PLAYBOOK

NOW

Networks of
Opportunity for
Child Wellbeing

POWERED BY VITAL VILLAGE

Transformative Community
Capacity to Advance Equity

This playbook is published by the Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW), a national network of peer communities and coalitions working to promote child wellbeing, prevent early childhood adversities, and advance equity by eliminating systemic barriers and lifting up community-driven solutions.

NOW Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing
POWERED BY VITAL VILLAGE

Authors
Renee Boynton-Jarrett, MD, ScD
Ronda Alexander, MA
Diana Rivera, MSW, MPH
Tiffany Rodriguez, MPH
Soojin Conover, PhD

Vital Village
BELONG • LEARN • ENGAGE • TRANSFORM
N E T W O R K S

NOW is an initiative of Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center

About Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW)

Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW) is a national initiative to improve the capacity of local communities and coalitions to advance equity. The NOW Innovation Forum is a national network of peer communities working to promote child wellbeing and prevent early childhood adversities. An initiative of Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center launched in 2016, NOW aims to build the capacity of local communities and coalitions working to promote child wellbeing and align early childhood systems of care and education using a trauma-informed lens to advance equity.

https://www.networksofopportunity.org | @NOW_WellChild

About Vital Village Networks

Vital Village Networks, based at Boston Medical Center, builds the capacity of communities to optimize child wellbeing, prevent early life adversities, and advance equity through coalition building, collaboration, leadership development, research, data sharing, and advocacy. Vital Village's community of practice mobilizes cross-sector collaborations, encourages collective learning, and cultivates stronger connections between residents and community-based organizations to co-design community systems-improvement efforts and address structural inequities.

https://www.vitalvillage.org | @Vital_Village

Get Connected

About the Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW) Innovation Forum

The NOW Innovation Forum brings together resources, stories, and other interactive tools in a central online hub, to promote shared learning and networking among communities across the country that are working ensure all children and their families achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Key features include a searchable resource library; the NOW webinar, blog, and podcast series; bright spot stories and profiles; a community forum; and a member directory.

Stay connected at **https://www.networksofopportunity.org/**

Sign up to become a member of our network at
https://www.networksofopportunity.org/connect-now

Share Your Feedback

Contact us to share how you are using the playbook:
vitalvillage@bmc.org

Table of Contents

PLAYBOOK

FORWARD

What would it look like if communities ensured every child, parent, resident, and family equitable access to critical resources and opportunities to lead healthy, thriving lives — and a seat at the table to drive the solutions?

This playbook came to fruition in 2021, 10 years after Vital Village Networks commenced, one year after the first phase of the Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW) Learning Community concluded, and many months after the coronavirus pandemic began torapidly spread across the globe and national protests calling for action to eliminate structural racism and advance racial justice swelled.

The capacity for individuals, organizations, institutions, and coalitions to partner equitably and share power with communities that have faced ongoing racial oppression and marginalization is critical to achieving social transformation and racial justice.

Vital Village Networks, based at Boston Medical Center, builds the capacity of communities to optimize child wellbeing, prevent early life adversities, and advance equity through collaboration, research, data sharing, leadership development, and advocacy. The models, pillars, and frameworks outlined in the playbook were developed in collaboration with residents and partner organizations in Boston, Massachusetts and through the NOW strategic planning process, which engaged stakeholders across the nation to identify key levers of community change.

Between 2018 and 2020, multi-sector leadership teams from 10 peer communities across the US engaged in the NOW Learning Community. This playbook distills elements of their learning journeys and highlights recommendations, additions, and extensions pioneered by the NOW peer communities based on their use of these resources in action.

This playbook is a resource guide designed to provide tools for local leaders, community coalitions and networks, educators, practitioners, and policymakers working to promote the wellbeing of children and families, advance equity, and align systems of care and education in early childhood.

Introduction

In 2016, Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center launched Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW), an initiative to build the capacity of local communities and coalitions working to promote child wellbeing and align early childhood systems of care and education, through an equity and trauma-informed lens.

One of our central goals is to achieve health and educational equity by creating opportunities for every community to access peer support and resources to align systems of education and care in early childhood.

The NOW Playbook serves as a compilation of frameworks, tools, and stories from the NOW Learning Community, reflecting their peer learning journey together from 2018-2020, and seeks to shed light on how local communities are driving the transformations they want for children and families.

As you experience this playbook, you'll be introduced to frameworks, stories, and a variety of strategies to center the dignity of children and their families, from communities across the country. The approaches represented highlight what is possible when stakeholders form and function as a village to help children and families thrive. These are the stories of how our partners have created spaces where all children and families can belong, learn, and engage together to transform outcomes for their communities. We hope you draw ideas and inspiration from these resources and adapt them to advance similar goals and missions in your community.

This Playbook is composed of two complimentary sections: Part I lays out foundational levers of change for community capacity building, and Part II describes a model that supports strategic action and continuous learning to implement these resources and advance collective leadership, co-design, and social transformation (Part II).

> "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."
> —*Nelson Mandela*

PART I

Part I introduces the **NOW Levers of Community Change**, including an overview of each lever, examples of community-based strategies, and examples of learning in action from NOW communities. NOW engaged national stakeholders in a participatory process to identify these levers, and strategically focuses on these five key aspects of equitable community capacity building:

1 **CENTER RACIAL EQUITY AND HEALING:**
Leading the work to advance child wellbeing with racial equity and community healing at the center.

2 **IMPLEMENT SHARED GOVERNANCE:**
Developing inclusive and equitable decision-making structures.

3 **ENGAGE COMMUNITIES AUTHENTICALLY AND WITH DIGNITY:**
Mobilizing broad community involvement and honoring the gifts and experiences brought by those intended to benefit.

4 **DEVELOP AND DISSEMINATE DATA STORIES:**
Using Vital Village Networks' data story methodology to motivate alignment, inform iterative improvements, and monitor progress by identifying and measuring shared benchmarks and effectively communicating with policymakers and public stakeholders.

5 **PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY:**
Spreading and scaling up local efforts through sustainability planning and integrated funding.

PART II

Part II introduces **Vital Village Networks' 90-Day Challenge model.** NOW has used this foundational tool to strengthen community capacity, collaboration, and systems transformation. The 90-Day Challenge offers an accessible and iterative strategy and process for addressing the levers of change.

This section outlines the seven key steps of this continuous learning process:

1 **LEAD WITH LISTENING:** Set a foundation for equitable and sustainable partnerships.

2 **LEAD TOGETHER:** Establish practices of co-leadership.

3 **SHARE POWER:** Develop explicit shared governance and decision-making processes.

4 **PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLNESS:** Encourage self-care and adaptability to support sustainability.

5 **MOVE FROM IDEA TO ACTION:** Recognize and build upon assets and operationalize equity.

4 **LEARN CONTINUOUSLY:** Invest in learning from both successes and failures.

5 **REFLECT PERIODICALLY:** Build practices and use data to improve equity.

Part II also spotlights the learning journeys of NOW peer communities using the 90-Day Challenge model.

Our aim is to enable all children to achieve optimal health and wellbeing and eliminate inequities. We hope that this playbook serves as a starting point, a source of inspiration, and a practical resource to add to your toolbox. This guide is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to offer a comprehensive set of tools, ideas, and experiences, and to spark collaborative actions and progress. Each community context is unique and dynamic, and this work is neither straightforward nor identical across neighborhoods, cities, or regions. We know that we are not alone in this work; we are proud to be part of this national network of changemakers, and we look forward to collaborating on the important work still ahead.

Levers of Community Change

Community and systems transformation start from the ground up. The strengths, assets, and wisdom of those most impacted by structural inequities are the cornerstone of sustainable solutions that ultimately create healthy, thriving communities of opportunity for all children.

As community networks, grassroots coalitions, and parent-led campaigns mobilize to address inequities in early care and education — and to expand access to health care, resources, and opportunities to achieve educational and economic wellbeing — wisdom from both research and practice are revealing important common threads that help facilitate successful and impactful initiatives.

Levers of Community Change

In 2016, NOW convened a diverse, cross-sector group including parents, caregivers, advocates, educators, practitioners, and other stakeholders, with an ambitious goal: to co-design a robust community capacity-building infrastructure to support community efforts to advance equity and achieve optimal child and family wellbeing by transforming and aligning systems of care and education in early childhood, using a trauma-informed and equity-focused lens.

Drawing upon the lessons learned from Vital Village Networks' history of community engagement and empowerment in Boston, this strategic planning process yielded a theory of action that established the foundation for the NOW initiative and its framework for building local community capacity. **Five key levers of community change** emerged from the NOW theory of action as critical domains of action and collaboration that can drive equitable and inclusive systems alignment and transformation — moving those most impacted by inequity from the margins to the center. These levers of community change foster equitable leadership through strategies that uphold and honor dignity.

FIVE KEY LEVERS OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

Lever 2
Implement Shared Governance

Lever 4
Tell Data Stories

Lever 1
Center Racial Equity and Healing

Lever 3
Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity

Lever 5
Plan for Sustainability

⚙ Lever 1: Center Racial Equity and Healing

OVERVIEW

Equity is achieved when every person has the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential for health, education, and wellness. In a just and equitable society, quality of life and wellbeing are within reach for all, regardless of social position, identities, characteristics, or social circumstances (such as gender, race, ethnicity, immigration history, sexual orientation, ability, gender identity, and socioeconomic status).

Structural racism must be addressed in order to build community capacity and create equitable outcomes for all. This requires examining and transforming interconnected policies, laws, institutional practices, ideologies, and norms that systematically disadvantage or privilege certain racial groups relative to others. As a system, racism generates and maintains differential opportunities based on a racial hierarchy and is a central driver of inequities. Social classifications, such a race and gender, intersect and mutually constitute experiences of oppression and privilege. Intersectionality is an important lens to understand the root causes of structural inequities and how forms of power interact and impact individual and group experiences.[1].

The vision of racial equity is a world with the highest level of health, education, and wellbeing for all people, regardless of racial or ethnic background — especially for those who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage or historical injustices (adapted from Healthy People 2020). A racial equity lens recognizes the why and how of racial and social inequities — their historical, structural, and systemic root causes, and the processes that perpetuate and uphold barriers to opportunity. Such a perspective reveals that differential outcomes, such as the racial wealth gap or disproportionate access to healthcare by race, are neither natural nor inevitable.

More often than not, low-income communities and communities of color bear the disproportionate burden of health, economic, and educational inequities. A commitment to racial equity calls upon us all to confront histories of oppression and eliminate structural racism in all of its pernicious forms, including the systemic barriers that prevent families and children — particularly children of color from the prenatal period

About This Section

This section delves into the five levers of community change. We illustrate the power of each lever through the following elements:

Overview: A description of the lever and why it is important for coalition building and community transformation.

Stories in Action: Examples of how coalitions in the NOW Learning Community are successfully using the lever to strengthen local capacity.

Village Strategies: An offering of strategies from Vital Village Networks and the NOW Learning Community that coalitions and community leaders can consider when working to strengthen the lever.

Tools and Resources: A select menu of accessible tools that leaders can use to apply these strategies in their own work.

⚙ Lever 1: Center Racial Equity and Healing

to age 5 — from accessing and utilizing supports and resources needed to thrive. Racial justice requires intentional and proactive work to create policies and systems that produce and maintain equity in access, opportunities, and power.

Centering racial equity involves:

- Increasing opportunities for children of color and the adults who care for them;

- Eradicating resource and opportunity gaps;

- Redistributing resources, benefits, and rewards in ways that eliminate and do not exacerbate longstanding racial inequities;

- Enacting sustainable, comprehensive, multi-sector policies and programs to advance racial equity and dismantle structural racism by addressing interconnected institutions, policies, and practices rooted in and reinforced by ideologies of white supremacy;

- Advancing racial justice through proactive actions, policies, and systems aimed at producing and sustaining equity in access, opportunities, and power; and

- Co-creating a society that supports human rightsand liberation.

Using a Structural Lens to Prevent and Mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and toxic community environments may have an enduring and detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of children as they progress in life. These negative experiences — such as chronic hunger, exposure to community and state-sanctioned violence, child abuse or neglect, and housing and economic instability — can significantly impact young children's development. They also contribute to inequities in educational, health, and economic outcomes throughout the course of their life.

While great progress has been made to ensure that children of color and their families can thrive in healthy, resilient, nurturing environments, not every child has been able to benefit from these investments and opportunities. Far too many families are facing racist policies and racial biases that pervade residential housing, education, health, and early childhood education and care systems, and are grappling with intergenerational and historical trauma associated with racism, displacement, and legacies of oppression.

⚙ **Lever 1:** Center Racial Equity and Healing

While great progress has been made to ensure that children of color and their families can thrive in healthy, resilient, nurturing environments, not every child has been able to benefit from these investments and opportunities. Far too many families are facing racist policies and racial biases that pervade residential housing, education, health, and early childhood education and care systems, and are grappling with intergenerational and historical trauma associated with racism, displacement, and legacies of oppression.

Building a culture of health that ensures all children grow healthy and strong and advances systems to create and sustain equity for children for whom this has long been denied — Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other children of color and immigrant children — requires a paradigm shift. The gravity of this moment calls for a new model, one that (a) considers how adverse social environments and structures in early childhood impact wellbeing over the course of life, and (b) integrates an equity lens to understand these patterns of exposure are not random, rather systematically influenced by structural inequities. A racial justice framework is needed to create sustainable systems and opportunity structures to promote equitable prosperity. The equity movement has spurred powerful action from leaders, parents, and advocates who believe it is possible to transform systems to center the needs of the children facing the most entrenched inequities. Local communities are coming together, challenging structural inequities that are leaving too many children behind, and designing sustainable solutions to make sure every child has the best start of life possible.

⚙️ Lever 1: Center Racial Equity and Healing

Stories in Action: Centering Racial Equity and Healing

Voices and Choices for Children Coalition (Twin Cities, Minnesota). This coalition explicitly names racial equity in its mission statement: "to build capacity and amplify the voices of communities of color and American Indian communities to ensure they have an impact on public policy and practice and remove systemic barriers in order to create the conditions in which racial and social justice thrive." The coalition works collaboratively to develop strongly engaged cultural communities of learning, organizing, and advocacy for their input, and impact in shaping more equitable practices and policies that will support better outcomes, specifically for children of color and American Indian children prenatal to 8 years old across the state.

Berkeley Early Care and Education (BEE) Collective (Berkeley County, South Carolina). BEE Collective was developed to address discriminatory exclusion and expulsion rates in early learning settings, disproportionately affecting Black boys, in their community and across the state. The Collective focuses on the impact of implicit racial bias in the early education system and works with community leaders to develop solutions. They use community and public data to raise attention to this equity issue and have developed a multi-pronged approach to address it at the community and state level. Locally, they offer mental health, inclusion, and curriculum support to centers serving students of color, who are disproportionately impacted by expulsion. They also engage in state-level advocacy to better support parents and teachers and invest in training to reduce implicit racial bias in the maternal health and education system and to build capacity for equitable treatment of children and families.

Essex County Council for Young Children (ECCYC; Newark, New Jersey). The ECCYC health committee focuses on building early education and care systems that are responsive to adverse childhood experiences and trauma. Using a multi-sector collaborative approach, they established the goal of making Newark a trauma-informed early care and education community. The ECCYC works to foster parent leadership and engage a wide range of partners from across sectors — including education, health care, and business — to invest in and align around this collective goal.

⚙ Lever 1: Center Racial Equity and Healing

Village Strategies

Name racism as a root cause of health, economic, and social inequities. Understanding and recognizing the levels or racism (internal, interpersonal, and institutional) and learning about the historical forces that have driven its current form is crucial to identify strategies to dismantle it. Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones's "A Gardener's Tale" provides a framework for understanding and recognizing various levels of racism and its impact on health and wellbeing.[2] A first step to addressing structural racism is to acknowledge that it exists, and that, as a system, it perpetuates and reinforces other levels of racism.

Commit to eliminating structural racism and achieving racial equity as a central — not separate — part of your work. Naming, acknowledging, and learning about structural racism is an important step, but the critical work doesn't stop there. Dismantling structural racism should be a central aim, interwoven into all early childhood education, public health, and education systems change and alignment efforts, and not a secondary or separate side project. Deep reflection and honest internal examination of how you and your group, organization, or institution are doing in terms of key equity and trauma-informed practices are important steps to identify growth areas and focus your efforts to embed antiracist organizational practices.

Embrace difficult and meaningful conversations around racial trauma. In the NOW Learning Community, members worked over time to develop a shared agreement and vocabulary to better understand race-based trauma and racial equity. Taking these courageous and brave steps was challenging and at times uncomfortable. Yet creating a space to welcome and affirm differences and remain in conversation was vital for both individuals and the group to move from a space of comfort to a "stretch zone" where multiple perspectives, diverse experiences, identities, and different learning styles were valued — creating a strong foundation for collective action to address social and structural inequities. These individual and group approaches catalyzed the development of new policies and practices within coalitions to build organizational capacity to promote racial equity.

⚙️ Lever 1: Center Racial Equity and Healing

Village Strategies

Use data and stories to identify who is most impacted by inequities — and engage these communities in meaningful leadership opportunities. Quantitative data (such as health outcomes or community demographics), qualitative data, and rich narrative stories are all essential elements to tell the full story of a community or family, and the opportunities and equity challenges they are facing. Disaggregated data can help you zero-in on who is facing the greatest health, economic, or social inequities and to prioritize engagement, leadership, and resource investments. Public data is one important source of information; diverse multi-media approaches — such as capturing family stories through video or photos — can also be powerful tools to identify equity challenges.

Create and honor brave spaces for indigenous people and people of color. The majority of participants in the NOW Learning Community identified as people of color. Several Learning Community participants shared that it was the first national, majority-people-of-color space focused on early care and education that they had experienced. Participants shared that they were able to unapologetically bring their whole selves to the experience while simultaneously tapping into a safe and supportive network. Honoring brave spaces for communities of color can create opportunities for transformative and intimate conversations.

⚙️ Lever 1: Center Racial Equity and Healing

Tools

Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-to Manual (Government Alliance on Race and Equity). Racial equity action plans can put a theory of change into action to drive institutional and structural change and achieve a collective vision of racial equity. This manual provides guidance for local governments to develop their own racial equity action plans after a period of research and information gathering, including advice and tools for conducting this research.

A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity (Center for Disease Control and Prevention). This comprehensive tool provides lessons learned and innovative ideas on how to maximize the effects of policy, systems, and environmental improvement strategies — all with the goal of reducing health disparities and advancing health equity.

The Working Principles for Health Justice & Racial Equity Organizational Self-Assessment (The Praxis Project). This tool supports organizations or programs to reflect on the ways in which they embody health justice and racial equity in practice, and identify opportunities for growth and improvement. Included are five working principles, and what each principle encompasses.

Early Childhood System Performance Assessment Toolkit: Advancing Parent Engagement & Equity Items (Center for the Study of Social Policy; CSSP). This set of tools helps groups measure various aspects of how well your local early childhood system is working, including key equity metrics.

Resources

Manifesto for Race Equity & Parent Leadership in Early Childhood Systems (Center for the Study of Social Policy). A group of 40 parent leaders and agency staff from nine Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Communities (EC-LINC) communities, with support from CSSP staff and consultants, came together to create this Manifesto for Race Equity and Parent Leadership in Early Childhood.

Equity Manifesto (PolicyLink). The Equity Manifesto has been inspired by the work, commitments, insights, and resolve of the many partners with whom PolicyLink has shared the journey of advancing racial and economic equity.

⚙ Lever 2: Implement Shared Governance

OVERVIEW

Shared governance is a central feature of effective and equitable community coalitions, networks, and other collaborative entities that involve a diverse group of stakeholders at the table. Shared governance can be understood as decision making that values inclusion and embraces diverse input from members. This form of decision-making is grounded in principles of shared accountability and ownership.[5] This lever focuses on the power structures, operational processes, and systems that shape decision making within a community group or coalition: How are decisions made? Who implements and upholds the decisions? How is power distributed, by whom, and on whose authority?

Equitable and inclusive decision-making structures translate values into practice through an explicit governance structure where power, roles, and authority are intentionally shared across levels, members, and groups within a coalition. Shared governance prioritizes the voices and perspectives of members who are most impacted by an issue as central and not supplementary.

Building strong and effective coalitions with shared governance infrastructure takes time and intention to adopt processes that are equitable, inclusive, respectful of each member's contributions, and centered on the participation and role of those most impacted by inequity. These processes should be ongoing and iterative, with specific attention to how equity is or is not supported by coalition structures and practices — from coalition formation, membership, leadership roles, governance, and decision-making processes to quality improvement and evaluation methods.

Shared governance can be understood as "shared decision-making based on the principles of partnership, equity, accountability, and ownership. This model empowers all members... to have a voice in decision-making, thus encouraging diverse and creative input that will help advance...the missions of the organization" (Chapter 1, Shared Governance, 2006).

⚙️ Lever 2: Implement Shared Governance

Stories in Action: Distributive Leadership

Generations Forward Children's Collaborative (Whatcom County, Washington). One of the Collaborative's key aims during the NOW Learning Community was to formalize and support family-centric processes, power, and leadership within its governance infrastructure. In the early years of the program, Generations Forward was led by the Family Council, a Family Champion who helped to lead the Council, and the Coordinating Council. The Family Council was a group of parents whose expertise comes from their lived experience, while the Coordinating Council provided oversight for the overall implementation plan of the initiative. These groups met regularly with one another for information and skill sharing, and also hosted quarterly Generations Forward meetings that were open to the public. The administrative team, made up of staff at Whatcom County Public Health and Opportunity Council, met regularly to plan, coordinate cross-council and action team activities, and facilitate decision making across the collaborative. Generations Forward continues to regularly assess the strengths of and challenges to its governance structure to ensure it remains accountable to families, most recently leading to the dissolution of the Coordinating Council was dissolved and the elevation of the Family Council as the main leading body. The Family Council has since led a number of initiatives focused on family engagement, anti-racist practices, local systems alignment, and expanded leadership roles for Family Champions.

Austin Neighborhood Network (Chicago, Illinois). This coalition is actively working to ensure that all young children (ages 0-5) in Chicago's Austin neighborhood have access to quality early learning programs by 2025. With guidance and support from United Way, Austin Neighborhood Network's backbone organization, Austin Coming Together (ACT), holds formal Memoranda of Agreements with each network partner that outline common agreements, shared goals, and aligned activities. The network has a multi-tier governance structure that allows member organizations to engage and participate in a range of ways, depending on capacity: core members inform decisions and set strategic goals, and supportive members play important planning and implementation roles. The network is organized by committees categorized by function or topic, including a steering committee; fiscal oversight; communication; and issue area workgroups, such as early childhood. Network members meet regularly to review collaboration and progress, and maintain a rolling three-year strategic plan process with quarterly reviews. Approximately 90% of the network's steering committee and ACT Board members are residents of Austin neighborhood.

⚙ Lever 2: Implement Shared Governance

Village Strategies

Reassess and deconstruct your current decision-making "table." Designing your group's decision-making structure and processes in a way that reflects your values and vision as a group can take time and multiple iterations. Whether a new or established group, building in regular check points around the following questions if helpful: Who decides? Who participates? Who benefits? How is power perceived and shared? Are there named or unnamed, conscious or unconscious, dominant norms, beliefs, and expectations that shape how decisions are made in your group? Decision-making structures and processes are often rooted in white, dominant professional norms that are not reflective or representative of the shared values and experiences of diverse groups of community leaders. Embracing stories and data that capture process, not just outcomes, is important to gauge whether your current structure is achieving your goals.

Work toward role clarity and aligned goals. A shared understanding of each person or organization's role in a coalition, collaborative, or network is critical, as is alignment around a common vision, mission, and goals. Mapping out the strengths, assets, passions, and the "why" of each member person is involved can help deepen this understanding. Building trusting relationships can foster a culture of openness to try different strategies, test new ideas, and learn from mistakes. Building in regular review and assessment practices also allows you to adapt and course correct in live time.

Develop and commit to a community accountability structure. Accountability is commonly viewed as reporting to a funder or other decisionmaker. But shared governance requires building diverse and participatory accountability structures that consider the role, authority, and perspectives of community members. Community accountability structures ask coalitions and groups to take responsibility for whether their efforts have actually made a positive impact on people's lives, health, wellbeing, and livelihoods.

⚙️ Lever 2: Implement Shared Governance

Tools

Creating an Inclusive and Equitable Process for Planning and Implementation (Racial Equity Tools). This tip sheet focuses on four issues related to equitable planning and implementation: decision making, process issues, practices, and accountability. The tips included in this resource apply to a wide variety of group structures and activities, including coalitions, collaborations, system interactions, and dialogue processes.

The Tension of Turf: Making It Work for the Coalition (Prevention Institute). The Tension of Turf is the companion tool to Prevention Institute's coalition-building guide, Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight Step Guide. "Turf-ism" can be defined as non-cooperation or conflict between organizations with seemingly common goals or interests. Whether over resources, recognition, or control, turf struggles can threaten coalition vitality. This guide was developed as a tool to help practitioners working within coalitions to identify, address, and manage turf issues.

Building Diverse Community Based Coalitions (The Praxis Project). Most activists have figured out that engaging a broad cross-section of people in support of an issue is a good thing. This tool offers guidance on what is important to take into account in efforts to build diverse community-based coalitions.

Ladder of Citizen Participation (Sherry Arnstein). This tool describes how empowered public institutions and officials deny power to citizens, and how levels of citizen agency, control, and power can be increased. Also view Elizabeth Rocha's Ladder of Empowerment and Roger Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation.

Resources

The Shared Power Principle (Centre for Public Impact). This framework locates power within the lowest appropriate entities both across and within organizations and creates the environment for this shared power to be used to develop effective and legitimate solutions. This tool outlines four patterns of the principle: subsidiarity, relationships, accountability and learning.

Shifting Power from the Inside Out (Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) and RoadMap). The report offers a new framework for community-based organizations on the evolution from member-based to member-led organizational structure, culture, and practice. At a time when political leaders in the U.S. are using rhetoric and policy to terrorize and silence immigrant communities, Shifting Power demonstrates how we can back immigrant women as the leaders our movements need.

Early Learning Multnomah Parent Accountability Council. This brief video outlines the mission of the Parent Accountability Council and the impact of elevating parent voice in early learning.

Lever 3: Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity – Strategies to Expand Parent and Community Leadership

OVERVIEW

Many community engagement processes view community members as the beneficiaries of services or interventions, rather than as the designers and drivers of community solutions. For Vital Village Networks, authentic community engagement is an ongoing process that supports intentional pathways to expanded leadership for community stakeholders. Using co-design, a participatory approach to develop innovations cooperatively with community partners, can honor the dignity of all residents and expand parent and community leadership at every stage of the process — from visioning and planning, to decision making and implementation.

Sustainable and culturally relevant solutions emerge when the process of developing them is driven and led by the wisdom, voices, and experiences of those who are directly affected by a community issue. Elevating community resident leadership ensures that the framework, planning, implementation, and evaluation of a community effort are responsive to their needs, preferences, strengths, and assets.

Buy-in, support, and trust from diverse stakeholders and community members are critical factors in shaping the longevity and long-term success of any collaborative effort to remove barriers to wellbeing and improve outcomes for residents. Any coalition should transparently define the desired end goal of a community engagement process in partnership with community stakeholders to minimize the risk of unintentionally exacerbating inequity. If widening opportunities for community and parent leadership is an explicit goal of community engagement, for example, coalitions and organizations will need to examine key internal structures — such as decision-making processes, roles, meeting schedules, and resource allocations — and be willing to rebalance power in ways that allow community members to take on meaningful leadership roles.

Lever 3: Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity – Strategies to Expand Parent and Community Leadership

Stories in Action: Authentic Community Engagement with Dignity

Young Child Wellness Council (YCWC, Tuscaloosa, Alabama). During their time with the NOW Learning Community, YCWC leaders sought to shift institutional practices to better center family voices, starting with changes to how they worked with residents of the Crescent East community (located in a rural public housing facility that has historically received a range of services from the city and county). The Council implemented engagement strategies to build stronger relationships and trust with residents as active partners, meeting residents in the neighborhood – instead of a county office – and listening deeply around resource needs and assets. They continue to work to center community voice in their cross-system development, strengthening the ways in which outreach, prevention, early intervention, and maternal and child health services are designed and implemented in communities in their region.

Conectando, formally Moving Ahead Adelante* (Jefferson County, Colorado). The coalition works to enhance the social capital of Spanish-speaking/Latine children and families concentrated in under-resourced communities through neighborhood-level strategies for community impact, advocacy, and policy development connected to formal systems. Their monthly network meetings have been a critical structure for continued family engagement and leadership development, providing a space where families, parents, and Spanish-speaking family service providers come together to discuss programming, gaps, and successes. These potluck-style meetings allow attendees to share the gifts of family recipes and shared meals, and are structured to uplift parents as experts of their own lives and treat them with the same professional respect as agency leaders. Meetings are intentionally facilitated to center parents in speaking time and space in the room, with agency staff and partners stepping back and taking a listening role. Additionally, all meetings are conducted using language justice principles, with Spanish serving as the primary language of discussion. English-speaking members utilize simultaneous or consecutive interpretation to participate, decentering English as the dominant language of the room. The members of Adelante chose to change the name to Conectando because there were other efforts in the community with the same name. After a series of idea-sharing and brainstorming sessions, the members chose the name Conectando to reflect what this network does: connect families to services, services to experts, and individuals to community.

Lever 3: Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity – Strategies to Expand Parent and Community Leadership

Stories in Action: Authentic Community Engagement with Dignity

Essex County Council for Young Children (

ECCYC, Newark, New Jersey). ECCYC serves as a leading statewide model for authentic parent engagement and leadership. A majority of the members are parents, many of whom hold key leadership roles. They are actively working with peer communities to share their trauma-informed and parent leadership approach across the state of New Jersey, serving as a model for other county councils for young children. In the past five years, they have engaged over 600 parents and other stakeholders through meetings, activities, testimonials, and advocacy activities. Parents actively engage in state policy and advocacy processes, providing testimony at state hearings on topics such as pre-K expansion and access to school break-fast. Most recently, they launched a parent leadership develop-ment cohort and training series that allows parents to serve as ambassadors and information hubs in their community for resources related to ACEs and trauma-informed services.

McKinley County Early Childhood Coalition

(MCECC, Navajo Nation, New Mexico). As part of the Family Leadership Institute and the University New Mexico Family Development Program, this coalition is building leadership capacity among a cohort of parent leaders who are receiving services from early childhood programs across the area. A total of 16 family leaders participated in an initial two-day Family Leadership Institute program and continue to work closely as new members of the MCECC to align parent engagement and outreach efforts in the Navajo Nation community. To ensure that parent leaders are valued for their time and participation, the coalition provides incen-tives to assist families with childcare and gas, if needed.

Lever 3: Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity – Strategies to Expand Parent and Community Leadership

Village Strategies

Engage in deep listening to nurture trust and meaningful connections. Deep listening requires undoing what many of us have been taught about how to engage with others and with new ideas and perspectives. Nurturing trust, building community buy-in, and strengthening new or existing relationships are all essential components of building effective coalitions, and take time and commitment. Key practices that members of collaborative groups can take toward this end include being fully present, approaching a space with openness, and committing to learn and better understand the roots of other people's perspective and experiences. This includes understanding, respecting, and building upon existing relationships between and among community leaders; actively checking assumptions and preconceived mental models; and honoring diverse cultural practices and perspectives in order to foster deeper and more authentic community connections.

Assess current community engagement activities and invest in leadership pathways. The Community Engagement Continuum is a helpful tool to regularly assess how your group or coalition is currently engaging community members and parents, create leadership pathways, and to track improvement over time. Parents and other community leaders should collaboratively assess the degree of leadership and engagement community members currently possess. Establish a goal for where on the continuum the group aspires to be, and develop strategies to move toward that goal. This process can support coalitions to build pathways to advance community leadership over time and plan for additional resources and support as needed. Consider ways that you begin to shift community member roles and positions in your current structure from active participant or member to active leadership, co-leadership, or key decision maker.

Examples of community stakeholder engagement strategies utilized by members of the NOW Learning Community include the following:

- **Recruiting community leaders to serve as ambassadors or engage in advocacy activities;**

- **Hosting outreach events in the community to build new relationships;**

- **Facilitating visioning sessions with community members to define strategic directions;**

- **Strengthening community engagement and leadership as a central practice to agency partnership development; and**

- **Hosting or partnering to organize parent capacity building or training sessions focused on leadership development, such as the Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) model.**

Lever 3: Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity – Strategies to Expand Parent and Community Leadership

Village Strategies

Design meetings with community leaders. Coalition meetings and gatherings should be intentionally designed to be accessible to and inclusive of a broad range of community members and parents. Hosting meetings during business hours is often not conducive to busy parents who are working and juggling school schedules; instead, try evening or even weekend hours to maximize access and participation. The location and format of the meetings also matter; for safe in-person gatherings, is the location easily accessible by most parents and by public transit? For virtual meetings, do parents have the necessary software and devices to be fully present and partici pate? Human-centered design principles can guide coalitions in the critical work of embracing flexibility and proactively plan- ning meetings with community members in mind.

Invest ample time and resources into authentic, inclusive community engagement processes. Authentic community engagement and sustainable local capacity building require time and resources. They also require flexibility in plan- ning and timelines — not just in setting meetings dates, times, and locations, but also in planning time and opportunities to get to know team members and partners. Building relationships and trust is an ongoing process that is important not only at the start of a new collaboration but throughout its duration. Investing time and both human and financial resources is also important. Consider the capacities and team members needed to fully reach and engage with community members, as well as resources needed to host and organize outreach events, parent support groups, and community kick-off and other events. Investing in resources that support language and technology justice is crucial to prevent unintentional exclusion and barriers to participation. Consider allocating resources to translate materials or provide interpretation at meetings and to ensure access (and potential) training for any necessary technologies.

Lever 3: Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity – Strategies to Expand Parent and Community Leadership

Tools

Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement (Urban Institute).
This report offers a guide for those seeking innovative, effective, and responsible approaches to support residents of low-income housing communities through community building and engagement efforts that address community-level trauma.

Parent Engagement & Leadership Assessment Guide & Toolkit (Center for the Study of Social Policy).
This resource is designed to help agencies, systems, and collaboratives working with young children and their families to chart an expanded approach to family engagement.

The Power of Community Wisdom in Advancing Health Justice & Racial Equity (The Praxis Project).
The Praxis Project's work with base building community partners consistently shows that building community power through supporting community organizing is crucial to improving health justice and racial equity across issues, and that there are opportunities to strengthen collaboration with traditional public health and allied partners. This brief introduces the Centering Community in Public Health - Learning Circle Brief Series with lessons learned and recommendations for centering community in public health.

Resources

Abriendo Puertas.
Abriendo Puertas / Opening Doors is the nation's first evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents with children ages 0–5 to be advocates and leaders for themselves and their young children.

Community Organizing and Family Issues.
Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) aims to strengthen the power and voice of low-income and working families at all levels of civic life — from local institutions and communities to local, state, and federal policy arenas. It is a center and a resource for family-focused organizing, leadership development, and community building focused on the wellbeing of children, youth, and families.

⚙ Lever 4: Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

OVERVIEW

Data is only as powerful as the stories behind it. When equity is placed at the forefront, stories and key messages can elevate communities' strengths, potentials, and strivings in ways that resonate with and move audiences to take action. Conversely, when data is shared without a narrative context the interpretation and actions that follow may be misdirected and further reinforce inequities.

Community-driven data collection, analysis, and communication can serve as powerful tools for system transformation, from conveying a community's vision for health and equity, to effectively evaluating programs, to acting as a catalyst to improve the health of young children. Strengths-based data capacity building involves ongoing work within coalitions: creating consensus around use of existing data, linking data systems and sharing information, developing feasible methods of data collection, and identifying meaningful benchmarks (and the associated metrics and indicators) to capture progress, outcomes, and impact.

⚙ **Lever 4:** Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

Data Story Methodology

A "data story" serves as a tool for positive change by translating relevant quantitative and qualitative information into a compelling narrative, often tailored to a specific audience. It occurs when a community develops an intentional narrative around why certain policies, practices, and programs are needed to resolve a particular challenge, using storytelling strategies that illustrate a process or historical trend, describe relationships and structures, or make the case for a key message or ask. Data stories focus on solutions that communities have developed rather than solely describing problems. In this way they offer a more comprehensive, complex, and holistic view of a community. Data stories can be utilized as an intervention to highlight synergies and shared goals and to promote cross-sector alignment, and ultimately can help communities track and evaluate progress.

The data story methodology follows a simple process with three components:

Use diverse forms of data to identify and describe why a given issue is important and how it impacts child wellbeing, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide broader context. Including visual and digital media (like photography or video), observational data, and nontraditional sources of data (such as Google analytics, media, and municipal reporting systems) can help capture community assets and resources.

Offer positive, strengths-based framing that moves from a deficit model to an actionable platform to design a data story. For example, communities that are outperforming predicted expectations based on traditional metrics (such as census tract data) may be dismissed as outliers. Using strengths-based framing, outliers can be reclaimed as "bright spots," or solutions to learn from. This approach may be useful in developing a more nuanced and comprehensive picture of a community, learning from and scaling existing solutions, and spurring systemic changes to promote child wellbeing.

Engage in participatory, community-engaged and iterative processes to frame research questions, design processes, and interpret and disseminate the data, in ways that move the dial toward programmatic and policy solutions and systems-level change.

Vital Village Networks developed this data story methodology with partners in our Community Data Workgroup, through the development of a community dashboard (Village Vital Signs), and diverse narrative engagement strategies, such as digital storytelling workshops. During the NOW strategic planning period and in partnership with NOW partners and advisors — Children's HealthWatch, Dr. Ayesha McAdams-Mahmoud, and learning community coalitions — we continued to refine this methodology to develop communities' abilities to articulate their stories in compelling ways to move progress, action, and transformation.

⚙ Lever 4: Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

Stories in Action: Collective Capacity Building

Child Wellbeing Tracker: Measuring collective actions and impact. The Child Wellbeing Tracker is an interactive online data dashboard developed collaboratively by the NOW Learning Community to capture collective actions to advance child wellbeing across its coalitions. Using a participatory approach, the NOW Learning Community coalitions came to consensus on a shared measure of child wellbeing: collective actions to promote parent and family engagement. Parent and family engagement play a crucial role in improving the health and wellbeing of children, but is rarely highlighted or measured as a benchmark or indicator for child wellbeing. Through the NOW Learning Community, coalitions participated in periodic, semi-structured reflections on parent and family engagement activities and shared existing meeting and event data. A data summary was created from these reflections and reviewed and edited by the coalitions, and became the **Child Wellbeing Tracker.** Co-designing data-sharing efforts to measure collective actions using a participatory approach to determine significant benchmarks for child wellbeing led to the prioritization of an underappreciated indicator — parent and family engagement — and the development of a dashboard to share information. The Child Wellbeing Tracker tells a story about the importance of parent and family engagement in advancing child wellbeing and health equity.

Data story posters. As a data storytelling practice, NOW Learning Community coalitions created digital data story posters to share their narratives using data. The coalitions defined an outcome and indicator of interest, worked collaboratively with the NOW team to identify existing data, and co-developed baseline data maps illustrating the populations and health inequity issues in their regions. Because the visualization of geographically disaggregated data can reveal spatial inequities, baseline data maps are a useful component of data stories. At the same time, a strength-based approach can be used to tell a positive data story. While many conventional data systems still widely use a deficit-based approach, the NOW Learning Community discussed and practiced some of the ways data can demonstrate strengths instead of deficits, such as modeling the share of residents who achieved a goal rather than the share who did not achieve the same outcome. The coalitions also incorporated qualitative data, including stories and photos from the community, to develop narratives of community change and illustrate the impact of local grassroots advocacy. Using a strength-based approach to engage with data helped members identify new and positive ways to describe neighborhoods and communities.

⚙ Lever 4: Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

Stories in Action: Collective Capacity Building

Berkeley Early Care and Education (BEE) Collective (Berkeley County, South Carolina). The BEE Collective has continuously used data to develop intentional narratives. With a data management system in place, the coalition regularly collects and analyzes data to inform its work and uses data gallery walks and data storytelling to communicate and share data with different stakeholders, including state representatives and community members. The coalition actively uses geographically disaggregated data to demonstrate the spatial regional dimensions of inequity Berkeley County — such as identifying childcare deserts — which provides evidence to guide discussions around potential interventions.

Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood Education (LIFE) Project (New York, New York). The LIFE Project aims to increase access to NYC's Pre-K/3-K programs through outreach and one-on-one enrollment support implemented by core coalition partners. They actively use data to inform their project by employing a tool designed by the coalition to collect data related to outreach, referrals, applications and enrollment, and information about families served and their school choices. The coalition has strengthened its capacity to gather and use qualitative data, such as parents' perceived outcomes and experiences, and continuously communicates data and relevant stories with policy stakeholders.

⚙ Lever 4: Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

Village Strategies

Apply an equity lens to data. When a data story aims to address a racial/ethnic, health, or socioeconomic inequity, applying an equity lens in the interpretation of the data is an essential approach. Disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, geography, and income can reveal hidden patterns. Data disaggregated by race and ethnicity can reveal the existence and magnitude of racial inequities in certain health outcomes. Disaggregating data geographically can shed light on spatial inequities. For example, data on the annual prevalence of young children with confirmed blood lead levels at the county level will present the average lead level across cities and neighborhoods within that county. Using census tract-level data can highlight the distribution of children's blood lead levels at a geographic unit closer to the neighborhood level. This can bring to light differences between census tracts that may be hidden if only viewing county-level data.

Use strengths-based frameworks to interpret and understand data. Choices about the frames used with respect to data reporting reflect the values that underpin a coalition's work. If an organization wants to understand and uplift community assets and strengths, and not just deficits and challenges, it is important to model this in a coalition's data and measurement of community attributes.

Create counter stories. Developed by Professor Lee Anne Bell at the Barnard School of Education, the Storytelling Project outlines four types of stories that are "connected and mutually reinforcing": stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories, and counter stories.[6] Counter stories are new narratives and stories that not only deliberately challenge stock stories, but suggest new ways to envision and transform society. In the NOW Learning Community, coalitions actively worked to create new counter stories about their communities as a guiding north star for their work, to reframe common topics and issues in the early care and education field. Creating new narrative frames rooted in values such as racial equity, resiliency, self-determination, community leadership, and the power of collective action served as an effective tool to galvanize communities into action.

⚙ Lever 4: Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

Village Strategies

Design participatory data storytelling methods. To develop authentic and insightful stories relevant to the issues that communities are facing, community champions and leaders should have meaningful roles and power in the design process. Whether or not quantitative data is available to highlight a specific inequity issue of interest for the community, collecting qualitative data through a participatory data storytelling approach can be a powerful exercise and source of information to tell the full story. Collecting and sharing community stories prioritized by community leaders and residents can support more equitable data sharing efforts. Coalitions should take care to establish a transparent process for permission to share stories: When members of the community develop data stories based on their personal experience, they should determine when, why, and how those stories are shared.

Use data visualization tools for effective communication. Data visualization tools can help communicate quantitative and qualitative data to diverse audiences. Graphs, charts, tables, summary word clouds, and digital images provide context for better understanding stories and can contribute to compelling narratives. Mapping geographically disaggregated data to demonstrate spatial inequity — or mapping resources to lift up community assets — is also an effective way to visualize and communicate data.

Build capacity for effective communication. Who is telling your story is just as important as the message itself. Community leaders are often the most effective messengers of their stories for policymakers, parents and other residents, and institutional leaders. Connecting personal stories to a larger systems framework is important to evoke action and commitment from decision makers or policymakers, and to ensure that community leaders are seen as engaged in driving solutions. It is also important to support community champions in preparing to tell their authentic stories, ensuring they have access to relevant background information and other supports. Coalitions should build processes to work together to understand the target audience and the structure/format of the setting, and to develop key talking points that resonate with the audience's values and priorities.

⚙ Lever 4: Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

Tools

Powering Health Equity Action with Online Data Tools: 10 Design Principles (PolicyLink, Ecotrust): This report outlines 10 design principles for building online data tools that strengthen community-driven efforts to achieve health equity.

Data as a Tool for Change (Spark Policy Institute): This resource offers a process guide to using data for change. Includes sections on asking and answering questions, interpreting data, presenting data, and using results.

Advancing Better Outcomes for All Children: Reporting Data Using A Racial Equity Lens (Annie E. Casey Foundation): This resource serves as a guide to presenting data in ways that are inclusive and advance racial equity for all children.

Storytelling: A Tool for Health Advocacy (Rebecca Kahn and Jewlya Lynn, Spark Policy Institute): This brief offers guidance on how health advocates can use stories to move people to action, outlining the internal elements of a story that can increase or decrease its ability to persuade various audiences.

Resources

Digital Storytelling (Tessa Lewin). This article discusses digital storytelling, a participatory methodology that can be used to catalyze change through workshops where storytellers develop narratives with photographs, usually with a film as a final product.

PLACES: Local Data for Better Health. An extension of the 500 Cities Project, this tool provides publicly available city and census tract estimates for chronic disease risk factors, health outcomes, and clinical preventive-services use for the largest US cities.

The Census Bureau. The Census Bureau is a leading public data source containing routinely updated, geographically disaggregated demographic and socioeconomic data on the US population.

⚙ Lever 5: Plan for Sustainability

OVERVIEW

The Centers for Disease Control's Healthy Communities Program defines sustainability as "a community's ongoing capacity and resolve to work together to establish, advance, and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life for all."[7] Supportive and intentional structures, policies, and processes can sustain community energy, engagement, and momentum over time to ultimately achieve long-lasting changes.

Sustainability encompasses a range of resources — such as funding, time, staff capacity, organizational buy-in, leadership, and communications — needed to accomplish a common goal. Importantly, sustainability involves investing in the currency of human relationships. Coalitions must demonstrate trustworthiness to cultivate authentic relationships; engagement processes that uphold dignity lay the foundation for enduring partnerships.

The reality of limited funding and competition for resources, coupled with the longer timeline often needed for systems-change efforts, can create challenges for community coalitions and initiatives seeking to advance equity and promote optimal child and family wellbeing. While grants and pots of funding may come and go, effective coalitions that are built with sustainability in mind are able to thrive beyond the confines of a specific grant cycle.

Integrating sustainability in coalition planning allows communities to consider both short- and long-term strategies and outcomes — to remain adept at responding to immediate needs and priorities while also developing and moving toward a long-term, common vision for health equity in a community. Sustainability planning also helps coalition members avoid burnout by building in practices that can visibly track progress, milestones, and forward movement.

Key components of coalition sustainability include:

- Strong and ongoing community stakeholder buy-in and engagement
- Collaborative leadership roles
- Leadership development pathways
- Sufficient and diverse sources of capital (funding, resources, civic engagement, volunteerism) to maintain operations
- Effective and transparent communication
- Policies, structures, and strong data system for assessment, monitoring, and evaluation
- Structures that support leadership and member transitions
- Data storytelling capacities and strategies to convey key messages
- Organizational capacity to be flexible to emerging needs and changing environments

⚙ Lever 5: Plan for Sustainability

Stories in Action

Voices and Choices for Children Coalition (Twin Cities, Minnesota). Over several years, an innovative idea for shifting not just power but state resource distribution began to emerge within community conversations and listening sessions. Community leaders recognized that they themselves had the ideas and community expertise required to tackle the range of equity issues families were facing, but were missing a key ingredient — sufficient resources that could be allocated and distributed by communities themselves. The idea for a Community Solutions Fund represented not only the creation of a dedicated pool of funds from state resources, but the recognition that communities of color can and should drive the decision making around funding and community investment. After years of work to build a broad coalition base and foster legislative champions, the Community Solutions Grant Program bill had its first hearing in 2019 with the State's Health and Human Services Policy Committee. After multiple committee stops and negotiation, it was included in the final Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill. This major victory offered a new paradigm for approaching sustainability: community self-governance of public tax-dollars resources, with the goal of moving the needle on child health equity and reinvesting in communities of color.

Austin Neighborhood Network (Chicago, Illinois). Investing in relationship building can help plant the seed for future momentum and attract new investments in community initiatives. For over a decade, the Network's backbone organization, Austin Coming Together, has nurtured relationships with providers and agencies in Chicago's Austin neighborhood. Its 18-month community-driven planning process engaged over 500 stakeholders to develop the neighborhood's first Quality of Life Plan, translating what community residents shared as priority strategies to improve health and economic wellbeing into a concrete five-year plan. Within one year of implementation, the plan was able to attract $13 million dollars from philanthropy and business investment to support and accelerate the remaining implementation period. Network members recognized that this was the product of many years of investing in relationships, allowing Austin community members to drive the plan moving forward.

⚙️ Lever 5: Plan for Sustainability

Village Strategies

Plan for transitions and document institutional knowledge. Transitions of staff, partners, funders, and within the economic and political climate are common and to be expected. Yet, these changes can still pose challenges for groups and coalitions that are working to build infrastructure, nurture relationships, and develop long-term strategies to align early childhood systems and connect families to health-promoting resources. Proactively planning for transitions as part of normal operations can help to mitigate the disruption of a coalition's work. Regularly documenting institutional knowledge, processes, and relationships over time supports a more seamless or uninterrupted transfer of knowledge when the time comes. Creating practices that help welcome and orient new members can build a coalition's capacity to share knowledge and distribute leadership, allowing groups to more quickly adapt and pivot during a period of transition.

Plant seeds through relationship building and mutuality. Sustainability involves much more than financial capital, resources, sponsorship, and funding. The most abundant resource in any community-driven effort is the community itself: the people. Value the people on your team and the partners and members of your network with whom you collaborate. Understanding what brings people to the table and investing in mutually beneficial relationships and opportunities for community partners yields alliances with roots for longevity. Shifting from a transactional to a relationship-centered sustainability approach can cultivate a flourishing network of trusted partners and allies that stand ready to share prospective opportunities and support one another when the right opportunity arises.

Recognize and enhance existing community assets. Using a strengths-based approach to community capacity building means that any effort begins with understanding and honoring existing community strengths, solutions, and assets. Community residents intimately understand neighborhood challenges, adapt, and introduce creative solutions. These dynamic, real-time solutions emerge before agencies or government institutions are able to respond. Instead of rushing to implement new interventions or programs, equitable and sustainable coalitions commit to learning from and getting behind the solutions that arise through grassroots efforts and local networks to address systemic inequities and build robust local systems and opportunity structures.

⚙️ Lever 5: Plan for Sustainability

Village Strategies

Explore diverse and nontraditional funding strategies. Philanthropic and government grants are a major source of funding for community coalitions and other systems-change efforts. This arena is very diverse and represents a wide range of local, regional, family, issue- or strategy-based, large and small foundations, as well as government agencies that can support your work. Organizations have also begun to explore nimble, nontraditional funding strategies to diversify their portfolios, allow more flexibility in terms of activities and timelines, and engage their stakeholders in meaningful ways. These strategies include business partnerships and corporate social investment models. Other longstanding, but less well known, strategies for financial and social sustainability include cooperative models, solidarity economies, and timebanking.

Assess your environment. The funding landscape, and the political, economic, social, and cultural context that shapes it, can change rapidly. The national Movement for Black Lives, as well as ongoing COVID-19 responses, for example, have impacted social transformation and, in turn, resource priorities and funder response. Assessing your environment is important to shape your sustainability strategy moving forward. Community organizing tools like SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and power mapping can be utilized for this purpose. The Conectando coalition, formerly Moving Ahead Adelante, introduced the NOW Learning Community to PESTLE Analysis (political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental). This strategic management tool can be used to identify, analyze, and monitor key external factors that can have an impact on an organization or group.

⚙️ Lever 5: Plan for Sustainability

Tools

Chapter 46: Planning for Sustainability (Community Tool Box). This chapter covers tactics to support funding, sponsorship, membership, synergistic partnerships, and strategic leveraging of resources to support the sustainability of your organization or initiative.

A Sustainability Planning Guide for Healthy Communities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthy Communities Program). The Sustainability Planning Guide is a synthesis of science- and practice-based evidence designed to help coalitions, public health professionals, and other community stakeholders develop, implement, and evaluate a successful sustainability plan. It provides a process for sustaining policy strategies, introduces approaches to sustainability, and uses examples to demonstrate sustainability planning in action.

Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (Washington University in St. Louis). This 40 question self-assessment for program staff and stakeholders evaluates the sustainability capacity of a program. The website also includes helpful resources for understanding program sustainability and best practices.

Sustainability Survey (Center for Story Based Strategy): This brief survey can help assess sustainability in your community and support movement work.

Resources

Factors that Predict Financial Sustainability of Community Coalitions: Five Years of Findings from the PROSPER Partnership Project (Greenberg et al). This longitudinal investigation of the Promoting School-Community-University Partnerships to Enhance Resilience (PROSPER) partnership model evaluated the level and sustainability of funding for community prevention teams and the factors associated with generation of sustainable funding.

An Assessment of the Sustainability and Impact of Community Coalitions Once Federal Funding Has Expired (NORC at the University of Chicago). This report examines the long-term sustainability and impact of community coalitions that were funded by the Community Access Program (CAP) and its successor, the Healthy Communities Access Program (HCAP). This study utilized the experience of the HCAP grantees as a lens to explore the sustainability and impact of community coalitions once their initial federal funding had expired.

Vital Village 90-Day Challenge Model

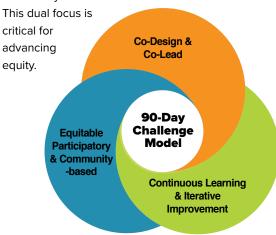## THE 90-DAY CHALLENGE MODEL & LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NOW LEARNING COMMUNITY

Collectives offer many advantages: diversity of experiences and wisdom; pooling of resources; cultivation and growth of networks and alliances; social support, relationships, and connections; and strength in numbers. Yet, many coalitions struggle to harness these resources in sustainable ways over time. Common roadblocks include meeting fatigue, lack of movement from planning to action, unresolved conflicts, and lack of transparency regarding aims and scope. All too often, these challenges are rooted in power dynamics.

The 90-Day Challenge model helps collectives articulate and address power dynamics in order to promote greater levels of community determination and sustainable collaborative improvement. Building community capacity can strengthen a sense of belonging, social networks, power, civic engagement and leadership, while also promoting opportunities that enhance wellness and promotes meaningful social change.[8, 9] The model is designed to help guide inclusion of diverse stakeholders in all stages of the process and incorporates strategic work to promote shared decision-making processes that can inform more equitable governance.

Why should you use the 90 Day Challenge?

Improvement cycles are often focused on outcomes and impact. The 90-Day Challenge model is a capacity building tool designed with two primary purposes: (1) helping individuals, groups, networks, and coalitions collaborate effectively, working across differences to co-create and co-design sustainable processes for improvement and social change; and (2) improving the collaborative process through iterative learning, which key questions, such as: How can inclusivity, trust, and authentic engagement with dignity be advanced to achieve co-leadership and community determination? This dual focus is critical for advancing equity.

Co-Design & Co-Lead

90-Day Challenge Model

Equitable Participatory & Community -based

Continuous Learning & Iterative Improvement

Vital Village 90-Day Challenge Model

THE 90-DAY CHALLENGE MODEL IS GROUNDED IN FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES:

1 ACCOUNTABILITY

Creating practices that encourage shared responsibility
Developing an intentional process for power sharing, distributed leadership, and governance structure

2 TRANSPARENCY

Expanding opportunities to share ownership for a larger vision and collective work by publicly sharing goals

Transparently outlining decision-making processes, roles, agreements, and tensions

Creating a learning community that is invested in drawing lessons from both success and failure, and expanding peer-led support by incorporating diverse forms of wisdom

3 COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Embracing diverse ideas and strategies
Co-designing, co-creating, and co-learning
Fostering adaptive and emerging leadership

4 FEASIBILITY

Working toward a larger vision in manageable steps
Learning in real time
Making room for critical reflection and course correction

90 DAY CHALLENGE

Building on an equity-based approach to co-creation, co-leadership, and collective action, the model involves seven steps that can help coalitions, networks and groups develop strategies to address objectives, work toward their overarching vision, and advance equity through power-sharing, distributed leadership, shared governance, and democratizing the use of data.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7
Lead with Listening	Lead Together	Share Power	Plan forStability & Wellness	Move From Idea to Action	Embrace Continuous Learning	Practice Periodic Reflection
Set a foundation for more equitable and sustainable partnerships with listening	Establish a foundation for co-leadership	Distribute power through explicit governance structures and decision-making processes	Practice self-care and adaptability to support sustainability	Recognize assets and operationalize equity in the planning process	Invest in learning from both successes and failures	Build practices and use data to operationalize equity

Step 1: Lead with Listening

Community engagement commonly begins with the definition of a problem or an assessment of community needs. This is not a neutral starting point, and may diminish the opportunity to cultivate equitable, mutually beneficial partnerships built on trust and respect if a community is defined by its challenges rather than its assets. Anchoring the imperative for partnership in problem-solving may also diminish appreciation of human agency, social capital, and collective efficacy, ultimately undermining the opportunity to co-create and co-lead.

A more productive and inclusive starting point is to invest time and energy into listening. Listening sets a foundation for more equitable and sustainable partnerships and should be approached as an active process to learn, understand, connect, and build trust.

The 90-Day Challenge process begins with building trust, listening, and learning. Sometimes this requires just showing up for the community, having conversations, and not setting an agenda. Showing up to community events to learn and listen to the needs, hopes, and successes of the community is just as important as the work you hope to do. [Young Child Wellness Council & Berkeley Early Education and Care Collective]

Listening is a leadership strategy that can promote racial equity. Listening is an active process to promote equity and can expand opportunities to recognize and appreciate cultural, ethnic, linguistic and experiential diversity. Valuing lived experience or experiential knowledge, and centering the perspectives of those socially marginalized are critical strategies for actualizing anti-racist praxis.[10]

By centering the worldviews and ideas of those who have been socially marginalized, this process provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of a community context, to reveal dominant narratives about equity and to highlight counter-narratives, to identify the root causes of inequality (the structural factors and social forces that generate injustice), and to reimagine what is necessary for social change.

Allowing for the community to be engaged in the 90-Day Challenge from the beginning and truly giving the community the power to determine and set the goals for the 90-Day Challenge was instrumental in gaining trust and creating the feeling of co-ownership. [Austin Neighborhood Network]

Learning how to listen. Listening can be approached as a layered process to build social connections and to learn about both current efforts and historical conditions. Communities often have an abundance of strategies in place to promote wellbeing, but are often siloed or lack coordination. Take an interest in understanding existing efforts in the community and coalitions or networks that may have similar goals and stakeholders. Are there opportunities for alignment? Can these existing efforts be enhanced through synergistic partnerships? Coordinating efforts with other groups not only prevents duplication but also reduce competition, encouraging more interwoven and complementary efforts that create conditions for sustainability. Acknowledge and appreciate history and historical processes. What has happened to a community or place over time, and why? This provides a better understanding of the social forces and structural and contextual factors driving community outcomes.

Authenticity. Listening may be most effective if there is not a pre-existing agenda. Being transparent about existing aims, conditions, and a priori decisions, and making an effort to identify and articulate assumptions, are helpful ways to build a foundation of trust.

Step 1: Lead with Listening

Solution-finding orientation. Listening sets a foundation for more equitable partnerships if assumptions and mindsets are made explicit. If the goal of listening is to identify problems, that will inform what is heard. What if the central assumption is that there are existing solutions within the community that can be advanced and scaled? Vital Village Networks' theory of change embraces a solution-finding orientation to achieve equity and improve wellbeing. As opposed to a problem-solving orientation, solution-finding begins with the assumption that assets, resources, and solutions already exist within a community and can be scaled and aligned to achieve greater impact. Appreciating existing efforts and solutions is critical to the sustainability, scalability, and vitality of any strategy.

Equity does not have to wait for a workshop. It begins in everyday conversations and through all processes of the coalition. [Generations Forward]

Radical openness. The Beloved Community practice of radical openness can help guide the listening journey. What would it mean to be radically open to new ideas, perspectives, types of wisdom? How might that allow you to appreciate a broader spectrum of approaches, innovations, and insights?

Radical openness can create space for appreciating diversity and building relationships and alliances across differences.

Listening is a core leadership competency for promoting racial equity. Additional strategies to support listening include counter-narrative, storytelling, power mapping, participatory research, and appreciative inquiry (see Frameworks Table in Section 5.2. Operationalizing Equity in the Planning Process). These approaches can build capacity to address historical and racial trauma, internalized and interpersonal racism, and narratives that address systemic racism.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: HONORING TRADITION AND CULTURE

The McKinley County Early Childhood Coalition (MCECC) engaged in the 90-Day Challenge process in ways that honored their traditions, beliefs, and values. MCECC embarked on this challenge with a traditional Navajo diagnostic ceremony that allowed the community medicine man to identify four strategic areas of commitment that would be most impactful for the community: *1) Focus on prevention strategies and new preventative approaches over intervention; 2) Increase male involvement by creating opportunities for young men to engage in the work and take part in the nurturing and development of families and their children's lives; 3) Build a foundation that connects the multiple agencies within the coalition through a shared workspace; 4) Incorporate tactile learning because it is a strength amongst the native community.*

By intentionally creating a unique experience that connected deeply to the Navajo community, members of the Coalition sparked interest and engagement from the broader community. Over several months, they realized their goals through a community powwow and a storybook garden event that fostered reading and literacy among the youngest community members. During this process, they also identified an important community need, as parents were seeking supports with strengthening community parenting skills.

Step 2: . Lead Together — Create a Foundation for Co-leadership and Community Determination

Start by acknowledging existing leadership within the community, appreciating and honoring the diversity of skill sets, cultural and linguistic experiences, unique gifts, and wisdom that can contribute to different forms of leadership. Creating a culture that acknowledges and applauds many different forms of community leadership. Leadership is dynamic and can be nurtured. Welcome and support emerging leaders by intentionally creating opportunities for their growth and promoting networks to support leadership trajectories.

Consider the role of culture in recognizing and naming leadership. Name and acknowledge dominant leadership styles and norms that privilege directive leadership styles. Embrace culturally inclusive leadership models. Recognizing that various forms of oppression have historically impacted the experience of leadership for many people of color and indigenous people. Create space to acknowledge history, recognize social norms, consider alternative leadership models, and to heal.

How are equity, justice, and community incorporated in definitions of leadership in your work? Making room for people to be seen, heard, and appreciated is a first step toward creating an ethos that includes justice, equity, and community in the definition of leadership.

Providing parents with a variety of ways to engage is instrumental in working toward equity. [Berkeley Early Education and Care Collective]

Proactively welcome adaptive and diverse leadership styles. Embrace new paradigms of leadership. Validate and support collective leadership. Leadership development efforts often focus on building individual leadership skills; consider ways to promote collective leadership that is connected to community power and determination. "Leading together" means developing relationships and building capacities to promote collective leadership, and fostering a cross-section of leaders working collectively.

New opportunities that provide parents and families with institutional leadership power might seem overwhelming, but they are critical to building a more equitable community. Intentionally building trust through opportunities to connect and continued transparency of coalition development is valuable in supporting parents and families as their leadership continues to grow. [Family Engagement Network & Generations Forward]

Facilitative leadership approaches can help advance power sharing (Interaction Institute for Social Change). Facilitative leadership promotes strengths-based relationships and transparency around power dynamics, mental models, and motivations. This style of leadership embraces collaboration and works to sustain leadership, coupling dedicated listening with a process that goes beyond capturing the voice of the community to embracing community residents as equal partners in designing solutions.

Cultivate leadership capacity to work collectively to address systems change. Honor and prioritize inclusive, collective, and participatory leadership in networks. Increase access to social networks and expand networks for those who have been excluded from them. Nurture and welcome net-

Step 2: . Lead Together — Create a Foundation for Co-leadership and Community Determination

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY: TRANSFORMATIONAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Voices and Choices for Children Coalition set out to increase the decision-making power of people of color with respect to community funding by passing the Community Solutions Fund bill across multiple cycles of 90-Day Challenges. *The bill's language was refined through community feedback, largely from communities of color and indigenous communities. This inclusive process brought in lived experience from the start. By the second 90-Day Challenge, the Community Solutions Fund bill was passed, and the the Minnesota Department of Health was charged with its implementation. The next 90-Day Challenge focused on upholding the Minnesota Department of Health accountable for implementing the program in an equitable and community-centered way. Through its fourth 90-Day Challenge process, the coalition continued outreach and advocacy about the Community Solutions Fund applications and encouraged local organizations to apply for funding to support community-led initiatives.*

Lead from margin to center

Explicit design of leadership opportunities that engage people of color and indigenous communities is instrumental in addressing equity. [Voices and Choices for Children Coalition]

Vital Village Networks developed a "Mapping for the Margins" tool that applies an equity framework that uses a stepwise series of questions to design for the "margins," based on the assumption that designing adaptive solutions for the margins strengthens the entire system. This can be used repeatedly throughout iterative improvement cycles to (1) identify and name processes and systems that marginalize, (2) define and learn from community "bright spots," (3) increase the inclusivity and diversity of leaders, and (4) help groups transform traditional practices that have reinforce inequitable power dynamics.

Engaging families fully into the 90-Day Challenge process means that you identify the barriers in place that may exclude families from engagement and/or make it difficult to fully engage. Coalitions identified barriers in transportation and childcare as significant system barriers that impacted families' engagement in the process. [McKinley County Early Childhood Coalition, Young Child Wellness Council]

Who can fully participate in project design, planning, analysis and decision-making? How can barriers to full participation be continuously examined and addressed? Molding robust and sustainable solutions benefits from the breadth and diversity of community experiences and perspectives. Uncovering and dismantling barriers to participation amplifies community leadership and self-determination, laying the foundation for community ownership of emerging strategies.

Step 2: . Lead Together — Create a Foundation for Co-leadership and Community Determination

Language justice. Through the peer leadership and resources shared by the Conectando coalition, the NOW Learning Community was able to incorporate language justice practices in all learning community convenings. The entire peer learning community space expanded their understanding of these approaches. This served as an important learning process for NOW, leading to an adapted timeline to include the translation of written and web-based materials and content.

Language justice should be considered an equity-informed practice for the entire community rather than an additional service. Language justice models offer an opportunity to deepen commitment to equity for all participants by creating an experience where all can engage fully — through listening, speaking, reading, or writing — in the language of their choice that allows them to best express themselves. Seek to understand differences in the contributions gained from language translation, interpretation, and language justice models.

Embrace differences in accessibility.
Consider ways to broaden community access in designing your engagement processes. Both virtual and in-person participation often place additional burdens on members of the community who are deaf, blind, nonverbal, or have visual or cognitive differences that require accommodations. Critical questions include:

- Is participation accessible, and for whom?
- Is there a process to incorporate accommodations (sign language, food sensitivity and allergy alternatives, live captioning)?
- Is there a public commitment to expanding opportunities for members of the community with different abilities to participate?

The Essex County Council for Young Children (ECCYC) launched the start of its 90-Day Challenge process with a goal of increasing parent engagement across the coalition by 25%.
The council focused on providing the community with training and education related to ACEs (adverse childhood experiences). By reaching out to facilitators, universities, and organizations outside of the Newark community, ECCYC was able to offer a variety of best practices in creative learning styles that suited the diverse audience of engaged parents. By the third 90-Day Challenge cycle, the council had recruited 25 community health services workers who would serve as volunteer ACE ambassadors within the Newark community, and by the fourth cycle had mobilized the distribution of a health ambassador toolkit to continue community engagement.

Step 3: . Share Power

Language justice. Through the peer leadership and resources shared by the Conectando coalition, the NOW Learning Community was able to incorporate language justice practices in all learning community convenings. The entire peer learning community space expanded their understanding of these approaches. This served as an important learning process for NOW, leading to an adapted timeline to include the translation of written and web-based materials and content.

Language justice should be considered an equity-informed practice for the entire community rather than an additional service. Language justice models offer an opportunity to deepen commitment to equity for all participants by creating an experience where all can engage fully — through listening, speaking, reading, or writing — in the language of their choice that allows them to best express themselves. Seek to understand differences in the contributions gained from language translation, interpretation, and language justice models.

Equitable and transformative community engagement processes should directly address the question of how power will be shared. Shifting to more equitable forms of governance can begin with answering these important questions:

- Who has decision-making power?
- How are decisions made?
- Is there a desire for greater inclusion of stakeholders or broader representation in the decision-making process?

Transparency. Explicit governance structures can help create transparency about power dynamics, and promote accountability around shared goals. Clearly outline the decision-making process and what steps will be taken if a decision cannot be reached. Establish a process for resolving or mediating conflicts. Representation matters; have clear discussions about all facets of diversity in leadership. Using a racial equity lens, adopt governance policies that are anti-racist and work to actively address structural, institutional, and interpersonal racism. Use a trauma-informed and healing-centered lens to consider how histories of oppression, disempowerment, and divestment have been enacted through policies, governing bodies, and institutions, and in doing so create space to collectively build community determination within a governance structure.

Expanding power sharing. Additional questions can help expand power sharing: How is capital (political, economic, social, intellectual) distributed? In collaborative efforts, how are different forms of capital and wisdom valued? How is equity upheld within the governance structure? Groups can explore the extent to which their governance structure is achieving intended goals around equity, and can better understand different forms of capital and intersectionality.

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY: SHARED DECISION-MAKING AND COMMUNITY-LED GOVERNANCE

The Conectando coalition, formerly Moving Ahead Adelante, determined that its first 90-Day Challenge process would focus on increasing family engagement and community leadership. *During the first 90-Day Challenge, the coalition hosted a 40-family event within their community, creating a foundation for their second Challenge goal: to establish a community council that brought families into the decision-making process. By the third 90-Day Challenge cycle, the coalition was largely steered by the families in the community council. These families determined that they wanted opportunities to engage in activities with their children and that as parents, they wanted opportunities to learn and grow their skills. During this Challenge cycle, the coalition's Community Champion put together a weekend camping trip for eight families. For some, this was their first experience at an outdoor camping event. The coalition was able to cover 50% of the costs for the weekend event. In addition to the family engagement events, it continues to host advocacy, leadership, and health navigator workshops, to provide the capacity building desired by parents engaged in the coalition. All of the group's meetings, events, and training sessions continue to be hosted in Spanish and English. During the 90-Day Challenge process, the coalition strengthened its language justice practices by designing a budget that included supports for an inclusive language environment.*

Step 4: Plan with Sustainability in Mind

Working on social change can lead to friction, internally and externally. The 90-Day Challenge model can help support sustainability of efforts toward both short-term goals and long-term vision. Tools that help collaborative teams develop and follow agreed upon action plans, monitor progress, learn from success and failure, adapt and adjust, and manage transitions can support sustainability.

Wellness matters: Create periodic opportunities for restoration, renewal, and inspiration.
Acknowledge bright spots — exceptional efforts, solutions, and innovations that already exist within a community. Bright spots provide more than inspiration; they offer an opportunity to better understand community context and strengths that can support scale and sustainability. Commit to a culture that promotes wellness, resiliency, and self-care for servant leaders. Incorporating wellness practices within routine activities and meetings is important to the vitality of the team. How will your team address, mitigate, and prevent toxic practices such as blaming and shaming? Upholding dignity is central to engagement, partnership, and collective actions that support wellness and transformation.

Develop a structure to periodically celebrate success.
Begin with broadening the definition of success. Success is not only related to an outcome, but can involve completing a group process, honoring commitments, applying new learning, or adapting plans based on something that did not work as expected. This structure provides routine opportunities to appreciate progress and express gratitude for team members.

Acknowledge dynamics of involvement.
New leaders will emerge, and existing leaders may step back or step away. How are you responding and adapting to leadership changes in a way the supports sustainability? How do you incorporate accountability? Plan for transitions, and create clear communication and documentation to support transitions, develop processes to welcome and include new members, and allow current members to reduce efforts if desired. Embrace and proactively welcome adaptive leadership styles that allow for different intensities, levels, and forms of engagement.

Manage tensions.
Prepare for internal and external resistance to change efforts. Develop capacity within the team for resolving conflicts and managing tensions. Governance structure is a part of the infrastructure that supports continued collaboration amid tensions.

Sustainable Funding.
Planning for sustainability from the beginning must include reflecting on how the work can be communicated to external funders and identifying diverse forms of capital that align with the group's values and can support longevity of the work, including civic engagement, solidarity economies, cooperatives, and public-private partnerships. Coalitions should practice transparency in communicating the financial resources for the program, tracking expenses, and planning for a scope of work that is commensurate with the funding structure.

Compensation.
Long-term and ongoing community-building efforts, such as accomplishing a 90-Day Challenge, require time and commitment. Honoring community members' time with some form of compensation (honorarium, stipend, per diem wages, or employment) values the expertise they contribute to the process and addresses financial costs of and barriers to participation. Many coalitions struggle to develop or maintain a sustainable model for compensating participants. Work with the community to clearly outline how inequities in opportunities to participate arise and the role of financial circumstances. Next, as a group, explore diverse forms of capital (micro-grants, amended organizational budgets, certifications, scholarships, fellowships, mentorships, internships, and pathways for leadership development and social network expansion) and determine those that are of value, acceptable to the group, and accessible (see Part I, Lever 3). Use this information to develop a structure to provide credit for service that operationalizes the shared commitment to equity.

Step 5: Move from Ideas to Action

5.1. Identify your Vision and Outline your Goals

Taking the time to set intentional aims, versus a high number of aims, will be highly impactful to the work of the coalition and the outcomes in the community. [Generations Forward]

Embrace the vision. It is important to begin with the end in mind. Ultimately, what do you hope to accomplish? How do you want your community to be different as a result of your group's work? This long-term vision may feel elusive, but committing it to writing is an important step toward transparency. The 90-Day Challenge can help you work toward this ultimate vision by setting achievable, time-bound goals and a process for continuous learning and periodic reflection. A clear description of what you ultimately hope to accomplish is essential. What do you propose to do, and what is your vision of success? What are the results? Who or what will be impacted by this effort, and how?

Acknowledge existing solutions and inspirations. Acknowledging bright spots is another step in helping to set the table for success. A bright spot is evidence that exceptional innovations already exist within the community and offer both inspiration and an opportunity to learn. The approaches, partnerships, and strategies used to accomplish, scale, and sustain the bright spot may provide meaningful insight regarding community attributes, assets, and resources.

Understand the landscape and identify and order strategic priorities. Identifying strategic priorities should begin with understand the broader landscape. Use of a current situation analysis tool — such as an environmental scan, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), or SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results) analysis — can help describe both internal and external resources, assets, and strengths, as well as important contextual challenges.

With a foundational understanding of the current and historical reality, strategic planning can begin. Outline strategic priorities to reach your vision and understand the order in which they need to be addressed. Several questions can help guide this process:

- Can these priorities be addressed at the same time?
- What are elements of the socio-political climate that impact the priorities?
- Is there greater urgency to address any particular priority and why?
- What are we most well-equipped to face and why?

As you determine strategic priorities, revisit the first four steps of the process, using the following questions:

- Lead with Listening: What are the existing priorities identified by the collective?
- Lead Together: Whose voices, perspectives, and ideas are being centered in the process?
- Who is being marginalized?
- Share Power: Who has the power to make decisions? What process will be used to determine how to address priorities?
- Sustainability: What do we have the resources and capacity to accomplish at this time?

Assess how your strategic priorities will advance your vision. Review the resources, requirements, and possible obstacles for each priority. Evaluate your options using equity-informed questions to establish a goal for the next 90 days SMART goals (Doran et al; 1981) provide a clear process for outlining a specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound goal The 90-Day Challenge encourages the use of an equity lens when outlining SMART goals and a participatory approach to making decisions as a group about what, why, and how an improvement is determined and defined.

Step 5: Move from Ideas to Action

5.2. Operationalizing Equity in the Planning Process

Several frameworks, theories, framing questions, and methods can help groups not only move from idea to action in their planning and implementation processes, but do so in a way that advances equity. The table below shares a number of such items that can be utilized.

EQUITY TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS

Methods

Appreciative Inquiry	Cultural Humility	Narrative and Counter-Narrative	Structural Competency
Appreciative inquiry is a strengths-based approach to change that is based on a narrative process. It can be a useful process for building authentic relationships and trust through stages of deep listening and for addressing conflicts through understanding. Appreciative inquiry begins with authentic curiosity on the part of the listener, and utilizes questions that have substance and integrity and emerge from positivity. The stages of appreciative inquiry commonly include definition, discover (reflect on the best of what is), dream (group begins to imagine a shared vision), design (determine concrete steps), and destiny/delivery (innovation).[11, 12]	Cultural humility is a process designed to build authentic, honest relationships and shared trust. It is an iterative process of self-reflection to evaluate cultural beliefs and identities,[13] intended to examine biases and values and make them explicit. [14] Cultural humility acknowledges power differences and dynamics and actively works to eliminate them.[15]	Narrative practices offer an opportunity to promote mindset shifts about race, racism, and racial identity. Intentionally exploring different types of narratives — stock stories (dominant, mainstream), concealed stories (marginalized), resistance stories (champions for anti-racism), and counter stories (new stories to reimagine possibilities) —provides an opening to critique the present reality and imagine new possibilities for social justice.[6] Narrative is a shared way of understanding experiences and change; therefore, storytelling can be an equity tool within community collaborative efforts to understand race and racism and work collaboratively to dismantle structures of oppression.	Structural competency is a set of practices designed to counteract marginalization of individuals and groups due to socially constructed differences. It involves identifying and naming the social structures and political forces that impact experiences and decisions, designing a possible structural intervention, and appreciating the limitations of the competency.[16] This practice can be used by groups to identify possibilities for systems-level changes.

Step 5: Move from Ideas to Action

5.2. Operationalizing Equity in the Planning Process

EQUITY TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS

Frameworks

Asset Framework	Beloved Community	Dignity Framework	Trauma-Informed Framework
An asset-based framework is an approach to describing attributes of and differences between communities with respect to their strengths and aspirations. Cultural-asset frameworks have been utilized to explore positive youth development and racial identity formation in the context of racism.[17] Asset mapping is an associated practice that explores communities as places with assets to be preserved, understood, and enhanced, rather than deficits to be repaired.[18] Trabian Shorters uses the term "asset framing for equity" to describe the impact of using strengths-based rather than deficit-based narratives to describe communities.[19, 20]	The term "Beloved Community" was initially coined by philosopher Josiah Royce. Beloved Community is both aspirational and realized. It is a vision for a society that more deeply values community, but also can be experienced through daily acts. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Grace Lee Boggs both popularized the concept of the Beloved Community, which refers to a broader love for community, country, and humanity. King connected this concept to the practice of nonviolence and a global vision for human rights, equality, and the absence of poverty. Boggs anchored the concept to both self-transformation and systems change, highlighting individual responsibility to take action for social change.[21] Principles of Beloved Community include love, forgiveness, reconciliation, radical openness, embracing fears, moving toward liberation, embracing conflict, and seeing redeeming qualities. Practices of Beloved Community include inclusivity, social justice, human rights, and honoring dignity. Using these practices during the iterative learning process can allow communities to embrace more equitable relationships and processes.	Dignity is defined as the state or quality of being worthy, and is achieved through a network of individual, interpersonal, institutional, organizational, and societal experiences: How do you value yourself? How does your community value you?[22] Core elements of dignity, such as recognition, fairness, and inclusion, reflect this dynamic, interactive process. Dignity can serve as a lens for understanding shared humanity. Unlike respect, which is conditional, dignity is unconditional, although it can be violated. Cycles of indignity, such as experiences of racism, cause humiliation or shame and undermine relationships and lead to conflict.[23] A dignity framework allows the human quality of dignity to be centered in all work to advance equity.[24]	Trauma informed approaches are a set of principles based on an understanding of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as a social determinant of health over the life course. These principles are directed toward supporting children and communities in holistic ways and through contextual approaches, working to prevent and mitigate adversities that can cause traumatic stress or harm. Approaches have been adapted from the similar frameworks that consider the role of ACEs, trauma, and resilience. A trauma-informed lens can help create alignment across sectors based on the common understanding of the long-term impact of early childhood adversities, establish common benchmarks for change, and encourage a shared data system to promote accountability. Trauma-informed approaches are also equity tools in that they can help contextualize historical and community traumas that may underlie tensions, challenges, and power dynamics within groups.[25]

Step 5: Move from Ideas to Action

5.2. Operationalizing Equity in the Planning Process

EQUITY TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS

Theories

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is based on social justice principles and a racial equity methodology. Primary components of critical race theory include: centering the perspectives and ideas of those who are socially marginalized; valuing experiential knowledge or lived experience; understanding race as a social construct; and acknowledging racism as a system of advantage where opportunity and value are assigned based on socially constructed categories, entrenched in American society, culture, policies, and systems. [10] Critical race theory also espouses the use of this understanding to impact praxis, or an iterative process of moving from theory to practice.

Healing-Centered Approach and Liberation Theory

Healing-centered approaches highlight the ways in which trauma and healing are collectively experienced and incorporate culture, spirituality, civic action.[26] Healing-centered approaches incorporate liberation theory and foundational components of collectivism, strength, hope, consciousness, and self-knowledge to promote healing.[27] Community healing may be supported by the use of storytelling and narrative strategies that reinforce resilience, social justice, and healing from historical and racial trauma.[28]

Step 5: Move from Ideas to Action

5.2. Operationalizing Equity in the Planning Process

EQUITY TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS

Frames

Centering the Dignity of Children	Community Determination	Iceberg Analysis	Intersectionality
The NOW Learning Community was challenged to embrace a specific anchor for the dignity framework: What would it mean if efforts aimed to respect, protect, and honor the dignity of a child?	Community determination is a process by which communities can engage in participatory and collective practices to achieve their vision. Leadership development often focuses on community residents and building their individual skills. Community determination requires leadership approaches that invest in building collective community power.	Systems change requires new approaches to thinking about how and why systems exist as they are. The iceberg analysis is a strategy to think about the measurable and concrete events and outcomes and the implicit and often invisible elements that contribute to systems change. In this model visible events and population patterns are the tip of the iceberg; responses to those visible elements are often reactive. Below the water are underlying structures (resources, opportunity structures, policies and practices), and mental models that are often implicit. Specifying these mental models can help develop strategic stories for allies and adversaries. Finally, cultural and norms shape and inform these mental models, indicating that paradigm shifts are required to achieve meaningful change.	Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how multiple axes of an individuals' identity intersect to create unique experiences of privilege, marginalization, prejudice, and discrimination.[29] One approach to understanding intersectionality in collective work is to utilize a tool called "Mapping the Margins" to consider who is being marginalized and why. Acknowledging the role of intersectionality in experiences of oppression is an important component of healing for collectives and individuals.

Step 5: Move from Ideas to Action

5.1. Identify your Vision and Outline your Goals

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY: COMMUNITY DETERMINATION

Generations Forward had a common priority for all of four of their 90-Day Challenge cycles: to courageously advance socioeconomic and racial equity and build trust and understanding. Central to this process was the Family Council, a group of parents whose expertise came from their lived experience, a Family Champion who helped to lead the Council, and the Coordinating Council, who provided oversight for the overall implementation plan of the initiative. These groups met regularly with one another for information and skill sharing, and also hosted quarterly Generations Forward meetings that were open to the public. The Family Council hosted story sharing events, for families to heal through connection with one another, and also shared family stories with local policymakers to advocate for funding for more affordable housing, childcare, and healthcare for families. The council also had several family members join the Whatcom County Family and Child Well-being Task Force and hosted monthly anti-racist community calls. By the end of the four 90-Day Challenge cycles, the Family Council at Generations Forward had worked with a consultant to assess the programs strengths and shortcomings and to envision how to make it more accountable to families. As a result, the Coordinating Council was dissolved and the Family Council was identified as the main leading body.

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY: USING EQUITY TOOLS TO REALIGN AND COURSE CORRECT

The Young Child Wellness Council wanted to foster authentic community partnerships by building trust. The council started its 90-Day Challenge process with focus groups to identify the needs of a community outside of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Previously, other coalitions who worked in this particular community had engaged there for only a short time, leading to broken trust and undernourished relationships. The Council found that focus groups were not going to be the best way to engage with the community, and by the second 90-Day Challenge decided to host a developmental screening event and resource fair: Books, Balls, and Blocks. By showing up and being present in a community space where families could receive services, engagement began to increase. Council leaders continued to foster their relationships with the community, without an event or an agenda, just by being present and making social connections. Through these conversations, they identified that what community members most wanted most was a new playscape for their children. The Council was able to serve the community through advocacy efforts and in submitting a request to the local Housing Authority office, which was approved. The community participated in picking out the design of the playscape, and by the end of the 90-Day Challenge process, ground had been broken and construction of the playscape had started.

Step 6: Continuous Learning

Sharing the story of the coalition growth and community engagement, with inclusion of both successes and struggles, is vital in spreading hope and trust amongst the community and stakeholders. [Family Engagement Network]

Time-limited projects that aim for a quick fix and early wins do not address complex systems change. Continuous learning is an element of the collective identity of groups that can sustain efforts to address complex social inequities over time, and is an essential component of the 90-Day Challenge model. As an iterative process, continuous learning can engage collaborative groups over time to transform systems; it requires constant attention to learning from what worked, what didn't work, and what can be understood about why.

Iterative learning is an effective, efficient way of understanding how people respond to proposed changes. Intentionally linking iterative learning with participatory approaches can create a synergy — a systematic learning process, improved by an approach to augment authentic community participation.

Redefining success. Encouraging a culture of continuous learning among teams can help create opportunities to learn from everything, rather than simply highlight success. For people of color and communities who have faced systemic inequities and oppression, the definition of "success" may be framed by the dominant societal narrative and more privileged groups. Continuous learning can be used as a strategic tool to reframe success in the context of a collaborative process. It can also help to prioritize different cultural frameworks (such as collectivism) and diverse leadership models (such as distributed or collaborative leadership), and to define indicators of success differently. Using trauma-informed, healing-centered frameworks can help groups to name historical processes, promote healing, and advance transformative group experiences.

The 90-Day Challenge with a community is a learning experience. Humility is needed, as missteps might be made. [Generations Forward]

When incorporating equity tools into continuous learning processes, "failures" may be understood as arising from structural and social factors, rather than individual choices. Iterative improvement can help avoid heavily prescriptive solutions and instead encourage a spirit of adaptation and emergence as the norm.

Embracing differences. Iterative learning encourages divergent ideas. However, welcoming a diversity of perspectives, thoughts, and experiences can pose challenges in the absence of shared principles and decision-making processes. Continuous learning can be supported through group practices that encourage and welcome differences, such as Beloved Community principles and practices. A participatory leadership process that welcomes different opinions can manage tensions and create practices in which different approaches can be discussed, listened to, and heard. Continuous learning offers the ability to apply and test small adaptations, innovate, and explore different ideas. In general, this approach welcomes multiple tactics and strategies rather than prioritizing a single solution. Developing an equity-informed process for making decisions (such as discussed in Lever 2, Shared Governance) can help prevent ideas from being prioritized by implicit power dynamics within a group.

Step 6: Continuous Learning

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY: ITERATIVE IMPROVEMENT CYCLES — EXPANDING AND BUILDING

For its first 90-Day Challenge goal, the Berkeley Early Education and Care Collective sought to create a cultural shift to empower mothers through supports and connections and to eliminate mental health stigmas in their community. By the second 90-Day Challenge, the Collective had established a mothers' support group and led a powerful community conversation about mental health stigma with a local technical school. During the third 90-Day Challenge, the Collective intentionally widened the table and engaged local tribal communities to determine how the Collective might move forward in supporting the community. By the end of the 90-Day Challenge process, the group had advanced community partnerships and trust, hosting two Transformational Table events (where the community convened around a cultural meal to discuss mental health and strategies to address mental health stigma) and other successful community healing events including a nature walk and yoga.

Step 7: Periodic Reflection

Data is critical and everything is data. Display-ing data in a variety of methods including data stories, visual displays, and collecting data through qualitative methods will help to tell the story of the coalition and the community, and prepare for future funding opportunities. [Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood Education (LIFE) Project]

Periodic reflection allows a group to build the habit of regularly sharing and learning from information that is being collected in real time. The routine sharing of information can deepen a sense of shared accountability for outcomes and responsibility for improvement efforts, particularly if coupled with a reflection process to engage with data.

Periodic reflection also provides an opportunity to strategically improve engagement. Contextualizing and visualizing data can communicate a sense of urgency, opportunities, and concrete needs that can guide the development of strong strategic alliances, deepen partnerships, and broaden engagement.

Central questions to consider include the following:

- What outcomes are being tracked? Are these the right outcomes? How can they be improved or sharpened?
- What's missing? Are there gaps in the information that is available?
- How can these data gaps be addressed or improved?

Be ready to pivot. Sometimes a coalition goes into their 90-Day Challenge with an idea of what the community goals and outcomes are. Then the community decides that it needs to be adapted and changed. Supporting the community and trusting in their guidance is critical to this work. [Young Child Wellness Council]

The periodic reflection process should apply an equity lens to consider impact, engagement, and shared governance.

Impact: Tracking the impact of the work on the community over time involves operation-alizing equity. Who is benefitting? Who is not benefitting? Why? How are structural inequities captured? How are contextual assets measured? or are they missing?

Engagement: Consider who is involved in the reflection process and who could be in-volved. How is data being shared and communi-cated with the network? Who is advantaged and disadvantaged by these dissemination strate-gies? Who could be engaged? Is the sharing of information inclusive? How are literacy, varying abilities, and linguistic and cultural diversity be-ing considered in the sharing of information?

Shared Governance: How do you advance participatory and equitable decision-making pro-cesses related to the interpretation and sharing of data and information? Who is participating in periodic reflections? Who is making decisions about data interpretation, collection, and mea-surement? Who is missing?

Step 7: Periodic Reflection

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY: PARENT ENGAGEMENT GUIDING EQUITABLE IMPROVEMENT

Building on a two-generation approach, **the Family Engagement Network** (FEN) seeks to create pathways for parents to access educational opportunities that create sustainable employment while also supporting their children's access to high-quality early education. The network's 90-Day Challenge aimed to build stronger relationships with caregivers in the community in order to identify and overcome systemic barriers to accessing workforce development opportunities. Parents identified access to childcare as a central barrier and proposed a streamlined process to reduce the amount of time and paperwork required and expand funding supports. FEN created a childcare scholarship program for parents participating in workforce development programs, enabling them to pursue advanced educational training through a Pima Community College Career Pathway Program. Despite acquiring resources and partnerships to streamline the application process and provide scholarships for childcare supports, many of their spots remained opened and unfulfilled because application submissions were low.

FEN continued to use one type of community engagement approach, known as a "parents-as-consultants" model, and through ongoing engagement in this process, identified that parents expressed feeling more comfortable with their children being cared for by close family members (kinship care). Wrapping up their 90-Day Challenge process, FEN sought to support families develop a greater sense of comfort and familiarity with other childcare programs and options available, in addition to kinship care, through the scholarship program by hosting tours of the childcare facilities so parents could feel as informed as possible when making a decision.

Data abstracted from context can reinforce inequities. Equity tools can be utilized during periodic reflections as a way to improve processes and build capacity for a group to operationalize equity.

Asset framing can be used during periodic reflections to help guide the development of next steps for collective action based on community strengths and assets. Reframing can help groups learn from unresolved issues and processes that may not have achieved the vision of success. Groups can elevate themes or outcomes that provide important insights and lessons. They can consider how mindsets regarding human agency and community assets inform those insights and reflect on the social, political, and economic structures that may have impacted their processes. What structures and mindsets are more aspirational, that may result in different outcomes? This process can help reframe "failures" as opportunities for deeper structural analysis.

Mapping the margins provides an opportunity to identify and strategically engage communities who have been socially marginalized in a group process. Who is not being included? Who do you desire to partner with that you are missing? Consider these questions and use a social network map to outline primary and secondary connectors who can help guide efforts to connect with these groups, working collaboratively to revise dissemination and engagement strategies in the process.

Step 7: Periodic Reflection

Restoration. Periodic reflections can be restorative and promote wellness. Creating routines that acknowledge and appreciate team members, honor cultural traditions, and promote collective resilience is an important way to intentionally support self-care and wellbeing. Moments to celebrate success may incorporate practices that reinforce opportunities to define success collectively.

Communication. Periodic reflections offer an opportunity to both reflect and share learnings at regular intervals. Data storytelling and narrative strategies can be used to help engage a broader number of stakeholders in reviewing and responding to emerging findings. Using data storytelling to help develop a plan for communicating with the broader network or coalition can support the sustainability of this effort in real time (See Lever 4. Develop and Disseminate Data Stories).

Accountability. Periodic reflection processes are intended to promote shared accountability among the group, but building the practice can be challenging. Establishing an accountability partner, for yourself or your group, with a routine check-in time, can be a useful strategy to address the social and emotional elements of change and lay the groundwork for establishing and sustaining this practice.

Conclusion

The gravity of this moment has profoundly shaped the lessons, strategies and tools shared in this playbook. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and national reckoning with structural racism and racial injustice, the costs of the failure to address longstanding structural inequities and dismantle racist policies are starkly evident. Can we achieve equity and racial justice, and promote optimal wellbeing for children, without fundamental social transformation?

This playbook has documented stories and captured the ways in which leadership paradigms can be shifted to recognize, honor, and actively promote community leadership, determination, and power. It has also posed critical questions to help unmask implicit leadership paradigms, practices, and assumptions that perpetuate white supremacy and reinforce racial hierarchies. The shared learning journeys of coalitions that are embracing distributed and collective models of leadership — and as a result, enhancing community capacity to affirm, welcome, and work across differences and take collective action to dismantle systems of oppression that perpetuate racial and social inequities — are just that: both a recognition of and an aspiration toward building a Beloved Community. The work of social transformation is neither simple nor straightforward.

This playbook is more than the story of a single village; it is also the untold story of tens of thousands of villages — and growing — across the country. We invite you to join us in authoring a new social story of the invaluable and essential leadership of caregivers and communities for a just and equitable future. We hope you are inspired to adapt, extend, and share these lessons.

NOW Learning Community

Members of the inaugural NOW Learning Community spanned the country, each bringing unique experiences, perspectives, and focus areas but all aligned around a community vision and commitment to child wellbeing and equity. Each member coalition is described below:

■ **Austin Neighborhood Network** (Chicago, Illinois). Launched in 2015, the Austin Neighborhood Network was part of an expansion of United Way's collective impact model into nine additional city and suburban communities of need following a successful pilot in 2013. Austin is one of Chicago's 77 officially designated community areas (neighborhoods). With Austin Coming Together (ACT) serving as the backbone organization, the Austin Neighborhood Network comprises 60+ community-based organizations working under formal collaboration to meet the education and income needs of Austin residents. Its mission is to increase its member organizations' collective impact on child, youth, and parent outcomes in the Austin community through the design and implementation of multi-organization, multi-sector initiatives. Learn more at ***https://austincomingtogether.org***/.

■ **Berkeley Early Education and Care** (BEE) Collective (Berkeley County, South Carolina). Formed in 2017, the BEE Collective aims to build an integrated mental health framework to increase the social-emotional development outcomes of children, birth to 6, in Berkeley County, South Carolina. Its mission is to ensure that every child enters kindergarten socially and emotionally ready to learn, that every educator has positive wellbeing and the tools to handle challenging behaviors, that families are resilient,

and that the community reduces mental health stigma for all ages. Learn more at ***http://berkeleyfirststeps.com/***

■ **Essex County Council for Young Children** (Newark, New Jersey). The Essex County Council for Young Children (ECCYC) is one of 21 such county councils statewide in New Jersey. They aim to create an environment where parents and families come together with providers and other community members as active partners to identify the issues that affect the health, education, and safety of children (prenatal to 8) in Essex County and discuss how they relate to the needs, concerns, hopes, dreams, and successes of families. Learn more at ***https://programsforparents.org/eccyc/***

■ **Family Engagement Network** (Pima County, Arizona). In 2017, the First Things First Pima North and Pima South Regional Partnership Councils, in partnership with Pima County At Work and Pima Community College, came together to establish the coalition called the Family Engagement Network (FEN). FEN draws on the strategic alignment and collaboration of four critical sectors that impact children and families' health and economic wellbeing: regional early childhood agencies, workforce development, community colleges, and nonprofits. First Things First aims to create a

family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative, and high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, health, and early education of all Arizona children, birth through age 5. United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona joined as an additional partner and serves as the organization's fiduciary entity.

■ **Generations Forward** (Whatcom County, Washington). Generations Forward is a growing collaborative of over 150 Whatcom County partners. Its mission is to promote the wellbeing of all Whatcom County's youngest children and their families, and close opportunity gaps associated with race, ethnicity, income, and family adversity. At the start of the initiative, the collaborative was organized around nine collective commitments to support children at the individual level, the family level, and the community level. These nine commitments formed the basis of the collaborative's original structure of nine corresponding action teams, each of which are made up of committed partners and stakeholders with distinct processes and decision-making structures. Currently, the Collaborative is focusing on efforts around three main areas — community building, education and co-learning, and policy advocacy – with the leadership and guidance of Family Council members, Family Champions, and other key partners.

APPENDIX

Appendix: NOW Learning Community

■ **Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood Education** (LIFE) Project (New York City, New York). The LIFE Project was developed and launched in January 2017. LIFE is a community-based outreach, education, enrollment support and advocacy project that aims to identify and overcome common barriers to immigrant families' enrollment into NY's Pre-K/3-K programs. The LIFE Project is coordinated by the New York Immigration Coalition and includes several grassroots, immigrant-led community-based organizations (working in key New York City zip codes with substantial immigrant communities): MASA, LSA Family Health Service, and Neighbors Helping Neighbors/ Fifth Avenue Committee. These organizations conduct culturally and linguistically fluent outreach about the availability and benefits of Pre-K/3-K programs and provide tailored support throughout the application and enrollment process. Learn more at ***https://www.nyic.org.***

■ **McKinley County Early Childhood Coalition** (Navajo Nation, New Mexico). Based in Navajo Nation, New Mexico, the McKinley County Early Childhood Coalition seeks to eliminate health disparities and improve the wellbeing of American Indians and Alaska Natives in their community. Composed of a diverse group of Native-led agencies, partners, and parent leaders, the coalition is leading transformational efforts to promote healthy, prosperous, and empowered Native children and families, grounded in honoring their indigenous culture, language, and traditions. They seek to build capacity for systems change led by Native communities themselves and center traditional cultural practices to ensure children and families have access to quality care and education.

■ **Conectando, formally Moving Ahead Adelante** (Jefferson County, Colorado). The coalition works to enhance the social capital of Spanish-speaking/Latine children and families concentrated in under-resourced communities through neighborhood-level strategies for community impact, advocacy, and policy development connected to formal systems. Since 2017, Jefferson County Public Health and Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition (have partnered to support Spanish speaking families and service providing agencies in building a network that will develop and rely on the leadership of the Spanish Speaking families. The Conectando network of community members and organizational partners provide continuing education opportunities to family, friend, and neighbor childcare providers; offer personal and professional development to community members; and collaborate strategically to extend training opportunities across the Denver Metro Area. Learn more at ***https://www.facebook.com/ConectandoCSP***C.

■ **Voices and Choices for Children Coalition** (Twin Cities, Minnesota). Voices and Choices for Children is a statewide coalition that partners with Minnesota's Children's Cabinet, state ethnic councils, state agencies, early childhood funders, non-profits, community-based organizations, early childhood advocates, and parents — with an explicit focus on representing communities of color and American Indian communities across the state of Minnesota. Learn more at ***http://www.voicesand-choicesmn.com/about***.

■ **Young Child Wellness Council** (Tuscaloosa, Alabama). Formed in 2015, Tuscaloosa Young Child Wellness Council (YCWC) initially launched with fourteen agency partners but has since grown and continues to identify potential partners. YCWC is composed of parents, providers, and community leaders and works collaboratively across systems in order to improve policies, programs, and approaches to using data and funds effectively. Together, council partners work to address the social and emotional health and wellbeing of infants, young children, and their families through an integrated early childhood system of care. Additionally, this group works to improve knowledge about healthy child development through public education campaigns and cross-disciplinary workforce development.

Appendix: Levers of Change

Tools & Resources

Lever 1: Center Racial Equity and Healing

Tools
Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-to Manual (Government Alliance on Race and Equity)
A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)
The Working Principles for Health Justice & Racial Equity Organizational Self-Assessment (The Praxis Project)
Early Childhood System Performance Assessment Toolkit: Advancing Parent Engagement & Equity Items (Center for the Study of Social Policy; CSSP)

Resources
Manifesto for Race Equity & Parent Leadership in Early Childhood Systems (Center for the Study of Social Policy)
Equity Manifesto (PolicyLink)

Lever 2: Implement Shared Governance

Tools
Creating an Inclusive and Equitable Process for Planning and Implementation (Racial Equity Tools)
The Tension of Turf: Making It Work for the Coalition (Prevention Institute)
Building Diverse Community Based Coalitions (The Praxis Project)
Ladder of Citizen Participation (Sherry Arnstein)

Resources
The Shared Power Principle (Centre for Public Impact)
Shifting Power from the Inside Out (Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) and RoadMap)
Early Learning Multnomah Parent Accountability Council

Lever 3: Engage Communities Authentically and with Dignity – Strategies to Expand Parent and Community Leadership

Tools
Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement (Urban Institute)
Parent Engagement & Leadership Assessment Guide & Toolkit (Center for the Study of Social Policy)
The Power of Community Wisdom in Advancing Health Justice & Racial Equity (The Praxis Project)

Resources
Abriendo Puertas
Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)

Lever 4: Develop and Disseminate Data Stories

Tools
Powering Health Equity Action with Online Data Tools: 10 Design Principles (PolicyLink, Ecotrust)
Data as a Tool for Change (Spark Policy Institute)
Advancing Better Outcomes for All Children: Reporting Data Using A Racial Equity Lens (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
Storytelling: A Tool for Health Advocacy (Rebecca Kahn and Jewlya Lynn, Spark Policy Institute)

Resources
Digital Storytelling (Tessa Lewin)
PLACES: Local Data for Better Health
The Census Bureau

Lever 5: Plan for Sustainability

Tools
Chapter 46: Planning for Sustainability (Community Tool Box)
A Sustainability Planning Guide for Healthy Communities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthy Communities Program)
Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (Washington University in St. Louis)
Sustainability Survey (Center for Story Based Strategy)

Resources
Factors that Predict Financial Sustainability of Community Coalitions: Five Years of Findings from the PROSPER Partnership Project (Greenberg et al)
An Assessment of the Sustainability and Impact of Community Coalitions Once Federal Funding Has Expired (NORC at the University of Chicago)

NOW Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing
POWERED BY VITAL VILLAGE

To find more resources, visit the NOW Innovation Forum Resource Library:
https://www.networksofopportunity.org/Resources

Sources

1. Crenshaw, K. *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.* in University of Chicago Legal Forum. 1989.

2. Jones, C.P., *Levels of racism: a theoretic framework and a gardener's tale.* American journal of public health, 2000. **90**(8): p. 1212.

3. Goodman, M., *The iceberg model.* Hopkinton, MA: Innovation Associates Organizational Learning, 2002.

4. Gee, G.C., et al., *Racial discrimination and health among Asian Americans: evidence, assessment, and directions for future research.* Epidemiologic reviews, 2009. **31**: p. 130-151.

5. Swihart, D., Shared governance: *A practical approach to reshaping professional nursing practice.* 2006: HCPro.

6. Bell, L.A., Robers. RA, Irani K, Murphy B, *The Storytelling Project Curriculm: Learning about Race and Racism through Storytelling and the Arts, in The Storytelling Project*, B. College, Editor. 2008, Barnard College: NY.

7. Batan, M., et al., *A sustainability planning guide for healthy communities.* Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016.

8. Butterfos, F., *Toward a Comprehensive Understanding of Community Coalitions: Moving from Practice to Theory, in Emerging theories in health promotion practice and research*, R.J. DiClemente, R.A. Crosby, and M.C. Kegler, Editors. 2009, John Wiley & Sons.

9. Byrd, K., Livne E, Boynton-Jarrett R, *Vital Village Network Boston Massacchusetts, 2017 Case Study, in Population Change Learning Community.* 2017, Boston Medical Center Boston, MA.

10. Ford, C.L. and C.O. Airhihenbuwa, *Critical race theory, race equity, and public health: toward antiracism praxis.* American journal of public health, 2010. **100**(S1): p. S30-S35.

11. Bushe, G.R., *Appreciative inquiry: Theory and critique.* The Routledge companion to organizational change, 2011. **87**: p. 103.

12. Whitney, D.D. and A. Trosten-Bloom, *The power of appreciative inquiry: A practical guide to positive change.* 2010: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

13. Yeager, K.A. and S. Bauer-Wu, *Cultural humility: essential foundation for clinical researchers.* Applied nursing research : ANR, 2013. **26**(4): p. 251-256.

14. Tervalon, M. and J. Murray-García, *Cultural humility versus cultural competence: a critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education.* J Health Care Poor Underserved, 1998. **9**(2): p. 117-25.

15. Pinderhughes, E., *Understanding race, ethnicity, and power: The key to efficacy in clinical practice.* 1989: Simon and Schuster.

16. Metzl, J.M. and H. Hansen, *Structural competency: theorizing a new medical engagement with stigma and inequality.* Soc Sci Med, 2014. **103**: p. 126-133.

17. Gaylord Harden, N.K., A.L. Burrow, and J.A. Cunningham, *A cultural asset framework for investigating successful adaptation to stress in African American youth.* Child development perspectives, 2012. **6**(3): p. 264-271.

18. Kerka, S., *Community asset mapping.* Clearinghouse on adult, career, and vocational education: Trends and issues alert, 2003. **47**: p. 1-2.

19. Lightfoot, E., J.S. McCleary, and T. Lum, *Asset mapping as a research tool for community-based participatory research in social work.* Social Work Research, 2014. **38**(1): p. 59-64.

20. *The Power of Asset Framing.* Available from: **https://www.skillman.org/blog/the-power-of-asset-framing/.**

21. Baker, R., *A century of Grace; restorative spatial justice, pedagogy, and beloved community in twenty-first century Detroit.* Gender, Place & Culture, 2018. **25**(3): p. 434-454.

22. Liston, M., *Dignity for Boys and Men of Color: An Exploration with Practitioners in the Field of Human Services.* 2018.

23. Hicks, D., Dignity: *The essential role it plays in resolving conflict.* 2011: Yale University Press.

24. Cobb, F., Krownapple, John. *Included Through a Culture of Dignity (2018) by Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple.* 2018; Available from: **https://www.thecorecollaborative.com/post/2018/07/20/included-through-a-culture-of-dignity.**

25. Blanch AK, S.D., REidy C, Lieberman L, *Building Stronger Networks: How a framework reconginizing adverse childhood experiences, trauma, and resilience can facilitate community collaboration.* 2019, Mobilizing Action for resilient Communities (MARC).

26. *Ginwright, S., The future of healing: Shifting from trauma informed care to healing centered engagement.* Occasional Paper, 2018. **25**.

27. French, B.H., et al., *Toward a psychological framework of radical healing in communities of color.* The Counseling Psychologist, 2020. **48**(1): p. 14-46.

28. Chioneso, N.A., et al., *Community Healing and Resistance Through Storytelling: A Framework to Address Racial Trauma in Africana Communities.* Journal of Black Psychology, 2020. **46**(2-3): p. 95-121.

29. Crenshaw, K., *Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color.* Stan. L. Rev., 1990. **43**: p. 1241.