate from high school
Post-Secondary Enrollment	Percent of students who enroll in a post-secondary institution within six months of graduation; Percent of students who enroll in a post-secondary institution during the first two years after high school
Post-Secondary Completion	Percent of students who graduate from a local post-secondary institution; Percent of students who earn a certification (other than degree)

Engaging key stakeholders who understand local data to form a data team is one strategy commonly used to select indicators; another method is to use the following criteria as a guide to select core indicators:

- Is a valid and specific measure of the outcome
- Availability of data: produced by a trusted source and is both valid and reliable data
- There are reasonably similar measures that exist across the region and/or various school districts
- Is affordable to gather and report on; data will be available consistently over time (annually)
- Is within the influence of the partnership (within the cradle to career scope)

Priority Indicators: Priority Indicators are a subset of the core indicators that are prioritized to determine the initial focus and formation of Collaborative Action Networks. Very few Partnerships have the capacity and resources to work on improving all indicators, therefore, prioritizing to identify top 2-3 to be focused on initially is recommended to ensure success. Prioritization is based off of a number of different factors, including:

- **Significant need exists:** Using best available data, there is a significant need to improve the outcome/indicator if we want to achieve success for all children. *Note: Communities should also begin to disaggregate data based on appropriate subpopulations.*
- **Data you can trust exists to practice continuous improvement:** Data is being collected for a significant portion of the target audience and cuts across sectors. *Note: Sometimes good data may be difficult to find.*
- **Momentum exists:** Community focus, resources, or appropriate partners are already engaged and poised to benefit from partnership supports.
- **Staff and facilitation support exists:** Backbone or lead convening organization has capacity to staff & facilitate networks.
- Lastly, the **combination of areas is not concentrated** at one section of the continuum.

Creating Data Sharing Agreements: Although State Departments of Education publish data for most partnership indicators, successful scoping/launching of collaborative action networks requires disaggregated data which is often only available through the creation of data sharing agreements. To determine the method required, talk to Superintendents or contact the State Department of Education directly to identify the specific requirements and estimated timeframes for approving data sharing requests at a local level.

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When a partnership is considering launching **Collaborative Action Networks** around the indicators that have been prioritized it is critical that these meet the criteria below prior to forming a group:

Priority Indicators Checklist: Use this tool to determine the strength of the indicators selected:	Yes	No
1. Is there at least one measurable indicator for each outcome?		
2. Are the selected indicators specific (i.e. does not include words such as “and” or “or”) and not worded in a way that would require further definition?		
3. Is the data for the indicators readily available?		
4. Is the data for the indicators produced by a trusted source?		
5. Will the data available for the indicators be considered both valid and reliable?		
6. Are the indicators similar across the region and school districts?		
7. Will the data for the indicators be affordable and easy to gather?		
8. Can the data for the indicators be available consistently over time (annually)		
9. Are the indicators within the influence of the partnership and within the “cradle to career” scope?		
10. Is it evident that the indicator is changeable to a significant degree by local action?		

Landscape Analysis: Once the “priority” indicators have been selected there is the need to begin to identify and invite potential local practitioners and leaders from the local community to participate in the Collaborative Action Networks. To accomplish this, the partnership members typically perform a landscape analysis what other *partnerships/groups* may already exist that could be engaged in the work. There are several common ways to accomplish this:

- **Invitation to Engage (ITE)** – The ITE is usually used when no networks exist around a given outcome/indicator. Invites practitioners, funders, or other stakeholders to engage with the partnership and form a collaborative action network.
- **Request for Engagement (RFE)** – The RFE is best used when a network exists or a group is already focusing on a given outcome/indicator. Invites existing group working directly toward a given outcome/indicator to engage with the partnership and morph into a Collaborative Action Network.
- **Request for Support (RFS)** – The RFS is used when a network exists and is using at least some data to drive decisions around a specific outcome.

Value Exchange: The value exchange typically involves the leadership members identifying a list of roles, expectations, supports, activities, etc. between the overall partnership and the networks and defines how supports will be delivered. Below is an abbreviated example of a value exchange:

Benefits to Network	Expectation of Network
Hands-on facilitation, training and technical assistance to develop and implement shared action plan	Develop and implement a shared action plan to improve outcome/indicator
Access to consultation & support from data experts	Share relevant program data and expertise to support action plan
Recognition of effective practices & improved outcomes	As appropriate, adopt or adapt best practices identified by continuous improvement process

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Collaborative Action Networks (Theory of Action: Pillar III): Collaborative Action Networks are a group of community members formed to work together collectively on impacting the same outcome/indicator, using disaggregated student/school level data, to continuously improve practices over time. Typically, collaborative action networks form around outcomes/core indicators.

However, in order to help these groups focus their collective work together, they will need the data disaggregated further to ensure they will be able to clearly identify specific opportunities for improvement. Therefore, data for each priority indicator will need to be disaggregated prior to their first meeting; to the extent that best demonstrates where the greatest needs are, while also allowing for the opportunity to potentially identify existing “bright spots” within the community. Examples of the level of disaggregation for priority indicators include, but are not limited to: *number of students and percentages by school, grade, subject, and other sub-populations (Race, English Language Learners (ELL), Free/Reduced Lunch, etc.)*

In addition, the data team may also want to begin to identify and collect additional disaggregated data on other possible *contributing indicators* knowing that once the Network is launched the members may have some additional data requests.

Contributing Indicators (Theory of Action: Pillar III)

Contributing Indicators are indicators identified as contributing to the associated outcome and the prioritized core indicators but are not the direct or main metric (measure) being used to track progress on improving the outcome. These are typically measurable factors that can be other key drivers that influence the priority indicators and often close examination of these can lead to improvements and the discovery of effective practices. Each contributing indicator needs to also be measurable – data needs to be readily available, valid, reliable and easily accessible over time (annually at minimum).

Outcomes:	Priority Indicators: Each Priority Indicator needs to be disaggregated as appropriate (e.g. school, grade, subject, and sub-populations, etc.)	Example Contributing Indicators: (which will also need to be similarly disaggregated)
Kindergarten Readiness	Percent of students assessed as ready for school at Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children enrolled into a quality preschool program ▪ Social/emotional readiness data ▪ Pre-school assessment data ▪ Quality-rated preschool programs
Early Grade Reading	Percent of students proficient or above in third grade reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chronic absenteeism rates ▪ Second grade literacy assessment scores ▪ First grade literacy assessment scores
Post-Secondary Enrollment	Percent of students who enroll in a post-secondary institution within six months of graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FAFSA completion ▪ Scholarship completion ▪ College application completion ▪ ACT/SAT scores by content/subject area (e.g. math, science, reading, writing, etc.) ▪ Aspirations assessment data

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By using the checklist below, the Partnership can determine the actual *readiness* for launching a Collaborative Action Network around a Prioritized Core Indicator.

Collaborative Action Checklist: Use this tool to determine the readiness of the Partnership to launch a Collaborative Action Network around a Prioritized Indicator:	Yes	No
1. Does the indicator meet all of the criteria identified in the “Priority Indicator Checklist”?		
2. Has the priority indicator data been disaggregated appropriately – to the extent that the members will be able to identify areas of potential and specific need in order to focus their work? (e.g. school, subject, age, grade, F/R lunch, ELL, other sub-populations, etc.)		
3. Has at least one possible contributing indicator been identified for each indicator?		
4. Are the contributing indicators measurable? (data readily available, easily gathered, accessible at least annually, and considered both valid and reliable)		
5. Has the contributing indicator data been disaggregated appropriately – to the extent that the members will be able to identify areas of potential and specific need in order to focus their work? (e.g. school, subject, age, grade, F/R lunch, ELL, other sub-populations, etc.)?		
6. Is it clear that the Collaborative Action Network members would be able to have an impact on the priority indicator and/or one or more of the contributing indicators identified?		
7. Has the Partnership identified initial practitioners (e.g. educators, community organizations, etc.) who would be able to have an impact on the work (the “doers” who are either already working in or are interested in working with the area of work)?		
8. Has a dedicated facilitator been identified who can help support the Collaborative Action Network?		

NOTE: To ensure the likelihood of success of the work, the Partnership will need to postpone launching of a Collaborative Action Network for the Prioritized Indicator until all of the above checklist items are addressed. However, the Partnership can use aggregated data on the Outcomes/Indicators to begin other types of Leadership Action (e.g. policy, advocacy, campaigns, etc.)