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A Road Map to Quality Collective Impact Programming with Fiscal Independence

The Providence Children and Youth Cabinet Story

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We wish to thank each of the Evidence2Success® key leaders and citywide and community partnership members in Providence for their full support and participation. These strategic learnings would not be possible without their involvement and trust.

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative change efforts are challenging not only to implement but also to sustain. This report examines the past and current work of the Children and Youth Cabinet in Providence, Rhode Island, which, seven years ago, adopted the Annie E. Casey Foundation Evidence2Success® framework. The progression of the Cabinet from a backbone supporting the Evidence2Success work to an intermediary is explored, using a case-study analysis approach. The implementation findings offer insights that are molded into a road map that can provide direction to collective impact efforts toward sustainability and fiscal independence.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 43.1 million Americans lived in poverty and one in three were children.¹ In order to improve the situation for these youth and families, local community residents have begun to join forces with elected leaders, advocacy and service organizations, universities, research institutions, public systems, and even funders to form coalitions aimed at making measurable improvements in families' quality of life.²⁻⁷ However, collaborative community-systems change efforts remain challenging to implement and sustain for a variety of reasons.⁸ The Evidence2Success framework, developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, was specifically designed to address some of the most salient challenges in this work.⁹

Evidence2Success promotes healthy child development by

helping communities and public systems work together to use data to understand how children are doing; select proven programs to enhance strengths and address needs; and develop financing and action plans to support the ongoing use of those proven programs.

This report delves into the demonstration of the Evidence2Success in Providence, Rhode Island*. This site is seven years into its implementation of this framework. It has developed a sustainable, innovative financing plan that will likely keep the site viable for at least another five years. In this report, we take a case-study approach to describe the progression of the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet (CYC) from a backbone supporting collective impact** work through the Evidence2Success¹⁰ framework. Today, CYC is an intermediary*** organization supporting a



*Evidence2Success Providence publication: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/evidence2success-in-providence/>

**See Table 1 for an overview of the components of a collective impact effort.

***We acknowledge that the field has not yet settled on a single commonly accepted definition of an intermediary. Consequently, we use this word cautiously and define how “intermediary” is being used within the context of this paper and within the context of the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet’s work: an organization that fulfills supportive functions for a data-driven, community-systems coalition implementing tested, effective programs.

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Table 1. Components of Collective Impact¹¹

COMPONENT	DEFINITION
Common Agenda	A shared definition of and the steps that need to be taken to address the identified community problem
Shared Measurement	Defining how the coalition is going to measure the success of its activities
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Members of the collective impact effort engaging in activities that are different from one another but are all part of the effort's action plan
Continuous Communication	Holding regular meetings, providing ongoing communication between those meetings, and having a shared vocabulary
Backbone Support	A separate organization whose main role is to coordinate the effort's activities, which can range from providing strategic guidance to collecting and synthesizing data that inform the effort's work

community-systems collaborative and science-based approach to planning, implementing, evaluating, and funding tested effective youth programs. This transformation has been crucial in supporting the effort's sustainability. The goal of this report is to provide a road map to other such initiatives striving to achieve sustainability and fiscal independence in similar efforts, and to offer the field lessons learned about this process.

METHOD

Setting

The Evidence2Success demonstration began in 2012 in Providence, Rhode Island. Providence is a relatively small city within a

large metropolitan area that is racially and ethnically diverse, with pockets of poverty. Just over 178,000 people live in the city of Providence. More than 23% of the population is under the age of 18. Around half the city is White (49.8%), with Hispanics making up the next-highest proportion at 38.1%.¹² The median household income across the city is \$37,366, and 28.2% of the city's population live below the poverty level.¹³ Comparatively, the census tracts that make up the neighborhoods initially targeted within the city of Providence have lower median household incomes (from \$16,000 to \$34,000/year), higher poverty rates (21% to 63%), and a higher

I think that we would have to develop strong partnerships within the organizations that would be involved with implementing these programs, including the police department and any other social agencies that would be partnered with us.

— Key Leader
Baseline Interviews

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percentage of non-White residents (71% to 96%) compared to citywide statistics.¹⁴

Design

Due to the small sample size (one city region with two intervention communities) and to the formative nature of the project, the evaluation of the demonstration of

Evidence2Success included multiple measures, multiple reporters, and multiple time points in order to increase confidence in results. Consequently, all project data collected between 2012 and 2017 have been drawn upon for this analysis (see Table 2 for more details). A holistic review of all quantitative and qualitative data,

Table 2. Data Used in the Analysis

METHOD (DURATION)	SAMPLE, SAMPLE SIZE (INCENTIVE, IF APPLICABLE)	TIME PERIOD	TOPICS
Implementation Progress Interviews / Surveys			
In-person (45 min.) In-person (30 min.)	Citywide Partnership Members, <i>n</i> = 25 Key Leaders of 15 Sectors & 3 snowball, <i>n</i> = 18	Sept. - Dec. 2012	Baseline of targeted capacities: how people and organizations across the City make decisions about and work together to implement youth programs; confidence in prevention and tested, effective programs
Paper survey (20 min.)	Community Partnership Members, <i>n</i> = 31	June - July 2013	Baseline of targeted capacities: How people and organizations in the targeted neighborhoods make decisions about and work together to implement youth programs; confidence in prevention and tested, effective programs
In-person (45 - 60 min.) In person (45 - 60 min.)	Citywide Partnership Members, <i>n</i> = 24 (\$20) Community Partnership Members, <i>n</i> = 28 (\$20) Key Leaders of 15 Sectors, <i>n</i> = 17 (\$20)	March - June 2014	Wave 2: Follow-up of targeted capacities; implementation quality and progress of the Evidence2Success framework
In-person (45 - 60 min.) In person (45 - 60 min.) In person (20 min.) In person (10 min.)	Citywide Partnership Members, <i>n</i> = 18 (\$30) Community Partnership Members, <i>n</i> = 11 (\$30) Implementation Team Members, <i>n</i> = 12 (\$30) Finance Workgroup Members, <i>n</i> = 7 (\$30)	May - June 2015	Wave 3: Follow-up of targeted capacities; implementation quality and progress of the Evidence2Success framework
Phone (20 min.)	Administrators and TA support for the Youth Experiences Survey, <i>n</i> = 4	June 2016	Wave 4: Planning, administration, data analysis, and reporting of the Youth Experiences Survey
In-person (30 min.)	Children & Youth Cabinet Members (i.e., Citywide Partnership members), <i>n</i> = 8	Sept. 2017	Wave 5: Transition and current structure of the Children & Youth Cabinet
Technical Assistance Record			
Online survey (15 min.)	Technical Assistance Providers, <i>n</i> = 25 (340 total reports)	Monthly, July 2012 - Dec. 2016	Summary of all technical assistance and coaching interactions and targeted capacities
Meeting Check-Up			
Observation by trained evaluation staff	Citywide Partnership meetings, <i>n</i> = 19; Citywide Leadership, <i>n</i> = 12; Community Partnership meetings, <i>n</i> = 20; Various Subcommittee and Workgroup meetings, <i>n</i> = 39	As occur, Sept. 2012 - Dec. 2015	Interpersonal and productivity characteristics regarding regular community and region project meetings
Workshop Evaluations			
Fidelity Observations by trained evaluation staff	Each 'key meeting' outlined in the Evidence2Success framework, <i>n</i> = 19	As occur, Aug. 2012 - Feb. 2014	Adherence, adaptations, facilitator quality, participant responsiveness, reach, and how well objectives were obtained
Paper surveys (10 min.)	Attendees of each "key meeting" (e.g., workshop, orientation, or training), <i>n</i> = 220	As occur, Aug. 2012 - Feb. 2014	How well meeting objectives were attained; general meeting quality/organization
Project Documentation			
Timeline tracking: Excel workbook	Process evaluation staff record dates of key activities along the five-phased project	As occur, July 2012 - Dec. 2015	Organizational charts, meeting minutes, community action plan, and other site-generated communication materials
Archive project documentation	Process evaluation staff archive key project materials, including meeting minutes and site-created reports	As occur, July 2012 - December 2016	Organizational charts, meeting minutes, community action plan, and other site-generated communication materials

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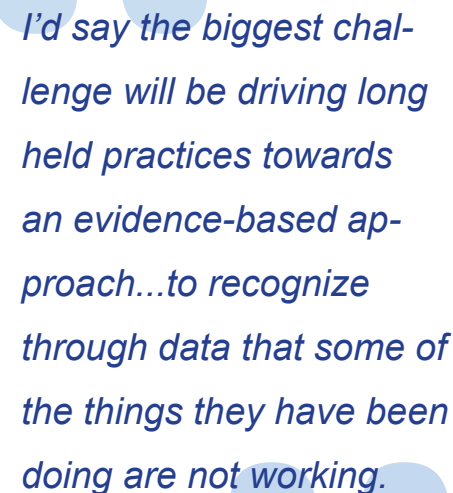
and a review of all previously summarized data in project reports, was undertaken for this case study. The description of the process, the lessons learned, and the road map we present are based on the key themes that surfaced during our review.

THE STORY

Evidence2Success promotes healthy child development by supporting public investment in programs proven to help young people. The framework helps communities establish a coalition of public systems leaders, elected leaders, community organizations, residents, and other community leaders. The coalition works to collect comprehensive data on youth needs. Using the youth data, the coalition identifies its priority areas and then selects tested, effective programs that map onto its priorities. Program implementation quality and program outcomes are monitored and reviewed in a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process to ensure programs are fulfilling set targets. Simultaneously, financial

data from public systems and other funders of programs for children and youth are reviewed as efforts are made to start planning an innovative, sustainable financing plan. All this work requires the existence of a highly skilled, experienced, and functioning entity to house the initiative—in other words, a supportive infrastructure. In the world of collective impact, this infrastructure would be considered a “backbone.”¹⁰

There are challenges to implementing a collective impact effort, however. Many challenges were identified by researchers after undertaking a community-change effort^{5,8,15} were identified as concerns before implementation of the Evidence2Success framework began.⁹ Specifically, the baseline interviews and surveys with citywide partnership members, key leaders, and community partnership members revealed many expected challenges to this work, including: 1) lack of collaboration within the community, primarily among local organizations and residents; 2) lack of funding

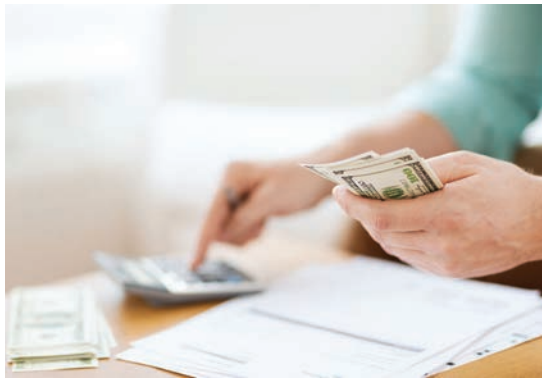


I'd say the biggest challenge will be driving long held practices towards an evidence-based approach...to recognize through data that some of the things they have been doing are not working.

— Evidence2Success
City-Level Coalition Member
Baseline Interviews

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There is not enough money to go around.

— Key Leader
Baseline Interviews

and resources to implement the change effort; 3) resistance to investing in and implementing tested, effective programs; and 4) lack of commitment to the implementation of the change effort.

The Early Days of the CYC and Evidence2Success

The Providence CYC was formed in 2010, under the direction of the city's mayor, to convene organizations across the city that provided services or other programming for children and youth. Together, these organizations worked to prioritize shared results and to take collective action to improve the well-being of Providence's children and youth. After a slight hiatus related to a transition in city leadership, the CYC reorganized in 2012, and the first Director of the CYC was selected. The goal of the CYC was to translate existing reforms and initiatives into a cohesive cradle-to-career strategy to help children and youth reach their full potential. In order to accomplish this goal, the CYC regularly convened organizations to: 1)

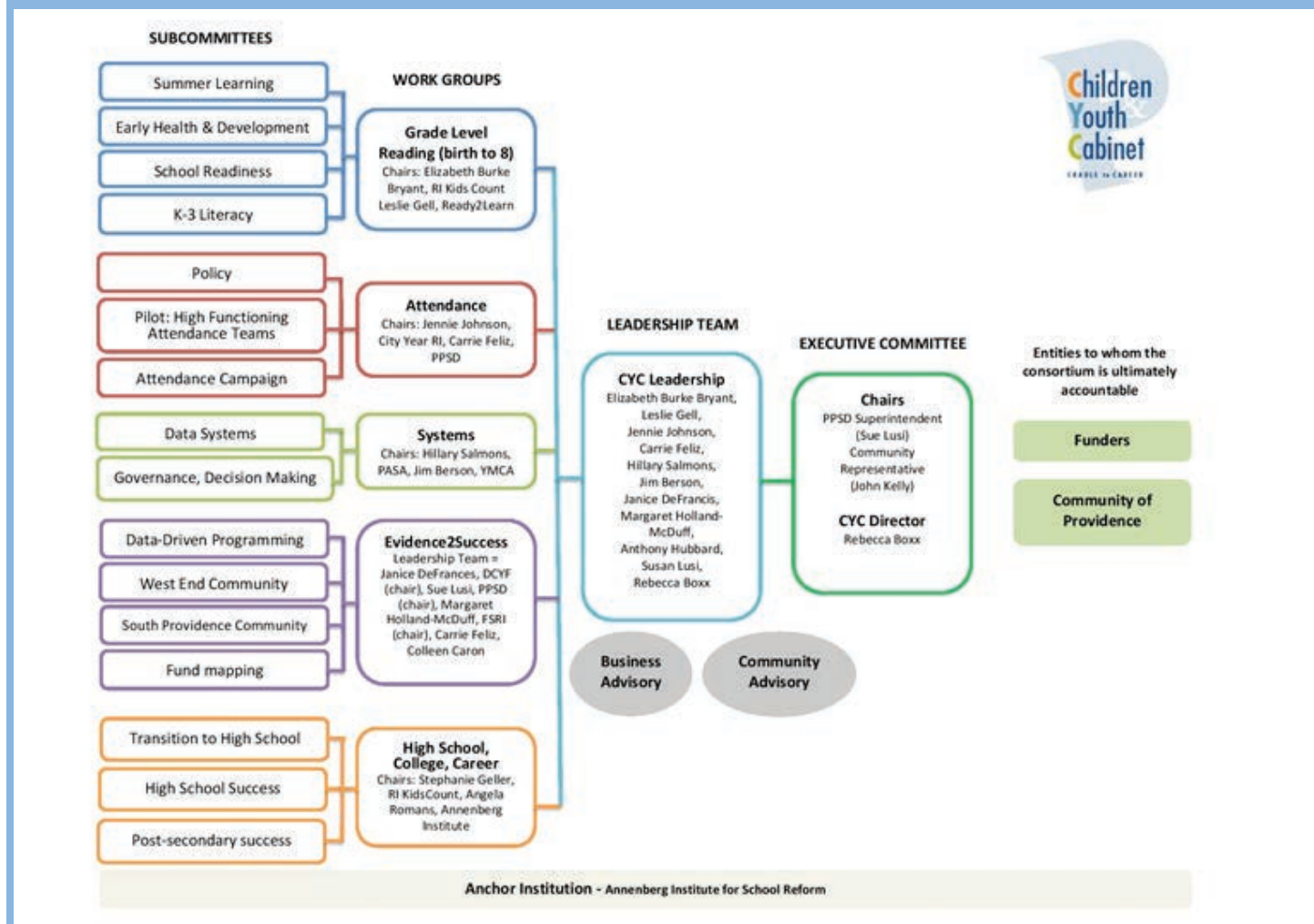
set priorities and goals; 2) take specific action toward reaching goals; 3) learn together and monitor progress; 4) develop policy and practice recommendations based on what was learned; and 5) engage new partners in order to reach specific goals. As tracked in project documents, the work was distributed across four workgroups (see Figure 1).

As an existing collaborative, data-based, youth-focused initiative, the CYC already had identified priorities and established a leadership team as well as its operating procedures. It was already functioning as a backbone of a citywide collective impact effort.¹⁰ The CYC, however, was not involved in financing or fund-raising and did not yet have a commitment to using tested, effective programs. Additionally, the CYC did not include a mechanism for community resident involvement and did not include youth survey data among its data sources. When Providence was selected as the demonstration site for the Evidence2Success framework,

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Figure 1. Organizational chart of the CYC in 2012, when the Evidence2Success effort started in Providence, RI




Evidence2Success became the fifth workgroup within the CYC structure. According to project documentation, initial on-site trainings occurred without an official leader being named for the Evidence2Success work. After six months, the Director of the CYC became the Site Coordinator

for the Evidence2Success workgroup, as well. At that time, the future vision recorded in meeting minutes was that the Evidence2Success framework would eventually be integrated into all the work of the CYC. If accomplished, this would include the Evidence2Success framework


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Without the CYC, we wouldn't have had city and statewide buy-in, and so it would not have been possible to identify and direct funding toward priorities that the group had set. I think that the group would not have gotten its second round of funding without the unified and sort of higher-level leadership of the CYC.

— Evidence2Success
Community-Level
Coalition Member
Wave 3 Interviews



becoming the decision-making and programmatic framework for the entire CYC operation. The general plan at that time, also recorded in meeting minutes, was for the Evidence2Success-related work to grow and demonstrate success before its functions would be integrated. At this time, several individuals involved in the Executive Team within the CYC were also leaders of the Evidence2Success workgroup. A second wave of interviews was conducted with citywide partnership and community partnership members after risk/protective factor and outcome priorities, and tested, effective programs were selected. In these interviews, the CYC and its staff were frequently reported as being critical to the success of the Evidence2Success effort. One public agency representative on the citywide partnership described the Evidence2Success work and the work of the CYC as having a “symbiotic relationship.” Through these interviews, a theme surfaced that the CYC seemed to organically develop its backbone

support for the Evidence2Success work, providing stability and consistency through unexpected transitions, and demonstrating locally owned commitment to the Evidence2Success work. Challenges arose during this time, as reflected in the interview data collection. The CYC had difficulties getting racially and ethnically diverse individuals involved; consequently, citywide and community partnership members noted that CYC members did not reflect the community demographics. Several community partnership members noted that the CYC did not engage community residents enough, and indicated that the CYC was not rooted in the community. One community partnership member noted that the effort felt more like “grass tops” than “grass roots.” Quantitative data collected at this time about community involvement in decision-making echoed the qualitative data. Other challenges reported included a need for more stability and consistency of those involved, as well as a desire for the process to move more quickly to program

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implementation. Some expressed a desire to involve additional partners or different communities, and others mentioned concerns regarding the rollout of the strategic finance process. Participants also noted a lack of sufficient, adequately clear communication.

Moving Forward

A typical backbone undertakes six main functions: 1) guides the vision and strategy; 2) supports aligned activities; 3) establishes shared measurement strategies; 4) builds public will; 5) advances policy; and 6) mobilizes funding.^[10]

At this time, the CYC was operating as a traditional backbone of a collective impact initiative. Retrospectively at Wave 5, CYC leaders commented that as the work of Evidence2Success evolved, the CYC re-examined its needed functions and noted that they started to see the need to broaden their scope of work shortly after the tested, effective programs were selected. For example, traditional collective-impact backbones do not have explicit

finance strategies. Additionally, the importance of community voice⁵ and power in decision-making is not emphasized. Traditional collective-impact initiatives do not explicitly focus on tested, effective programs and the implementation science and supports needed to produce scalable and sustainable results. Finally, the importance of prevention and of measuring risk and protective factors was not explicit in the CYC's typical backbone work; typical cradle-to-career efforts focus on long-term outcome indicators, such as graduation rates. Interviewees commented that Evidence2Success, on the other hand, brought explicit financing strategies; community voice; tested, effective programs; implementation science; and an emphasis on prevention into the existing CYC initiative.

Another wave of interviews with citywide and community partnership members (i.e., Wave 3) was conducted shortly after implementation of the first tested, effective programs began. The importance


One facilitator of success with Evidence2Success was the commitment of the CYC to make sure that this [work] happens.

— Evidence2Success
Community-Level
Coalition Member
Wave 3 Interviews




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Without the CYC, the Evidence2Success work wouldn't have stayed at the forefront of people's radar screens, at the forefront of their efforts.

— Evidence2Success
City-Level
Coalition Member
Wave 3 Interviews



of the CYC as a backbone support to the Evidence2Success framework, which now included implementing and monitoring programs, surfaced as a theme in the collected qualitative data. Citywide and community partnership members indicated that the Evidence2Success work and the work of the CYC became more intertwined during this time. Multiple respondents recognized the CYC as leading the Evidence2Success work, helping the citywide and community partnerships to look toward the future and plan next steps around their identified common agenda. Participants said that the CYC leadership provided stability during transitions in key leadership and staff; it was around this time that additional CYC leadership also took on specific leadership roles with implementation planning and systems coordination with the Evidence2Success work. Also noted was that the CYC helped further relationships with key partners, such as the school system, which supported sustainability.

Those interviewed describe several additional areas of overlap and growth between the CYC and the Evidence2Success work. For example, data showed that the CYC had begun espousing a commitment to tested, effective programs. Some interviewees described the structure of the CYC as a convener that enabled the execution of productive meetings. The continuous quality improvement (CQI) process was followed in meetings to ensure productivity and monitor the implementation of tested, effective programs. As tracked in these meeting observations, the implementation teams that conducted the CQI process connected diverse stakeholders, including community members, service providers, and system leaders. These individuals worked together to review program implementation quality data quickly and respond with suggestions for next steps to improve program implementation quality.

Also recognized in the third and fifth rounds of interviews was that the CYC benefitted from the

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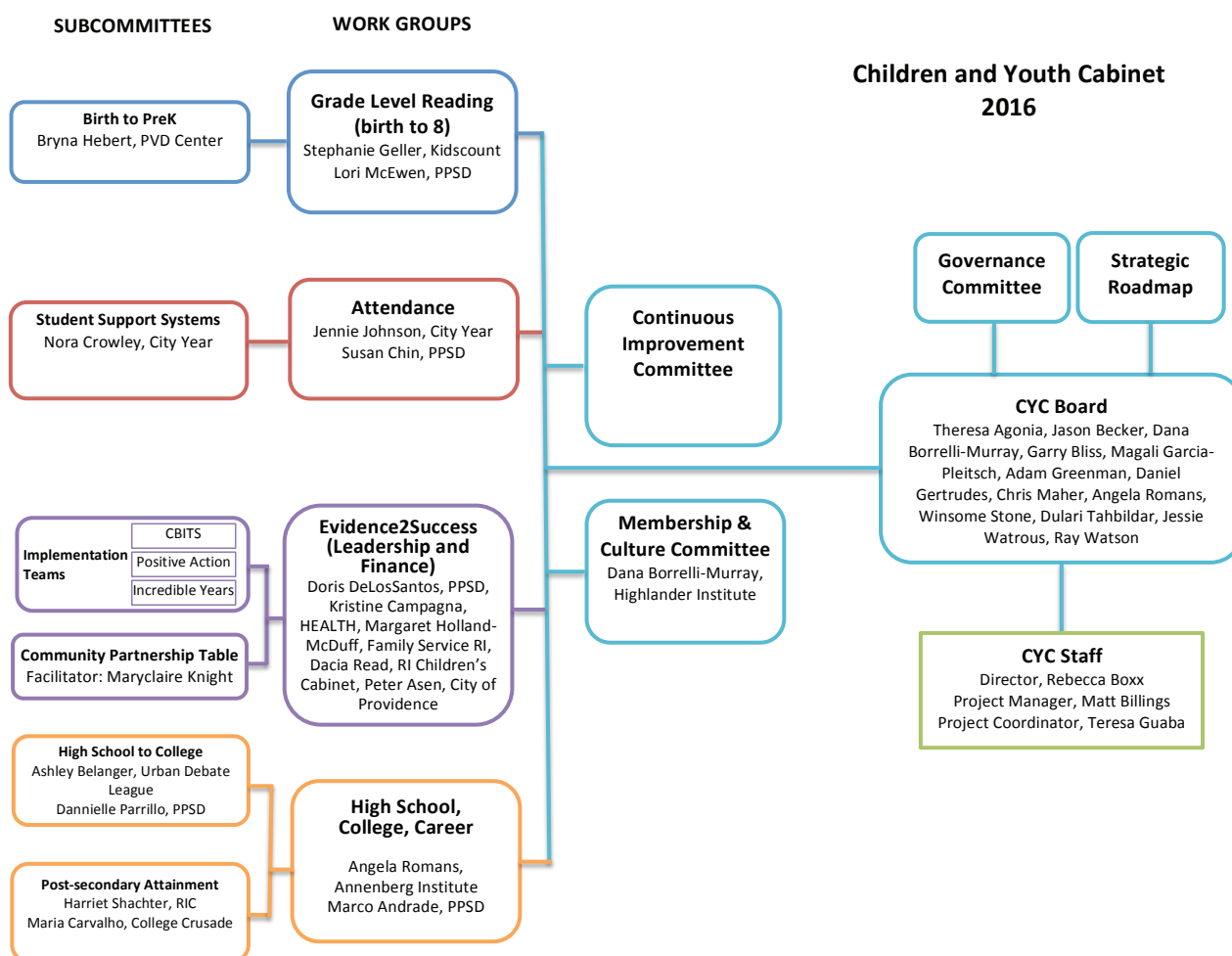
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Evidence2Success fund-mapping and strategic finance process, as well as from the strong leadership of the CYC. As recorded in the third round of interviews, the CYC received financial support from multiple and diverse public systems and local government agencies to

continue the Evidence2Success work, leveraging existing funds to gain additional, new funding.

Yet, some themes of concern also surfaced. Interviewees expressed unease about a lack of genuine community engagement. These

Figure 2. 2016 CYC Structure



Anchor Institution - Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University

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concerns continued to surface in the third round of interviews. For example, one community partnership member mentioned feeling that some CYC members were “disconnected from the neighborhoods” and that their “day-to-day lives are not connected to the communities.” Interviewees also felt that they did not have equal power in decision-making. In response to this challenge, as documented in meeting observations, CYC leadership recruited several residents with deep knowledge of their communities for the CYC Board. Interviewees said that they did not receive information quickly enough and had trouble under-

standing how ideas would lead to action.

As documented in meeting minutes, the CYC undertook a strategic planning process to further develop its sustainability plan after reviewing the Wave 3 interview results. As recorded in project documents and in the retrospective Wave 5 interviews, by 2016, the CYC had changed its organizational structure to accommodate its needs regarding continuous quality improvement and program implementation (see Figure 2); it was reported in the Wave 5 interviews that the common feeling was that work could be organized and executed more efficiently.

Table 3. Joint Community- and Systems-Identified Priorities and Programs Via the Evidence2Success Process

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS	OUTCOMES	SELECTED PROGRAMS
Family management problems	Anxiety	Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)
Early initiation of antisocial behavior	Depression	Positive Action
Community disorganization	Delinquency	Incredible Years - Parent and Teacher versions
Low commitment to school	Chronic absenteeism	Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)
Few opportunities for community prosocial involvement	Emotion regulation	Familias Unidas

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Figure 3. Current 2017 CYC Organizational Structure

CYC Membership Focus and Function



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It was like a see and be seen...you come to the big annual CYC meeting and see all the other CEOs, and EDs of non-profits in the city in one space mingling and networking...it wasn't about the CYC...they weren't doing anything for the collective impact...

— CYC Leadership Team Member
Wave 5 Interviews



Common frustrations included too many meetings with not enough outcomes and a lack of flexibility in finance systems and procedures at the CYC's organizational home, Brown University. This also was cited in the fifth round of interviews, causing the CYC leadership to begin thinking about finding a new organizational home, whether as a new organization that would act as a fiscal sponsor or as an independent 501(c)(3). Previously, as documented in project evaluation reports, the idea of developing into a new, independent 501(c)(3) had generally been discouraged because the goal of collective impact is not to develop a new, competing organization, but to be systematic, thoughtful, and intentional about existing resources, using the existing functions of existing organizations to execute needed tasks.¹⁶ Theoretically, this strategy works when existing scopes of work can be modified to fit the stated priorities and needs of the collective-impact effort while continuing to serve the mission of the organization.

Current Structure

As recorded in the fifth round of interviews, upon completing its strategic planning, the CYC revealed a new, revised structure (see Figure 3), which respondents expected to be more efficient. As documented in this project hand-out, the CYC developed three different levels at which individuals or organizations can participate: 1) be informed; 2) engage; and 3) dig in. Also, three key Evidence2Success strategies are now integrated across the entire organization: 1) data-based decision-making; 2) community-systems engagement, including community-identified priorities; and 3) tested, effective programs. The Evidence2Success framework was now the official operating procedure for the CYC. Multiple interview respondents articulated that the CYC now clearly filled a gap in the positive youth development programming across the city; the Evidence2Success needs assessment, priority-setting, and program selection process helped them identify the need

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and gap. Furthermore, the Evidence2Success-identified priorities became the common agenda guiding the CYC's activities (see Figure 3).

The CYC has grown as a result of deepening its knowledge and skill related to community-systems collaboration; strategic financing; and tested, effective programs. The emphasis on quality, outcomes, and community voice have created demand for selected tested, effective programs. The CYC has found its niche and proven its worth so that it can now start itemizing its services to be included on system budgets or new grants.

After developing their new organizational structure, the CYC left the Annenberg Institute at Brown University and moved to new offices. It will now be working with TSNE MissionWorks, a 501(c)(3) that provides fiscal sponsorship to budding nonprofits. TSNE tailors its services to fit the specific needs of start-ups, such as provid-

ing an infrastructure that allows the CYC to act as a nonprofit. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring fiscal flexibility through the efficient movement of funds from one entity to another, which was not permissible at Brown University. TSNE also offers more efficient human-resource services and scaffolding. Some are concerned that the CYC will lose credibility by transitioning away from an institution of higher education. However, the CYC and Brown University have agreed to maintain a positive relationship. In this new structure, it is expected that the CYC will continue its work with increased fiscal authority and flexibility.

Current Functions

This report has described an interconnecting process of how the Providence CYC integrated the Evidence2Success framework into its operations. Over time, a single streamlined, nimble intermediary with fiscal independence was born. This means that the CYC now provides needed functions



...moving away from the old regime into the rolling-up-sleeves working groups and being an intermediary backbone to help get specific projects done for the city is a huge transition.

— CYC Leadership Team Member
Wave 5 Interviews

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to advance the collective-impact work driven by the Evidence2Success framework that occurs across the city of Providence. The CYC acts as a fiscal leader by actively updating and implementing the strategic financing plan. Acquired funds go directly to the CYC, and the CYC distributes funds to support the implementation of the common agenda. Thus far, following the CYC's transition to being a more independent organization, interview data suggest that it continues to be viewed as a neutral entity. More than one respondent said that the CYC's concentration on programming prioritized by the community, documentation of quality improvement and assurance, and coordinating around a shared vision strengthen its position as an independent entity. Several described the CYC as having leveraged traditional collective impact roles to turn into a nimble intermediary supporting tested, effective programs (see Figure 4).

The ideas brought to the surface during the fifth round of inter-

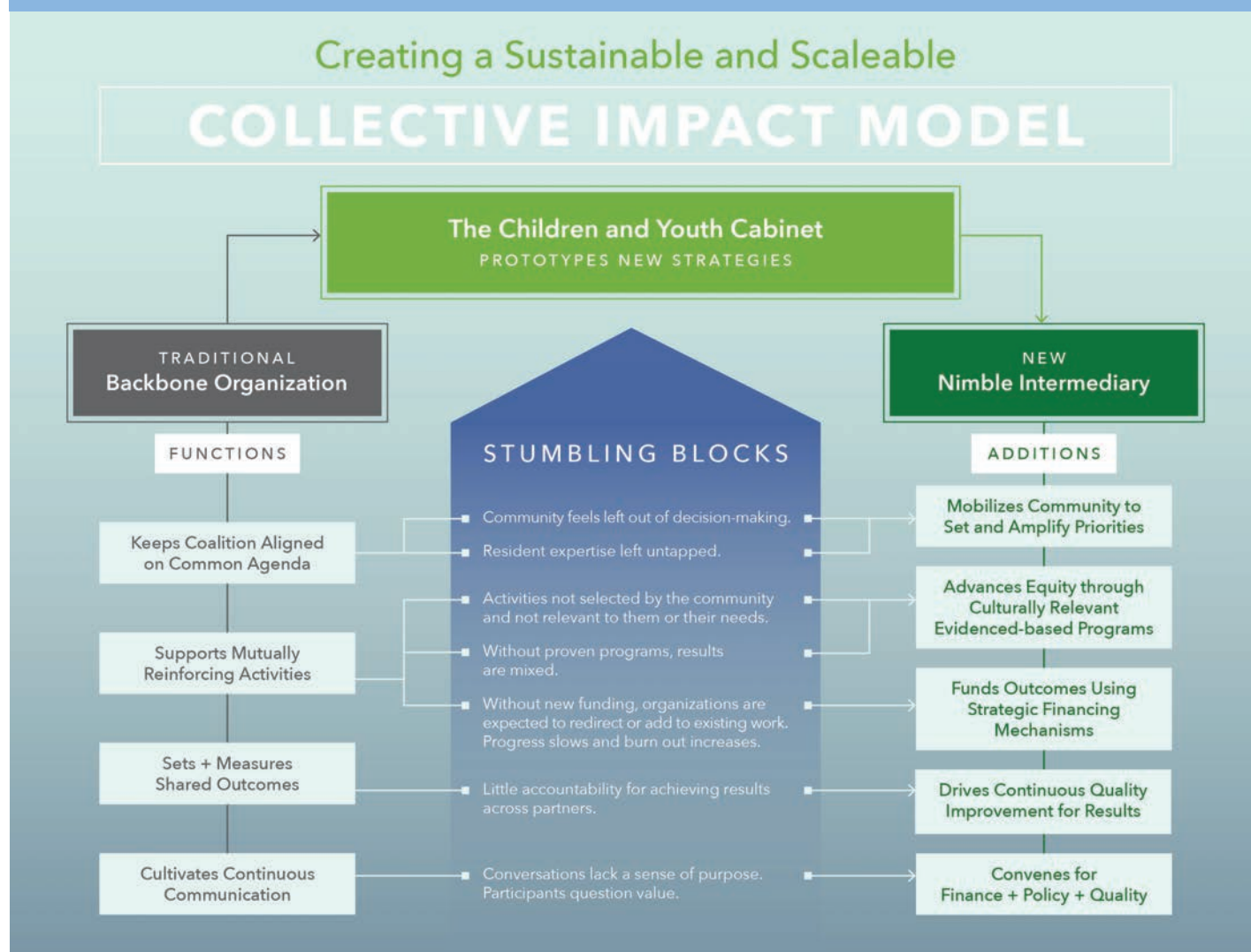
views include the following (see Table 1 for the list of collective impact components):

- **The collective-impact components of Convening and Developing a Common Agenda have evolved into an overall strategy of Amplifying Community Priorities.** A central function of the CYC continues to be bringing together individuals and organizations concerned about youth health and development in order to develop common goals. Yet, the emphasis, as it is in the Evidence2Success framework, remains on developing community-driven priorities and programming, and bringing new individuals and organizations into the decision-making process. In this work, the role of each individual and organization is specified to ensure efficiency.
- **The Shared Measurement collective-impact component has developed into Instituting Best Practices.** This strategy includes adopting a prevention-science approach to making decisions about youth programs. Therefore, the best available data are used

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Figure 4. Collective Impact Model (Graphic Developed by the Children and Youth Cabinet, 2018)




to make decisions about priorities and programs and implementing tested, effective programs that cover the prevention continuum (e.g., universal, selective, and indicated) and develop-

mental spectrum (e.g., birth to emerging adults and families). Data are gathered from youth on levels of risk and protective factors and outcomes and are then supplemented with archival/

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system-measured specific data, when appropriate. Program evaluation results are used to guide the selection of youth and family programs. Ongoing process and outcome data are then collected throughout implementation and are reviewed by program-specific implementation teams using a continuous quality improvement process that guides future next steps, including adjustments to implementation.

- **The Continuous Communication and Backbone functions are encompassed within an Organizational Support strategy.** In this strategy, tasks and timelines are managed and communicated across partners, with each partner carrying one part (or multiple parts) of the agreed-upon plan. In addition, given the specialized work in the Evidence2Success framework related to strategic financing, this strategy also includes developing, implementing, and continually adjusting the innovative finance plan to support efficient use of public resources

and to sustain the CYC's work.

With financing as part of this strategy, partners hold each other accountable to achieving the collectively determined goals.

In summary, interview respondents communicated their thoughts that this mix of redesigned strategies will maximize the potential benefits and help sustain their collective-impact effort aimed to improve youth outcomes. Thinking more broadly, applying the Evidence2Success framework to a traditional collective-impact effort, as the Providence CYC did, may also be able to advance other traditional collective-impact efforts.

Certainly, this analysis is observational with a pretest and repeated post-test only design without a comparison group. Causal connections are not possible with this evaluation design.

A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE EFFORTS

Key aspects of the Providence story can guide other collective-impact efforts on how to get

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to a similar place of fiscal independence and fiscal sustainability. This road map has seven steps (see Figure 5).

1. DEVELOP A SHARED VISION

First and foremost, it is important to create a tangible vision of how the collective-impact effort operates in the future. This step includes detailing the key individuals and organizations that need to be involved and how they will be expected to interact and relate to each other. This vision is in addition to and distinct from the specified youth and family outcome goals that the collective impact effort is working to obtain. For example, in 2012, the Director of the CYC believed Evidence2Success could become the CYC's operating system and would fulfill the functions of strategic financing; engaging residents in decision-making; and maintaining a focus on tested, effective programs and implementation—elements generally “missing” from a traditional collective-impact backbone. Start with the end in mind by thinking about what a sustainable, locally owned collec-

tive-impact effort looks like and what functions you need to build to execute this shared vision.

2. RECRUIT DIVERSE LEADERS ACROSS CONTEXTS TO ADVANCE A SHARED VISION

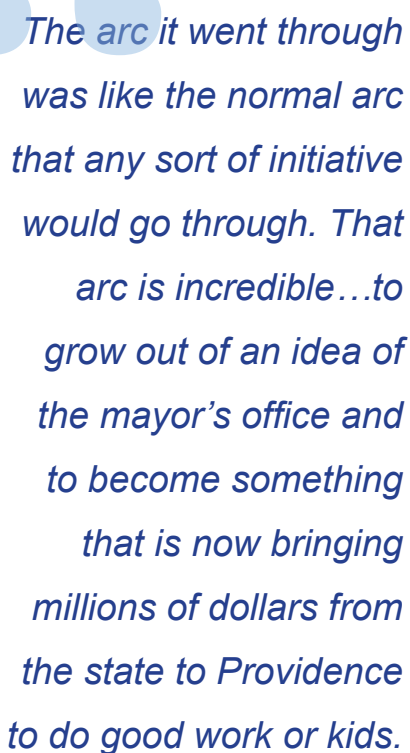
It took time to find the right leaders and balance of time for the CYC and Evidence2Success work; yet, the right leadership was crucial to moving the work forward. Consequently, it is important to recruit experienced, community-minded systems leaders and experienced community members to jointly lead the shared vision of how your backbone will develop into an intermediary. It is important that these leaders be trusted as neutral parties solely invested in improving outcomes for youth and families.

Ensure that these influential, experienced, and well-respected community leaders are supportive and have enough time to do the work. As learned through the CYC's successes and challenges in engaging diverse populations and leaders, the people who are identified to lead the work are



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The arc it went through was like the normal arc that any sort of initiative would go through. That arc is incredible...to grow out of an idea of the mayor's office and to become something that is now bringing millions of dollars from the state to Providence to do good work or kids.

— Leadership Team Member
Wave 5 Interviews

crucial. For example, the Director of the CYC and Evidence2Success previously worked within the public school system. The other sustained leaders involved in the CYC were often leaders of public systems. These leaders were initially called upon to chair the Evidence2Success work. Through the joint priority-setting and community-engagement efforts, residents with lived experience participated in decision-making and were recruited to positions of leadership on the CYC Board.

3. OBTAIN INITIAL INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMMING

Efforts toward change require funding and are perceived as inherently risky. Therefore, to jump-start the work, seed money is necessary. In the work of the CYC and Evidence2Success, seed money for infrastructure was obtained from multiple sources; however, programs were selected before programmatic funding sources were identified, and this timing mismatch delayed implementation. Collective impact efforts need initial seed money for

infrastructure and programming; seed money gives leadership time to plan sustainable financing.

4. DISCUSS FINANCE STRATEGIES (FROM THE START!)

One role of a backbone organization of collective-impact efforts is to leverage funds. However, specific strategies, tools, and a process by which to undertake this work are not often specified in collective-impact work. The importance of addressing financing early on was apparent in the work of the CYC, as the CYC had initial seed money for infrastructure but not programming. Experience shows that the financing discussion is facilitated by focusing on quality, evidence, and the production of measurable outcomes for youth and families.

The financing discussion can begin with a full fund-mapping process to identify flexible funds eligible to redistribute. Or, the discussion can start by focusing on easier finance strategies, such as repurposing current program staff to implement a tested, effective

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program rather than implementing their current programming. Then, as initial successes are experienced, partners can move toward discussing how the effort will obtain the additional funds it needs to support the common agenda. For example, in Providence, the child welfare and public school systems integrated selected tested, effective programs within their regular operations, rather than hiring staff at a new organization to implement the programs. This enabled the programs to gain momentum and their partners to experience success, which opened the door to additional, leveraged funding from federal, local, and philanthropic investors. Then, even later, after success had been documented, funders seemed to understand the need for specialized supportive functions, such as convening, training, evaluating, and monitoring. Experience also shows that the financing discussion should be an ongoing conversation rather than a single, onetime event; it took multiple conversations before

commitments were made. These conversations can be facilitated by the involvement of external, neutral financial consultants, as they were in the CYC and Evidence2Success work. An external expert facilitator can be perceived as objective, which helps build trust. Holding multiple one-on-one conversations prior to any full-group conversations, and before asking for a commitment, are also likely to help build trust.

Strategic finance planning can also include deliberate attention to itemizing and integrating the new necessary functions for evaluation and reporting, training, and implementation into partners' scopes of work, rather than into brand-new positions. In this strategy, current infrastructure staff within public systems and other partners are repurposed; while the daily tasks of their jobs change, the goal of their work remains consistent. In this case, independent leadership continues to be necessary to ensure that the work of the effort is complet-



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Figure 5. Roadmap to Fiscal Independence and Sustainability

Roadmap to Fiscal Independence and Sustainability



ed. Strong support from existing public system and organizational leaders is also imperative.

5. IMPLEMENT TESTED, EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

Historically, collective-impact efforts and backbones avoided espousing or implementing programs. Without specific programs identified as part of the collective-impact effort, confusion and lack of direction are likely. The CYC experienced this frustration from its coalition members during its development. With the Evidence2Success framework, the CYC was able to select tested, effective programs that are known to positively impact children and youth. With an explicit focus on programs—culturally relevant programs, in particular—the community seems to have felt a renewed energy and expectation to see measurable results for children.

6. CONVENE FOR RESULTS

Convening, whether to identify priorities, select programs, plan financing, or engage in quality implementation, is a critical function for any collective-impact

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effort. In order to make this happen, it is important to integrate diverse members of the collective-impact effort into leadership positions and committee work as much as possible without relying too much on one person. Integrating personnel builds ownership and accountability across systems and develops champions and stakeholder groups of the work. For example, as program implementation started, key individuals were recruited to serve on implementation teams to help track and ensure implementation quality. This helped the effort transition from a networking collaboration to one that was focused on getting real work done.

7. BE PATIENT, PLAN, & COMMUNICATE

Be patient. Each collective impact effort in each city or community is different. As implementation occurs, take time to reflect and conduct strategic planning; base strategic planning on collected evaluation data. Include diverse perspectives in this process. Take time then to communicate what

is happening and the rationale behind decisions.¹⁷ These activities will likely facilitate transparency, which will increase trust and help the collective impact leaders to be seen as neutral parties.

For example, in Providence, this transition to fiscal independence took more than five years. Across this period of time, there were at least two specific strategic planning periods that helped set the course of future events. Coalition leaders reported that the course of events leading up to fiscal independence in Providence needed to happen the way it did, and for it to take the time it took.




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SUMMARY

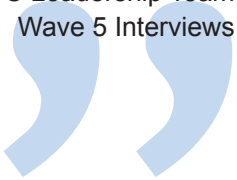
Several successes and challenges were encountered during the development of the CYC as a nimble intermediary with fiscal independence. The CYC started as a backbone supporting Evidence2Success as a distinct pocket of work. Now, the CYC has developed into a sustained organization having fiscal independence, with the Evidence2Success framework integrated throughout its operations. More important, the CYC is now often recognized

as a nimble intermediary, as well as a neutral organization with the capacity to navigate complex financing systems. Thus, the CYC's journey can be used as an example of how other collective-impact efforts can seek out a similar state of fiscal ownership and independence by developing core capacities and functions. The road map presented here can be a guide for existing collective-impact efforts looking to move toward more sustained, high-quality programming and fiscal independence.



I always thought that it should sit as a mayor's initiative...by moving it away, it lives beyond whoever is in the office...the last few years, having the home within Annenberg, has given them a great level of data...the working groups had great deliverables to show...there were 150 people that were coming to meetings all month...That is a tremendous amount of leveraged community work across the city.

— CYC Leadership Team
Wave 5 Interviews

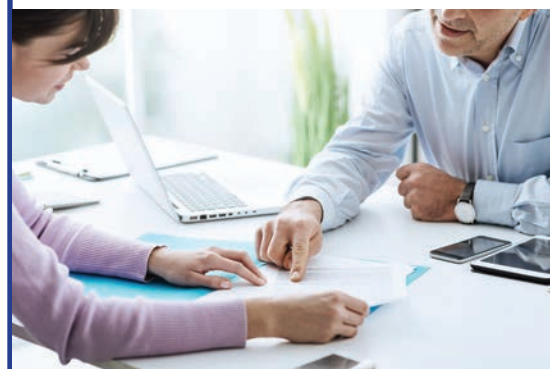


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