kidonomics

INVESTING EARLY IN OUR FUTURE

LAUNCHING EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

A Best Practices Guide and Community Resource Toolkit

INTRODUCTION

Across the state of North Carolina, there is a growing awareness of the need to enhance the well-being and life course trajectories of young children. Local leaders are rapidly realizing that this course of action is also the key to ensuring that young children are more likely to meet a number of outcomes including high school graduation and college attendance, and are better prepared for life success. In short, leaders are making the connection between workforce preparedness and a community's economic prosperity. But, a significant gap still exists in the knowledge base of many local leaders in understanding how best to address this challenge. All too often, the tendency is toward piecemeal programmatic adjustments or enhancements. However, to address this challenge, communities must approach these issues from a systems change perspective.

Ensuring that young people are capable of meeting the needs of tomorrow's economy requires addressing the entire range of needs a child has from health and wellness, to education and social development. Researchers have consistently demonstrated that more comprehensive approaches yield the highest and best outcomes for children's success in later life.

Moreover, early childhood systems are incredibly complex. In every community, there are numerous service providers and institutions that directly impact the lives of children. To affect the trajectory of children requires a comprehensive systems-level approach that focuses on the coordination and strengthening of the entire early childhood system.
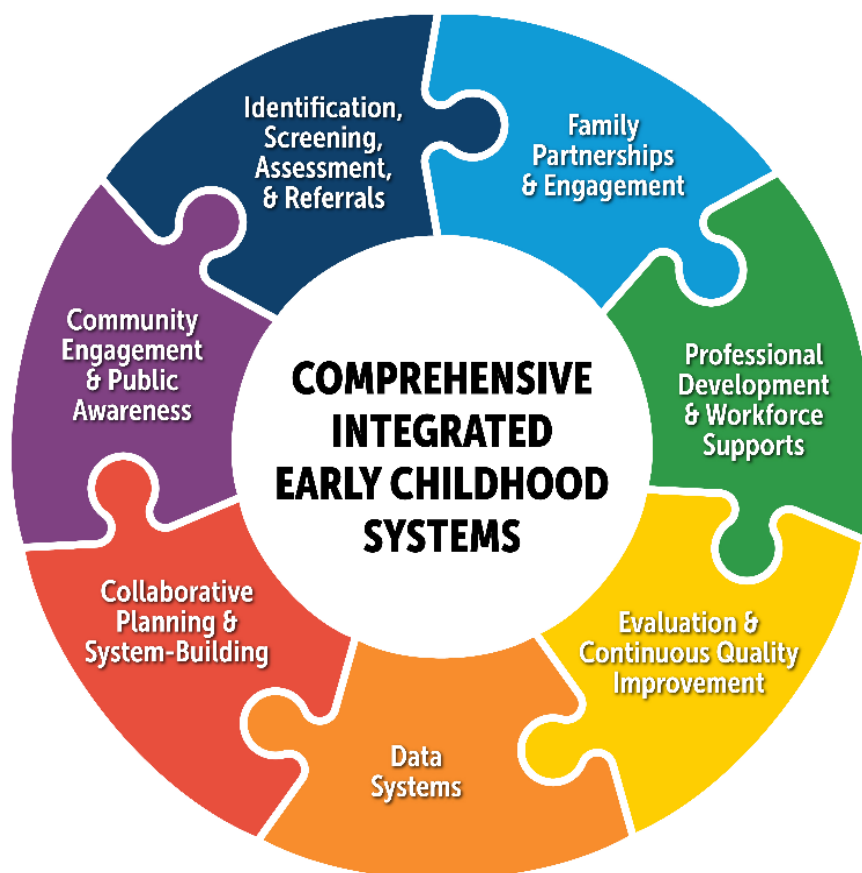
Across the state of North Carolina, communities are answering this challenge. This document is designed as a primer and toolkit for local community leaders interested in launching an early childhood initiative, or taking the next step in a system's evolution. It compiles lessons learned from several of the state's more comprehensive early childhood initiatives, and provides a set of useful strategies for tackling some of the thorniest of issues faced in taking on such a monumental task. These exemplar initiatives include:

➢ Forsyth County's Great Expectations
➢ Transylvania County's Early Childhood Initiative
➢ Read Charlotte
➢ East Durham Children's Initiative
➢ Guilford County's Ready for School, Ready for Life

Systems change is hard, and it requires sustained and well-planned action from every stakeholder, from parents to elected officials, to the business community, and everyone in between. What we also recognize is the value of community – the institutions and people that make up a city, county or neighborhood with a shared identify and common interests.

> Collective impact occurs when organizations from different sectors agree to solve a specific social problem using a common agenda, aligned efforts, and common measures of success.

In each of the initiatives examined by the Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI), collective impact models were explicitly used, or the initiatives were informed by principles central to the collective impact model. As such, this guidebook draws upon the ideas and principles from the collective impact model and uses several of its key elements as the foundation for this instrument. This report includes seven sections:

• **Necessary Preconditions** – The base conditions a community needs to have present
• **Appetite for Change** – A community's attitude toward change and readiness to accept change
• **Who Leads?** – Finding the right champions for early childhood change
• **Where Do Resources Come From?** – The challenges of securing the necessary finances
• **What Data Do We Need, and Why?** – Ensuring that an initiative is data-informed and data-driven
• **Where's Your Backbone?** – The critical role of a coordinating entity for a collective impact initiative
• **Who "Governs" –** Which entities have the ability to support and make change happen?

As we move further down the road, we hope to refine this tool by adding more information, resources and process steps. Visit emergingissues.org/kidonomics to learn more.

NECESSARY PRECONDITIONS

A 2012 report by the White House Council on Community Solutions identified five critical framing questions to determine if a community is ready for an initiative's launch. We have adapted these below.

For the purposes of this tool, the assumption is that a community is willing to support each of these principles. For some communities, there may need to be some groundwork done up front to garner the necessary commitment for any one of these. From our survey of initiatives, it is clear that a community may also need to do some work to maintain or renew commitment to any one of these principles as the initiative progresses.

Does your community….

Yes | No

☐ ☐ **Have the desire to create significant and measurable change in the lives of children?**

Leaders from Durham sent community members to New York and Portland to gain insight and resources before launching their initiative

☐ ☐ **Have the willingness to make a long-term investment in young people, with as long as three to five or more years to achieve success?**

In Winston Salem, leaders have made a 10- to 15-year commitment to realizing the community's early childhood goals.

☐ ☐ **Typically support and engage organizations and individuals from every sector?**

Transylvania County's main stakeholder group has more than 50 active participants representing the entire community.

☐ ☐ **Have a commitment to using measurable data to inform activities from the beginning and throughout?**

Leaders from Charlotte spent 12 months focusing on the data and research component of their initiative.

☐ ☐ **Have a commitment to partnering meaningfully with parents and community members?**

Guilford County's leaders have witnessed a growth in leadership from their parent participants who are producing tremendous value for them.

APPETITE FOR CHANGE

Systems change often necessitates shifting resources, doubling down on strategies, or eliminating ineffective approaches. Once you decide you are ready to embark on a systems-wide community initiative, you may find that not all existing activities will meet the standard you've set for success. You may also just as easily find that the most promising activity for yielding tangible positive outcomes is currently under-resourced. Along with your community stakeholders, you may discover that this scope of change is uncomfortable. Ensuring that you have the requisite level of commitment to a common goal is of utmost importance. It will be critical to ascertain the appetite for this level of change in a community.

In terms of "rallying the troops," it's important to be clear about what stakeholders are signing on for. Our survey showed that early childhood "preparation" was a central theme of every community. Nonetheless, oftentimes, different narratives resonate with different constituencies. For instance, workforce preparedness messaging may resonate best with members of the business community. It is important to make these necessary connections as you reach out to potential stakeholders.

Guilford County was able to determine early on that the wider community had a massive appetite for change, a reminder of the importance of "building on your strengths." The county's earlier experience as one of the state's first Smart Start partnerships was a key part of the county's success. Leaders were able to leverage the strength of those existing structures and relationships, which allowed for the community to move from information dissemination and recruitment to founding a formal steering committee without any major stumbling blocks.

In Mecklenburg County, there was long history of tense relationships between community stakeholders. In particular, the county school system has dealt with its share of detractors and critics in part due to the legacy of the landmark 1999 Federal Court decision affecting pupil assignment. Often times, local school systems become the scapegoat for wider societal problems; Charlotte-Mecklenburg is no exception. Leaders in Charlotte emphasized how important it was to not only court school system leaders with special outreach, but also to ensure that they understood their value to the community as one of the most critical partners in achieving long-term early childhood success. This example of facing early childhood challenges head on should serve as an example to other communities. According to Munro Richardson, the community's early childhood initiative leader, *progress is now happening at the speed of trust in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.*

As you approach your planning and execution, it may be instructive to do an inventory of your community's history with community-wide, large-scale change. Questions you may want to ask are:

> **How difficult were past change initiatives, and what were the major obstacles?**

Think about potential impediments like deep political divisions or warring factions.

> **Is there a potential enthusiasm gap among stakeholders that will need to be bridged?**

Some stakeholders may have bruised feelings from past change efforts where they were not included or did not feel heard.

Below, you will find a tool that can aid you in assessing your community's (and especially lead stakeholders') appetite for systems-level change. It is designed as a tool to guide your thinking and to raise issues that you may want to consider.

Once you have determined that the appetite for change exists, it is time to enlist the right leaders. You may have already identified them as you determined the community's appetite for change. The next section walks you through some considerations as you think about who your early childhood champions will be.

CHANGE ATTITUDE ASSESSMENT TOOL

- Is there a demand for capacity development and change? Is it sufficient to overcome challenges and resistance, and lead to sustainable change?

- Who holds the power to support or block change in early childhood development?

    o Who holds visible/legitimate power?

    o Who holds invisible power and how is it used?

- Is there political will among the general public to initiate and sustain change?

- What are the different motivations for change of each stakeholder group?

    o How important is this initiative to them?

    o What incentives are there for them to engage?

    o What perverse incentives would stop them from engaging?

- Are key stakeholders ready to make a commitment to act as a sponsor of the change?

- What issues in the culture, such as political party, race and class, are likely to be relevant to the change initiative? Can you overcome these issues?

- Is the change consistent with the history of your community?

- Are the value systems and background of the stakeholder groups consistent with a change mindset?

Conditions

- What supporting legislation, ordinances, policies or strategies are already in place? Are more needed?

- How much change is already going on in early childhood and how well is it being managed?

- Does the infrastructure (e.g. access to subject matter experts, etc.) exist to enable stakeholders and leaders to get the appropriate tools and training?

Resources

- What organizational or project management tools already exist that would help to plan, execute and monitor the initial steps?

- Are key stakeholders appropriately skilled to begin the process of change?

- Are finances and other necessary resources available or likely to become available? If not, what is needed and where can it be sourced?

WHO LEADS?

Even with their vocal support for an initiative, motivating a large number of people to action – each of them with their own agendas – is difficult. Having an effective lead person or organization serve as a champion usually makes the work a lot easier, and can go a long way toward ensuring a successful launch. In several of the communities we surveyed, funding organizations led the way. These entities were able to bring stakeholders to the table because of their:

➢ clout within their communities;

➢ financial capacity to motivate; and

➢ sincere actions, motivated by organizational missions opposed to narrow interests.

In other communities, government leaders have played a major role in marshalling support, corralling stakeholders, and bringing everyone to the table. In two of the communities we surveyed, county commissioners were key central figures. In both cases, it was clear that their abilities to connect with people and convey the importance of the issue was a powerful motivating force. Similar to major nonprofit funders, county leaders also have the benefit of influence over resources and major early childhood programmatic decisions. This is due in large part to the structure of human services in North Carolina whereby education, health and social services all fall under the direct or indirect influence of county commissions. This influence also can serve to motivate stakeholders.

In the NC Partnership for Children's Transformation Zone initiative, local Smart Start partnerships in eastern North Carolina included community leadership from multiple agencies.

In seeking out a champion, elected officials can be great champions due to their influence and natural abilities to connect with people. Because no one person can do this work alone, drawing upon the talents and reach of others, and having a broad network of champions was important to the successful launch of each of the initiatives we surveyed. Do not overlook leaders from the private sector, or initiatives across North Carolina and in other states. Business leaders can be powerful catalysts for creating action for early childhood initiatives.

It may also be instructive to ask yourself the following questions:

➢ **If your community does not have a ready champion, who or what organization(s) led past initiatives?**

Do not discount the idea of having multiple champions, or champions that represent non-traditional early childhood stakeholders such as the faith community or business sector.

➢ **In past initiatives, how did they go about securing the support of relevant stakeholders?**

You may find some important lessons about how to structure community convenings, identify critical people to win over, and coordinate with the local press to ensure positive coverage.

The East Durham Children's Initiative began with the efforts of elected officials and community leaders like Commissioner Ellen Reckhow and school board member Minnie Forte-Brown. They were a part of a larger conversation in Durham around the need to improve the outcomes of young children in Durham, particularly in the challenged area of Southeast Central Durham. The community invested in extensive information gathering and sent leaders to examine the Harlem Children's Zone and Portland's Connected By 25 initiative. They returned armed with information that helped to craft a vision unique to Durham. Having strong leadership committed to the issue up front proved to be pivotal for Durham. In any community, having leaders in key roles like the school board and county commissioners can help sway detractors or make headway on critical decision points. The county's commitment of resources (via budget line items), its voice, and its time helped to secure funding from philanthropic leaders to successfully launch the East Durham Children's Initiative.

WHERE DO RESOURCES COME FROM?

What is obvious to most people is that we live in a world of diminishing governmental resources. This is especially true at the local level, and even more so for low-resourced local communities. Funding for new initiatives is virtually non-existent in many communities. In the cases we surveyed, each community relied on different models for funding. They primarily relied on one of two models:

- Blended funding from a network of several sponsors

- Major donation from a lead funder

The amount of money needed will vary by community. Larger communities will of course require greater resources due to the scope and scale of a systems reform initiative. Other factors to consider include:

➢ the level of synergy between organizations in your community and the ability to leverage existing talents, efforts and resources; and

➢ the depth of the challenges faced with respect to the state of children and families in a community.

While sustained efforts beyond the initial launch will require significant resources, it is possible to sow the seeds of an initiative without a hefty investment. These efforts may also serve to draw the support of local business leaders or other funders who realize the importance and value of your early childhood pitch.

Transylvania County is a community realizing success with little external funding. Since launching its initiative, the community has achieved a 50% reduction in the number of opioid addicted births with less than a $200,000 investment (although much of the ground work was laid prior to any funding commitment). The community has relied on strong strategic partnerships and resource sharing. In lieu of spending funds on consultants they borrowed talent from unlikely places (like the County Manager's office) to achieve a big impact.

For low-resourced communities, beyond the initial activities, the challenge of finding resources may be daunting. In recognition of that reality, local communities may need to develop novel approaches to securing the necessary funding to launch an early childhood initiative. The NC Early Childhood Foundation has developed a toolkit about local revenue streams as a means to expand early learning in NC communities, and the report of the Institute for Emerging Issues' Blue Ribbon Commission on Local Finance provides an important perspective on these options.

This tool is designed to help communities explore the range of local funding strategies. But given scarce resources in many communities, we can't underestimate the value of innovation. In times of scarcity, new out-of-the-box thinking around resource acquisition is a necessity. For example, consolidated employee giving campaigns remain an under-utilized tool for raising funds for worthy community projects.

Most of the initiatives surveyed have one thing in common - heavy investment from the philanthropic community. In most cases, blended funding has proved to be the best route in securing the necessary funding. In Durham, Charlotte, and Guilford County, a network of funders has stepped up in each community to fund their early childhood initiatives (for example, Guilford County's funding is supplied by a network of 10 foundations and Cone Health).

Both Durham and Transylvania Counties have relied on flexible funding agreements to help secure funds for their initiatives. In each community, they've determined that the ultimate goal is to maximize the funding for its target population. To achieve that, they allow partners to operate under their umbrella, or use their branding as part of their funding applications. A key part of that arrangement is ensuring that partners' efforts are aligned with the overall goals of the larger early childhood initiative.

Durham stands alone among the five initiatives we reviewed as a "hybrid" model. They not only coordinate services, but they deliver services where no other partner can be found to serve the needs of its targeted community. This not only helps meet the depth of need in the community, it helps the organization to leverage much needed resources.

WHAT DATA DO WE NEED?

Collective impact initiatives should always be "data driven," which means that a collective impact initiative's activities should be determined by the careful analysis of relevant data. This is no less true for early childhood initiatives.

Given the number of organizations that touch the lives of children, getting a complete picture of the connections between programs and how they support or conflict with one another is critical. Some of the questions that should be driving your initial data dive with your partners include:

> ➤ What is the overall availability of services?
> ➤ What is the quality of existing services?
> ➤ What is the actual impact of existing services on the lives of children and their families?
> ➤ How many children are participating in programs and services?
> ➤ Who is being served, and more importantly, who is *not* being served (by geography, race, gender, income, etc.)?
> ➤ What services are being provided across each of the dimensions above?
> ➤ What is the impact of existing services – the relationship between existing program characteristics and child outcomes?
> ➤ What is the total services array that is available to children and families, and what is their capacity?

In the realm of building community capacity and collective action, it is essential to find a trusted, impartial partner who can provide data that allows for valuable insights about children, their well-being, their trajectories and those of their families – and about the wider context, the communities in which they live.

This trusted partner can be an organization (e.g., university/college or nonprofit) that has a facility with data, and an understanding of the nuances of collection, analysis, and presentation. Several of the communities surveyed relied on trusted organizations to serve as their data partners. In smaller communities, this may be a role performed by government organization staff/leadership with backgrounds in data and research. For example, a city or county manager's office typically has an employee with a background in public administration and training in statistics (as was the case in at least one of the communities we examined). The same is true of public health officials. The central point is that there is a need for an impartial party that can paint a picture without bias regarding the data's implications for a community's activities on them or other actors.

After identifying a data partner, you should have a candid conversation about your goals and the importance of data for decision-making with all stakeholders. Ideally, you should have in place a plan not only for initial data collection and use, but for improving your data fluency and responsiveness. Having access to this data will help you as you begin to probe questions at a more systematic level. Consider the following:

> What are the critical failure points in the system?

> How can we better integrate data horizontally (between entities) and vertically (the ability for data to follow children's progress across institutions)?

> How do we create a data-informed and data-driven culture in early childhood?

In each community, data is a driving force for solving the community's early childhood challenges. Each community has taken a serious approach to meeting its need for informative data. Durham, for example, has partnered with Duke University to analyze its programmatic outcomes. While they are still working through data challenges, they are receiving regular insights on progress by comparing the outcomes of its targeted area to a comparison zone (not receiving the same interventions) in another part of the county. This arrangement is unique to Durham given its narrowly-targeted, 120-block geographic focus. But, having a comparison zone, perhaps a neighboring county with similar demographics, has the potential to provide some of the most valid research outcomes from which to base decision making.

Forsyth County is launching a unique community survey tool. The tool is designed to uncover how the largest segment of the early childhood population is faring – those children and families who never received early childhood services prior to entering kindergarten. This is an important population in each county: statewide 77 percent of students do not receive formal, licensed child care. With little information on those not seeking services, we lack understanding of which services they are already receiving and which ones they might benefit from. Forsyth is making inroads on gaining the necessary insight to better serve this wider community, and its lessons will be instructive for us all.

From the outset, data has proved to be a critically important piece of the puzzle for Transylvania County. The initiative published a report that captured the scope of the challenges they were facing, and the plight of young children in their county. The report was invaluable in helping to secure support from community stakeholders. The report's author – County Manager Jaime Laughter – cautions that data should be made understandable and accessible to all parties. The report is intentionally brief to ensure that it is more easily read and digested by community members. Durham County has since adopted this model for its own efforts and it can serve as a good model for other counties as well.

Early childhood systems are plagued by a lack of integration, and, often, a lack of availability of important metrics on children and their families. Moreover, the ability to link children across system providers is a persistent challenge. Communities we surveyed have responded in a variety of ways to meet their data challenges. In one case, the community saw that there was a severe gap in their knowledge base about children who are not currently being served by early childhood programs. They are in the process of deploying a survey to gain a better understanding about this relatively sizable segment of their youth population. Other communities are currently partnering with consultants to help them get a better handle on their data challenges.

In other communities, painting a clear data picture was critical to the success of their launch. In one community, leaders were able to clearly articulate the state of children in a report that was widely disseminated and served as an important tool for stakeholder mobilization. They were adamant about the need for clear, succinct data.

As you seek to secure data, here are some sources that you may find valuable:

NC Department of Public Instruction - http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/data/

NC Division of Health and Human Services, Data on Child Care Facilities - http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/general/Child_Care_Statistical_Report.asp

Kids Count - http://www.ncchild.org/what-we-do/data/kids-count-data-center/

Census data at County Level - https://www.census.gov/support/USACdataDownloads.html

NCLinc, 900 items for all 100 counties - http://data.osbm.state.nc.us/pls/linc/dyn_linc_main.show

Also, county agencies have rich repositories of data on the numbers of children served and their families, such as those held by local school systems. Having a clear data plan (see worksheet, next page) and a strong data partner will help you in your next step where you identify the targets of your initiative, your geographic scope, and outcome data points. The image below is of the data dashboard Read Charlotte launched to monitor their progress on important indicators.
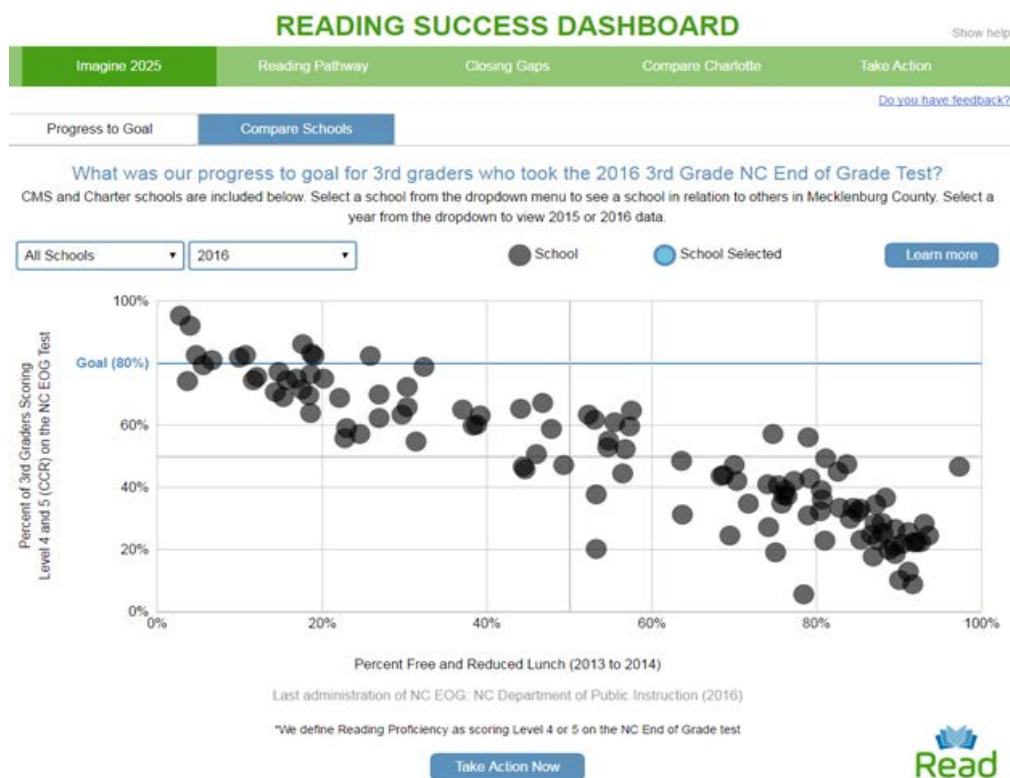
DATA ASSESSMENT TOOL

	AVAILABLE	ASPIRATIONAL	DATA SOURCE (Where to Obtain Data)	Timing of Data (release schedule - annually, monthly, etc.)	Data Challenges (Issues of access or complexity)	Importance Level (Rank from 1 to 10, with 10 being critical)
Data Point 1 _____						
Data Point 2 _____						
Data Point 3 _____						
Data Point 4 _____						
Data Point 5 _____						
Data Point 6 _____						
Data Point 7 _____						
Data Point 8 _____						
Data Point 9 _____						
Data Point 10 _____						
Data Point 11 _____						
Data Point 12 _____						
Data Point 13 _____						
Data Point 14 _____						
Data Point 15 _____						
Data Point 16 _____						
Data Point 17 _____						

WHERE'S YOUR BACKBONE?

A "backbone organization" is an organization dedicated to coordinating the various dimensions and collaborators involved in a collective impact initiative. There is no one set of responsibilities for a backbone organization. In our survey, each of the organizations leading the initiatives we studied took on varying sets of responsibilities, having different staffing structures and in-house skills. Over the life course of these initiatives, the backbone organizations took on different roles as their initiatives took shape. At times, they dropped activities due to other entities taking them on or because they were no longer needed. In other cases, they had to step in to provide a service when no other entity was capable or available. Common backbone responsibilities identified by the Stanford Social Innovation Review are listed below. We found these roles to be consistent among the majority of the organizations we surveyed.

- Guide vision and strategy
- Support aligned activities
- Establish shared measurement practices
- Build public will
- Advance policy
- Keep stakeholders connected
- Mobilize funding

A key question for consideration should be *at what point is a backbone organization needed*? After answering that question, you will have to determine its form. In one community we studied, the governing body (board of leading stakeholders) serves a role akin to a backbone organization. In others, separate nonprofit entities spun off to serve as the official backbone organization.

Keep in mind that the responsibility of a backbone can shift from one organization to another. At least two of the communities we surveyed were in the process of strengthening and grooming an existing organization to assume the role of backbone in the near future.

In either case, these central entities serve to facilitate and support the collective impact of partners in a community. Funding will of course be a primary consideration in determining the structure and staffing of your backbone organization.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

One of the most important responsibilities of a backbone organization is the effective management of mutually reinforcing activities. By mutually reinforcing activities, we mean the *coordination of multiple efforts by different entities to maximize results*.

On both a state and local level, responsibility for early childhood outcomes is divided, with multiple entities participating, but no single one in charge. To complicate matters, stakeholders report to different entities (e.g., school boards, county officials, parents) and are beholden to different funders who exert influence over their activities (philanthropic organizations, federal government, state/local government, private donors). Because they usually have no authority, backbone organizations by necessity accomplish the task of managing mutually reinforcing activities through influence.

Given that reality, trust becomes one of the greatest assets a backbone organization can have at its disposal, especially given that it is entrusted with helping improve the welfare of children. The leader of one backbone organization made it a point to say that trust is only the beginning. Even with trust in place,

there is the hard work of looking stakeholders in the eye, securing their commitment, and helping them understand how they fit into the community's bigger picture. One key advantage in this arena is the ability to leverage the good will of stakeholders by focusing on the higher value proposition: *the well-being and future success of children*.

Backbone organizations varied considerably across the different initiatives. In Forsyth County, efforts are still underway in identifying a backbone organization that can assume the role as coordinating entity. Similar, in Transylvania County, they have moved forward with strategic implementation without formally naming a backbone organization. They have largely relied on the work of four key subcommittees who ensure that identified strategies are carried out by partner organizations: Pre-School Education Committee, Health and Mental Health Committee, Parks and Recreation Committee, and a Family Support Committee. In their case, their model reflects integration between their governance structure and their implementation arm. Guilford County's model reflects a small degree of that same integration. Their backbone organization relies on just two staff members with substantial support coming from their Steering Committee Co-Chairs.

Words of wisdom from Charlotte – *It's important to have backbone organization employees who have data expertise.* Given the central importance of data to an early childhood initiative, this data expertise has proven to be critical to ensuring the successful launch of Read Charlotte. With their expertise, backbone organization staff have been instrumental in gaining the trust of community partners as they have laid out a transparent and inclusive process with data at the center of their planning processes.

In Durham County, the backbone organization reflects the scope of their undertaking (coordination and service delivery), as such the organization numbers 34 employees in total. They are responsible for coordinating the efforts of 50 partner organizations. Their scope reflects their success in moving from only 28 percent of kids graduating as kindergarten ready to 75 percent (as part of their EDCI Leap Academy).

It's clear that the size and scope of the backbone organization is not necessarily reflective of the level of success of any given aspect of the initiative. Each community will have to determine the model that has the best fit for their strengths, needs and resource availability.

In addition to securing the necessary trust, some key elements to beginning the process include:

➢ Gaining a good understanding of what programs/services are working well and which are not;

➢ Identifying which efforts can be strengthened, and which ones need to be discouraged;

- ➢ Determining where organizations can coordinate and leverage each other's talents/resources for greater impact, i.e. are non-duplicative;

- ➢ Identifying scale capacity - what can be scaled and to what extent; and

- ➢ Obtaining relevant data. It will be nearly impossible to act without a sound data foundation and a commitment to ongoing discipline in the use of data to inform and direct action.
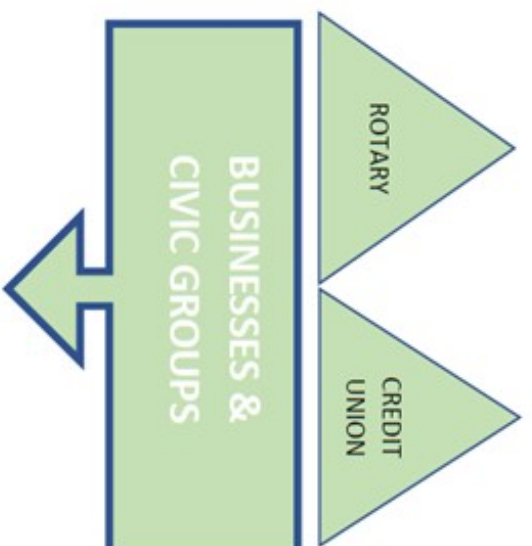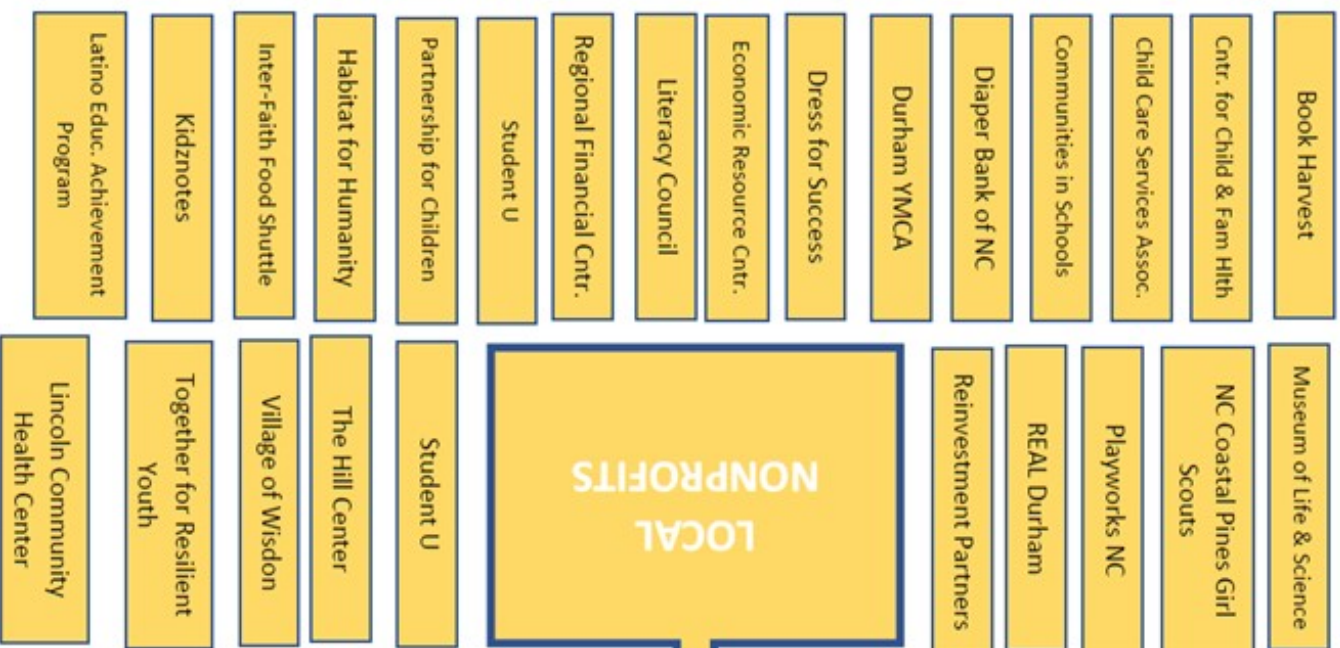
Coordinating mutually reinforcing activities is by far the most difficult task, and arguably the most centrally important part of a collective impact initiative. The linked resource below provides a good overview and guideline for walking a group of stakeholders through the process of defining strategies, outcomes and assets.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities Tool

In coordinating its mutually reinforcing activities, Durham works with a network of 50 partner organizations. This is a remarkable arrangement given that their focus is on a relatively small 120-block area in southeast Durham. This demonstrates the importance of partner coordination, and the level of effort needed by any community to sustain an initiative beyond first launch. On the next page you will see a diagram of Durham's partner network highlighting the sector focus of each partner.

LOCAL NONPROFITS

- Book Harvest
- Cntr. for Child & Fam Hlth
- Child Care Services Assoc.
- Communities in Schools
- Diaper Bank of NC
- Durham YMCA
- Dress for Success
- Economic Resource Cntr.
- Literacy Council
- Regional Financial Cntr.
- Student U
- Partnership for Children
- Habitat for Humanity
- Inter-Faith Food Shuttle
- Kidznotes
- Latino Educ. Achievement Program

- Museum of Life & Science
- NC Coastal Pines Girl Scouts
- Playworks NC
- REAL Durham
- Reinvestment Partners

- Student U
- The Hill Center
- Village of Wisdom
- Together for Resilient Youth
- Lincoln Community Health Center

CITY & COUNTY AGENCIES

- PUBLIC LIBRARY
- SOCIAL SERVICES
- PARKS & REC
- DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- CITY OF DURHAM
- COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
- PUBLIC HEALTH

BUSINESSES & CIVIC GROUPS

- ROTARY
- CREDIT UNION

LOCAL SCHOOLS & UNIVERSITIES

- Y.E. SMITH ELEMENTARY
- NEAL MIDDLE
- MAUREEN CHARTER
- EASTWAY ELEM SCHOOL
- DUKE HEALTH
- DUKE GARDENS
- NASHER MUSEUM
- KIPP PREP
- DUKE REGIONAL AFFAIRS

EDCI

WHO GOVERNS?

While the role of the backbone is to keep the train on the track and all the cars aligned, there is still a need for a trusted collective of leaders and vested stakeholders providing governance, a group that is seen as the guiding force behind the initiative. How your collective impact initiative is governed will undoubtedly be unique to your community. There is no one set of rules or recommended model. Suffice it to say, it is advisable to have a cross-sector group of community leaders who can provide direction and vision to the overall initiative. Getting the buy-in of the necessary stakeholders within this group will aid in moving your agenda forward. It is important to have key representatives from the major institutions in your community.
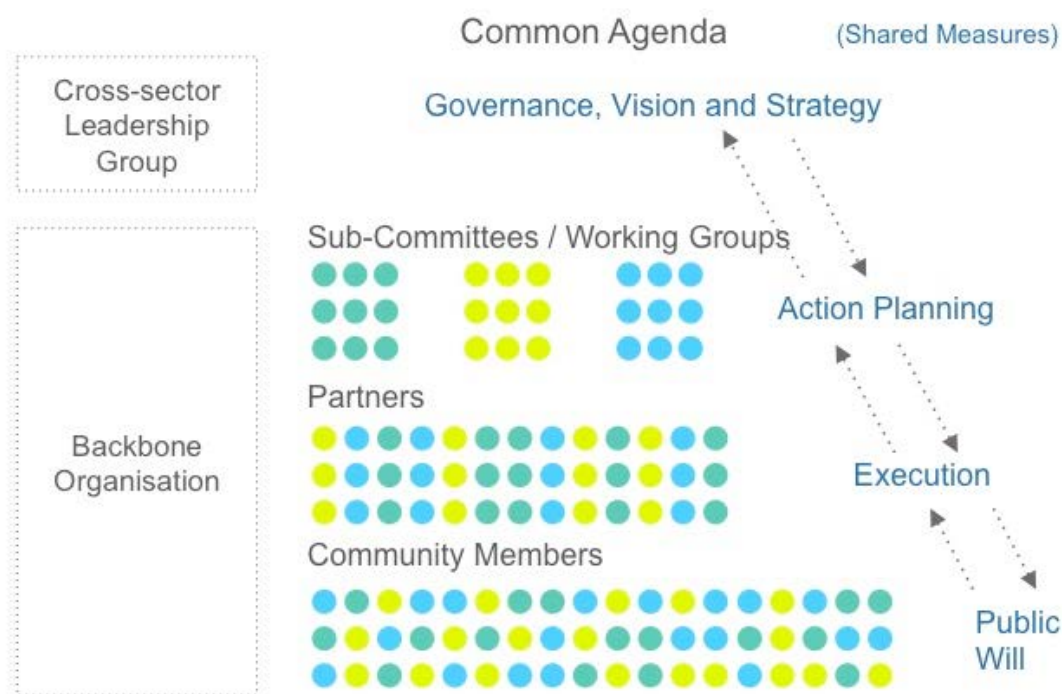

Image Source: Collaboration for Impact

The diagram above provides a good depiction of the different roles, and how they can potentially fit together. As you think about your governance structure, you should give some thought to the roles and responsibilities of the following groups:

Executive Committee – this is the entity that will serve to help galvanize support in the beginning, and maintain support as the initiative proceeds. Members should be individuals with sufficient influence in your community, and have the necessary insight into the needs of your community, its strengths and its weaknesses.

Based on the governance structures from the communities we surveyed, key positions you may want to look for include:

- Major Funder of the Initiative (could be public or private)
- Superintendent from your K-12 System(s)
- Charter School Representative
- County/City Elected Officials
- Early Childhood Services Provider Community Representative (e.g. Pre-K Services)
- Grass Roots Community Leaders
- Business Community (e.g. Chamber President or Major Employers)

Working Groups – No one person or small group of individuals can be an expert on everything. Groups of sector representatives (e.g., business) or early childhood subject matter experts (e.g., prenatal health) can be tasked to produce recommendations, plan reviews, asset inventories, or other deliverables. These groups figured prominently in the initiatives we examined. Given the complexity of early childhood development systems and the sheer volume of work, communities have consistently found this to be a necessary component in building their initiatives.

Citizen/Parent Groups – Citizen and parent groups are important voices, providing valuable input on specific needs, and offering their experiences within the early childhood system. For nearly every initiative we surveyed, the participation of parents and community members was viewed as vital to the success of their launch. Different models were employed, including separate parent advisory groups and full integration of citizens/parents into the leadership structure.

Data Advisory Group – As discussed earlier in this document, data is critically important to the success of an initiative. However, data can be a point of contention. It is not uncommon for community-based initiatives to fail, getting off to a rocky start because of an inability to find needed data or arrive at consensus on the data at hand. You may find it necessary to create a data advisory group of individuals who can wade through contentious data issues and help the community come to consensus on what to measure, and how to measure it.

All communities will have some familiarity with governance models. You may wish to review the people and organizations governing the initiatives in Charlotte and Guilford. Note the broad nature of their committees and the high-profile nature of their members. As outlined above, there are a number of key issues that need to be considered in forming teams. The most challenging dimension of governance is how best to integrate community members, and in particular, parents or family members, into a governance structure. Guilford County has made great strides in this area. From the outset they emphasized the importance of equity as a guiding principle, and of having a family centered model. They currently have a Family Action Learning Team that informs their strategic planning and serves as a feedback loop on their implementation and progress.

THE NEXT STEP'S ON YOU

We hope that this tool helps you to refine thinking and planning around your own early childhood collective impact initiative. It is not intended as a sole source document. There are a number of excellent resources and tools available from the nation's leading authorities on collective impact models. This tool focuses on fusing some of the best insights from these sources with the insights from several of North Carolina's leading and most comprehensive early childhood initiatives. You should seek out as much information as you can on collective impact models, early childhood systems reform, and the many core elements that define success.

In 2018, IEI will be marshalling the talents of leading authorities on early childhood and providing these resources to a small group of North Carolina communities who will participate in an 18-month peer learning collaborative focused on improving local early childhood systems. We hope that this tool can provide assistance to communities seeking to apply for that initiative, as well as others seeking to launch their own initiatives.

LINKS TO OTHER RESOURCES

Stanford Social Innovation Review Collective Impact Resources:

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

Collaboration for Impact:

http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/

The Collective Impact Forum:

https://collectiveimpactforum.org/

Tamarack Institute:

http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI3JKB_frq1QIVUD2BCh0VFQKuEAAYASAAEgIOJ_D_BwE

The NC Pathways Partnership:

http://buildthefoundation.org/pathways-partners/

Harvard Family Research Project:

http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/evaluating-education-reform-early-childhood-education

National Association for the Education of Young Children:

https://www.naeyc.org/ | https://www.naeyc.org/policy/statetrends/data

Centers for Disease Control Child Development Data and Statistics:

https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/data.html

Child Trends Early Childhood Databank:

https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/early-childhood-program-enrollment/

The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education:

http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/general/home.asp

The Office of Early Learning – NCDPI:

http://www.ncpublicschools.org/earlylearning/

Moving the Needle on Third Grade Reading – NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading:

http://buildthefoundation.org/2017/06/new-report-outlines-research-behind-measures-that-move-the-needle-on-third-grade-reading/