

SUSTAINING CROSS-SECTOR SYSTEMS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN:

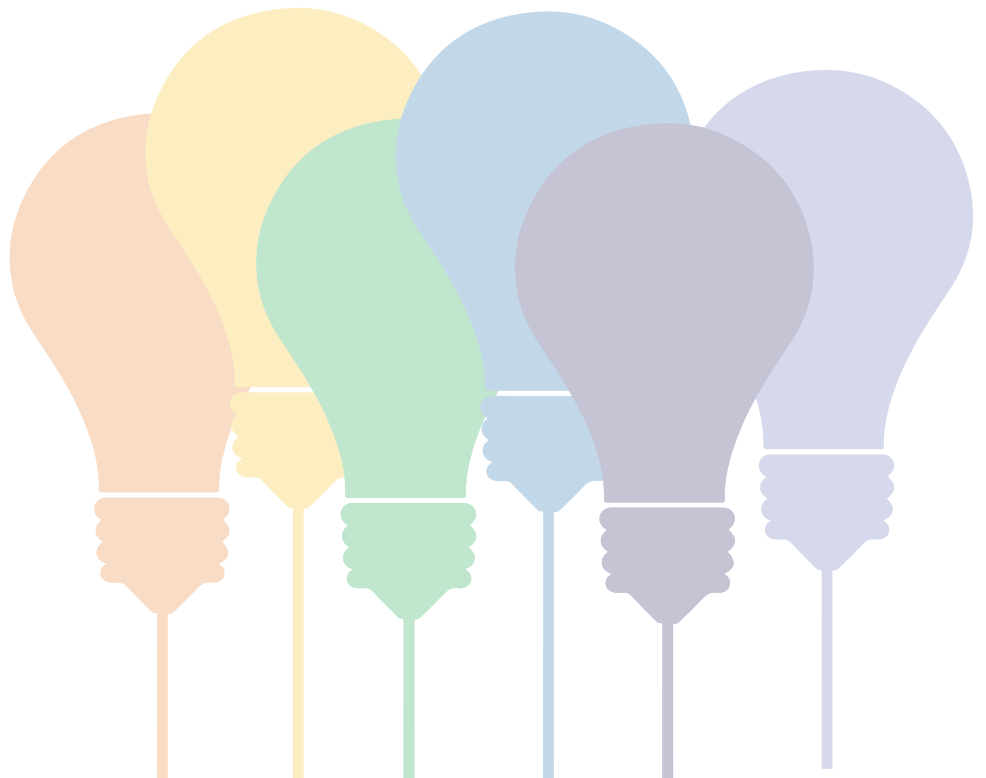
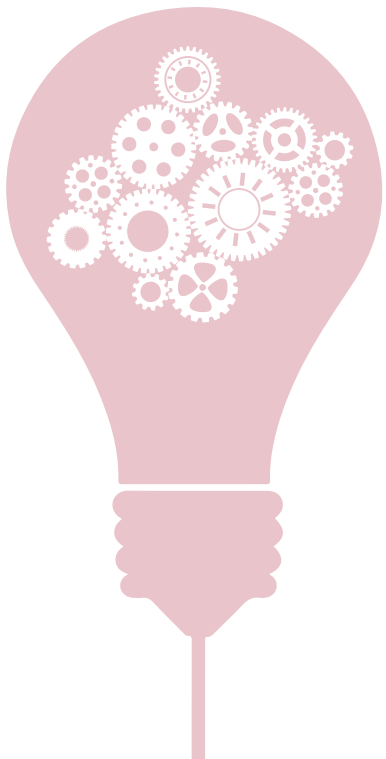
INTERIM LESSONS FROM THE *BY ALL MEANS* CONSORTIUM



October 2019
Executive Summary

OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL
EDREDESIGN
THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB





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AUTHOR'S NOTE

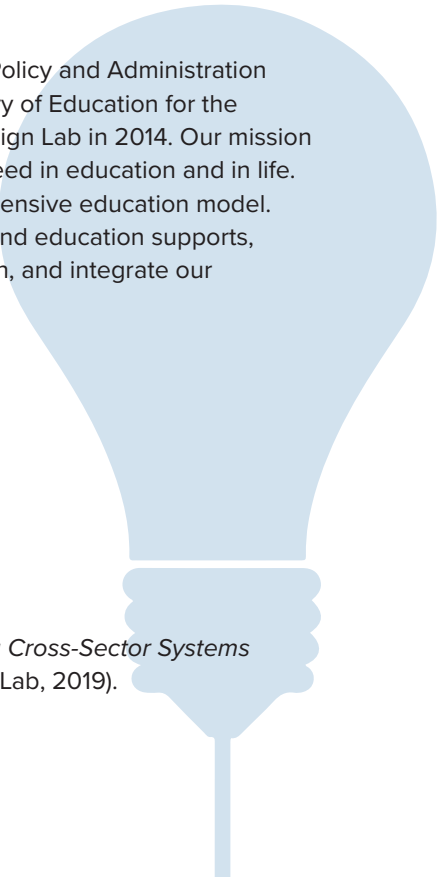
This report covers the period between May 2017 and August 2019.

ABOUT THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB

Paul Reville, Francis Keppel Professor of Practice of Educational Policy and Administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and former Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, launched the Education Redesign Lab in 2014. Our mission is to give every child in the United States the opportunity to succeed in education and in life. We hope to lead a movement to create a new and more comprehensive education model. In order to overcome widespread inequity in child development and education supports, opportunities, and outcomes, we must dramatically redesign, align, and integrate our systems of development and education for all children and youth.

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INTRODUCTION

Decades of school reform have done little to close achievement and opportunity gaps, particularly between children growing up in poverty and those who are not. Research consistently shows that income is the factor most strongly correlated with children's success or failure,¹ yet schools are ill-equipped to address the myriad challenges associated with poverty, from the availability of academic supports and enrichment opportunities to regular health care and experiences of childhood trauma, to name a few. Schools also continue to struggle to meet the needs of children with disabilities and learning differences and those whose first language is not English. It has become increasingly clear that focusing our efforts solely on schools is too narrow an approach if we are to attain equitable outcomes for all children.

In 2016, the Education Redesign Lab (EdRedesign) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education launched a network of communities, called By All Means (BAM), to create collaborative, cross-sector solutions to address the multifaceted needs of children. EdRedesign partners with and supports communities to establish integrated systems of support and opportunity that span the scope of children's lives from birth through postsecondary education or training. The BAM approach is based on a set of core components, including mayoral leadership and the launch of a cross-sector children's cabinet, that can be adapted to the needs of different communities.

Other core components of BAM are twice-yearly convenings at Harvard, a part-time "consultant" in each community, supported by EdRedesign, who facilitates the cabinet's work, a commitment to identifying and tracking metrics, and technical assistance on a range of needs, including financing, community engagement, data use, and policy implementation.

One of EdRedesign's goals in creating BAM was to document the communities' successes and challenges in order to inform and smooth the way for others interested in implementing a similar approach. To do that, EdRedesign researchers visited each community twice a year to observe children's cabinet meetings and interview key people, including the mayors, superintendents, and other cabinet members. We also surveyed attendees at the end of each BAM convening. In our first report, *Building City-Wide Systems of Opportunity for Children* (2018), we documented BAM communities' initial efforts and examined elements related to leadership, including cabinet effectiveness; partnerships and relationships; external factors; data; and funding. Our second report draws from what we learned as communities moved from creating new systems to implementing them and as EdRedesign transitioned from the first to second phase of BAM, with a particular focus on factors that support the sustainability of collaborative efforts over time.

THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustaining collaborative action long enough to make meaningful, lasting change requires commitment and leadership over many years, but changes in leadership, staffing, finances, and policy priorities, not to mention political and labor upheavals, all pose risks to the long-term survival of this work. As BAM continues to progress during its second phase, it is clear that sustaining this

complex work in the face of multiple challenges requires both adaptive and technical solutions. Adaptive solutions involve shifts in priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties, while technical solutions use existing expertise, structures, and procedures to solve problems.² BAM communities are leveraging both types of strategies as they undertake their cross-sector efforts.

TRANSITIONING TO BAM 2.0

The first phase of By All Means lasted, by design, for two and a half years. During this time, the six initial cities created children’s cabinets, established collaborative goals, raised funds, and began implementation of new or expanded initiatives to support children’s success and wellbeing.

In May 2018, EdRedesign launched BAM 2.0 to continue partnering with communities in their efforts to create new systems to support children. EdRedesign identified two specific focus areas for BAM 2.0: designing and implementing personalized Success Plans for children and youth (described in greater detail in the full

report) and creating a backbone structure for its cross-sector collaboration.

Five of the original six cities—Oakland, California; Louisville, Kentucky; Somerville and Salem, Massachusetts; and Providence, Rhode Island—opted to continue as members of BAM, and two new partners joined. One of these, the **Partnership for Resilience** in Illinois, had already been collaborating with EdRedesign for several years. The other community to join is Chattanooga-Hamilton County, Tennessee. Chattanooga-Hamilton County will build on its existing cradle-to-career effort, called **Chattanooga 2.0**.

UNPACKING SUSTAINABILITY: WHAT FACTORS AFFECT LONG-TERM SUCCESS?

Each BAM community has made meaningful progress in coordinating supports and opportunities to better serve children. To examine how communities can maintain their cross-sector approaches into the future, we explored the factors that affect the long-term sustainability of collaborative systems of support and opportunity for children. These factors include using data to measure progress; the role of networks; internal capacity and leadership; backbone support; funding; and community engagement. Interviews with children’s cabinet members in each community revealed important insights about how these elements have facilitated—and in some cases, hindered—their ability to sustain collaborative action over time.

USING DATA TO MEASURE PROGRESS

Since collaborative work takes time, and initially involves more process than programmatic or outcomes changes, tools for tracking progress need to take into account the different stages of the work. During the first phase of BAM, EdRedesign developed a framework, called the *Measures of Success*, for communities to use in identifying and measuring indicators of progress. This framework identifies five categories, from “committed leadership” to “child/youth impact.” **The Measures of Success** also contains a “throughline” document for communities to identify the pathway from their high-level goals to their initiatives to indicators of increased access to supports and, ultimately, to child-level outcomes.

All communities already collect a great deal of student data as part of their accountability systems, but determining how to align that with collecting and communicating data specific to their collaborative work has been challenging for most communities in the early stages of the effort. The strongest evidence of progress to date comes from increases in funding for youth programs and services and expanded access to a range of opportunities and supports, including a vast increase in new services for children in Salem, substantial increases in summer programming in Somerville, Providence, and Louisville, and expanded access to early childhood education in Somerville.

UNPACKING SUSTAINABILITY: WHAT FACTORS AFFECT LONG-TERM SUCCESS?

THE ROLE OF NETWORKS

By All Means was conceived of as a cohort of communities that would support and learn from one another in order to provide a network of support that would help them sustain their efforts. That element of the initiative has proven to be an essential feature, and one that has increased in importance over time. As communities have come together through the convenings over a period of years, they have developed relationships that have enabled them to learn from one another's challenges and successes and helped them sustain momentum.

Additionally, the role of EdRedesign as a convener, partner, and support for communities has been important for communities' ability to sustain the work. In a 2018 article for the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Paul Reville and Lynne Sacks identified five elements of a cohort-based approach that have been instrumental for BAM.³ They include strengthening internal community relationships; formal and informal cross-community learning; positive peer pressure; support for backbone staff; and outside support and expertise from a network convener.

NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY CHALLENGES

Committed leadership and dedicated internal staffing capacity are necessary for children's cabinets to sustain their cross-sector efforts.⁴ In BAM, mayors and superintendents jointly lead the work, while part-time consultants and supporting staff help coordinate the cabinet's daily activities.⁵ This structure has been effective in many BAM communities; however, internal capacity—having both sufficient personnel and continuity in key roles—remains a challenge. Similar to the trend documented in our first report, several BAM communities have experienced leadership transitions and turnover in other key positions such as city staff roles and the BAM-sponsored

consultants. A lack of continuity can affect a cabinet's momentum and level of support.

In order to address the challenges posed by a lack of dedicated staffing and inevitable turnover, BAM 2.0 required that communities designate a cabinet member to allot 25 percent of her or his time to support the work of the cabinet, in collaboration with the BAM-sponsored consultant. While all communities had already identified supporting staff—representatives from either the school district or the city—to fulfill this function, BAM 2.0 sought to formally embed the role into an individual's job description.

BUILDING A BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

Backbone support is considered one of the five conditions for implementing collaborative action.⁶ While BAM 2.0 asked communities to allocate 25 percent of a stakeholder's role to cabinet activities, EdRedesign recognized that this amount of time was insufficient for sustaining the long-term work. As a result, all BAM communities are expected to develop a backbone by establishing

a new organization, partnering with an existing organization, or creating new staff positions as a mechanism for both expanding staff capacity and institutionalizing the work. In addition to enhancing staff capacity, a backbone offers a neutral entity that can bring a diverse set of stakeholders together who have different—and sometimes competing—interests and priorities.

UNPACKING SUSTAINABILITY: WHAT FACTORS AFFECT LONG-TERM SUCCESS?

SECURING LONG-TERM FUNDING

Funding represents a fundamental component of sustaining cross-sector collaboration—both to implement programming and to operate the backbone. Raising funds to support the backbone capacity can be particularly challenging since funders often prioritize direct services. Without sufficient resources, collective efforts simply aren't viable. Although funding represents a formidable challenge for both starting and sustaining collaborative work, BAM communities have continued to use multiple strategies to obtain financial support for their cross-sector efforts.

In Somerville, the children's cabinet has tapped several funding streams, including from the school district, city, state, philanthropies, and corporations. Notably, the cabinet has secured substantial support this year for its early education and care initiatives, including a competitive three-year grant of \$1.5 million from the Massachusetts

Department of Early Education and Care as well as a three-year grant of nearly \$1.4 million from the Commonwealth Children's Fund. In Oakland, Kaiser Permanente, a locally-based nonprofit health care provider, continues to finance the project manager role and key initiatives of the health impact table, and to play an important role in the city's children's cabinet. In Louisville, the Weiss Institute is producing a fiscal analysis of the city's public spending, while Somerville and Providence have partnered with the Children's Funding Project to create fiscal "maps." These maps are intended to uncover existing spending gaps and overlaps in services for children. In addition to these strategies, BAM communities are pursuing other approaches to maximize resources for their long-term work, such as launching ballot initiatives and refining their budget infrastructure.

SPARKING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over the last several years, the collective impact field has more fully integrated the concept of community engagement into its framework.⁷ BAM communities widely recognize that community engagement and buy-in are critical for executing and sustaining their work, but they also find it challenging to do well. For most of the communities, a disconnect in the experiences of children's cabinet members and the population they are serving is a contributing challenge. Despite this, most communities have taken initial steps in this area.

In Somerville, for example, leaders conducted a set of public conversations and city-wide surveys about opportunities and challenges affecting children's learning both in and out of school as part of a visioning process called "Somerville Learning 2030." Grounded in a community organizing approach, Illinois's Partnership for Resilience has sought community input to inform

and guide its work at every stage. Resilient Southern Illinois (RSI), the Partnership's newest collaborative effort in Illinois, illustrates an even deeper level of community engagement. Most members of RSI's advisory committee are from the same communities they serve and share common experiences, which facilitates their cross-sector efforts.

Engagement also raises the issue of equity, which convening participants identified in a survey as the factor most important to the success of their work. Community members, particularly people of color, disadvantaged populations, and students, have historically been excluded from policy and decision-making processes. Cross-sector efforts can promote equity by engaging those most directly affected—in this case, families, students, teachers, and others who work closely with children—as members of a children's cabinet, advisory board, or other governing committee.

SNAPSHOT: BAM COMMUNITIES' KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



CREATED INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS COMMUNITIES

- All BAM communities have created children's cabinets, led by mayors, that include the school superintendent and key representatives from the education, health, nonprofit and other sectors
- All BAM communities are developing a backbone support function
- Louisville and Providence launched new 501(c)(3) backbone organizations



INCREASED ACCESS TO SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Somerville, MA

- More than doubled afterschool participation from 700 to 1,500

Louisville, KY

- Enrolled 850 students in expanded summer programming

Salem, MA

- Every child in a preK school has an individual Success Plan, with over 17,000 services delivered

Partnership for Resilience in IL

- Provided vision care to 3,200 Southland students, with 49 percent receiving glasses, and dental care to 2,900 youth

Oakland, CA

- Students at Oakland Promise high schools completed the FAFSA and Dream Act application and applied to college at higher rates than those at non-OP schools⁸

Providence, RI

- Tripled the number of schools (from 10 to 30) served by an onsite mental/behavioral health clinician

Chattanooga-Hamilton County, TN

- Partnering with City Connects to create individualized plans for children and coordinate supports and services in eight schools



GENERATED NEW RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Somerville, MA

- Raised nearly \$3 million for preschool expansion

Oakland, CA

- Raised \$33 million for the Oakland Promise "cradle to career" pilot

Salem, MA

- Secured a community benefits agreement to support initial City Connects implementation



LAUNCHED NEW DATA PLATFORMS

Oakland, CA

- Developing a data platform to decrease chronic absenteeism in partnership with Salesforce

Louisville, KY

- Created a data platform to link children with services and supports

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Sustaining complex, multi-year work takes deep commitment and perseverance through multiple challenges. There will inevitably be turnover in leadership and key staff roles. School districts will struggle with funding, academic outcomes, and teacher contracts. Communities will face political and financial crises and ingrained patterns of behavior and prejudice. All of these have occurred in BAM communities over the past three years, despite a selection process that sought out stable leadership and finances.

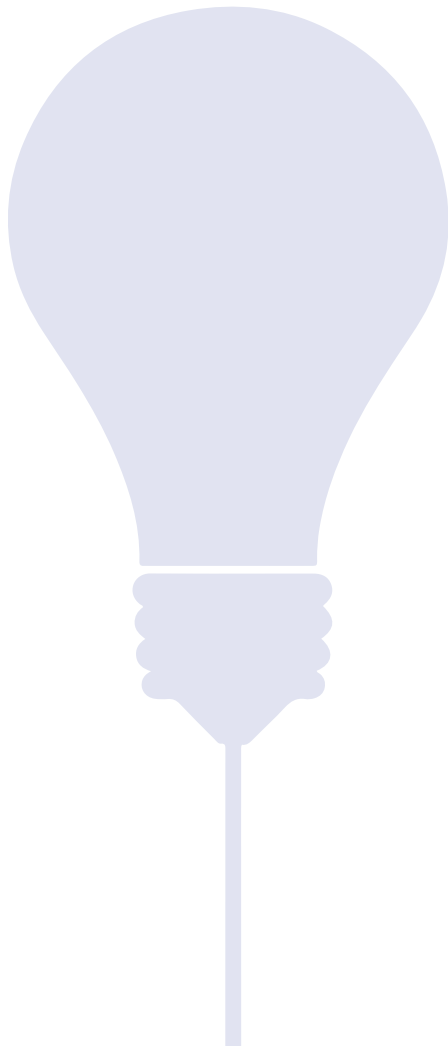
There are, of course, no quick fixes or simple solutions for much of this work, but there are useful lessons that can help communities overcome challenges. Our ongoing partnership with BAM communities and embedded research effort have yielded important takeaways about what it takes to sustain momentum and support this work over time. These lessons include the following:

- The By All Means approach has worked to improve how communities support children's development and wellbeing. Participating communities have all established children's cabinets, seen sustained involvement from mayors and other leaders, developed new cross-sector partnerships, raised funds, and increased services and supports for children.
- Building trust and creating strong relationships are critical to the pace and the long-term success of change. Communities need to devote attention and time to relationship-building in order to make lasting progress.
- Public demand is essential to sustain these efforts over time, and children's cabinets are an important mechanism for creating this public will. Without a broad-based understanding of the importance of cross-sector collaboration, commitment to it, and new expectations about what *all* children deserve, the collective work will flounder when leaders change or finances are tight.
- Issues of race and class, as well as disability, need to be at the center of the work and explicitly addressed by leadership and through authentic community engagement.
- Mayoral leadership continues to be key for a number of reasons: bringing agency heads and community leaders to the table, maintaining the effort as a top priority, highlighting successes, and finding resources.
- Partnerships at all levels are critical for executing new systems of support. External partnerships can accelerate the pace of change, and internal partnerships are essential for integrating across sectors.
- Staffing support can take different forms, but it is essential that there are funded positions whose job descriptions entail carrying the work forward.
- Effective use of data is important at every stage of this process, from identifying needs to defining and tracking metrics of progress to providing integrated services and supports. Using data well requires capacity building at all levels.
- Children's cabinets benefit from participating in networks of communities that provide opportunities to come together in regular convenings over time, cross-community support, structured learning, and best practices.
- Finding funding to carry out a bold vision is a major challenge, but there are proven strategies for generating revenue to support this work. Successful communities use multiple funding strategies and recognize that fully funding the effort takes time.
- Personalizing a navigation system for individuals through an enhanced system of child development and education does not happen automatically. Communities need to design ways to ensure all children have personalized plans that meet their needs and develop their abilities.

CONCLUSION

As the members of the BAM consortium continue to strengthen their efforts and the number of children's cabinets across the country grows, it is clear that a movement is building to take a new approach to educating and supporting all our children. Communities' appetite for working together across sectors to help children thrive remains strong. Nearly all the cities that began in By All Means are still involved today, with the committed participation of mayors, superintendents, and other cabinet members. Enough other communities have asked to join that EdRedesign has added one new city and a statewide partnership to the consortium. The new **Local Children's Cabinet Network**, jointly launched in 2019 by EdRedesign, the Children's Funding Project, and the Forum for Youth Investment, represents dozens of other communities from across the country who share the same broad goals.

In order to drive and further amplify this movement, communities must embrace both adaptive and technical solutions that tackle the myriad challenges related to collaborative action. Shifting long-standing practices and mindsets is difficult but necessary if we are to change the trajectories of vulnerable children and give them what they need to grow, learn, and thrive. BAM communities' persistence through these challenges shows what is possible with a combination of commitment, investment, and structural change.



¹ Sean F. Reardon, “The Widening Income Achievement Gap,” *Educational Leadership* 70, no. 8 (May 2013): 10-16.

² Ron Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

³ Paul Reville and Lynne Sacks, “Sustaining Collaborative Action,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (October 2018), https://ssir.org/articles/entry/sustaining_collaborative_action.

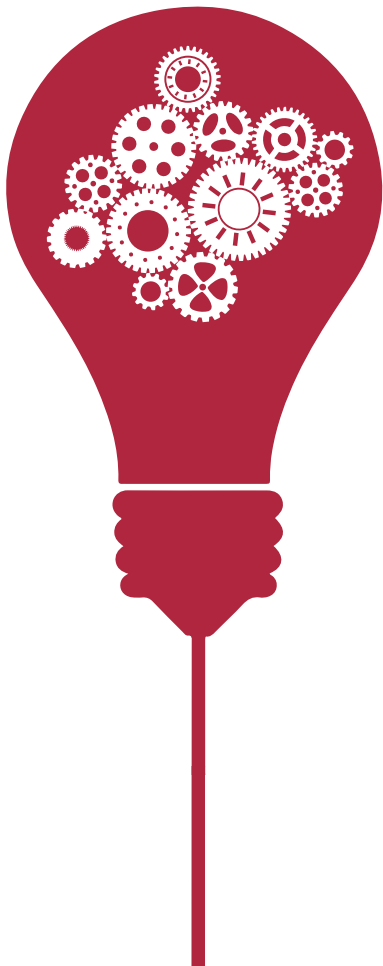
⁴ Lynne Sacks and Jessica Boyle, *Building City-Wide Systems of Opportunity for Children: Initial Lessons from the By All Means Consortium* (Cambridge, MA: Education Redesign Lab, 2018), <https://edredesign.org/press/Building-City-Wide-Systems-of-Opportunity-for-Children-Full-Report.pdf>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jon Kania and Mark Kramer, “Collective Impact,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2011), https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

⁷ Jon Kania, Fay Hanleybrown, and Jennifer, Splansky Juster, “Essential Mindset Shifts for Collective Impact,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2014), https://ssir.org/articles/entry/essential_mindset_shifts_for_collective_impact#; Collective Impact Forum, *Collective Impact Principles of Practice* (2016), <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Collective%20Impact%20Principles%20of%20Practice.pdf>; Michael McAfee, Angela Glove Blackwell, and Judith Bell, *Equity: The Soul of Collective Impact* (Oakland, CA: PolicyLink, 2014), http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/Collective_Impact_10-21-15f.pdf; Tom Wolff, “Ten Places Where Collective Impact Gets It Wrong,” *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, 7, no. 1, 2016), <https://www.gjcpp.org/en/resource.php?issue=21&resource=200>; Mark Cabaj and Liz Weaver, *Collective Impact 3.0: An Evolving Framework for Community Change* (Tamarack Institute: Waterloo, Ontario, 2016), <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Collective%20Impact%203.0.pdf>.

⁸ The Oakland Promise, *3rd Annual Oakland Promise Report* (Oakland, CA: Oakland Promise, 2019).



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