BUILDING CITY-WIDE SYSTEMS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN:

INITIAL LESSONS FROM THE *BY ALL MEANS* CONSORTIUM

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Education Redesign Lab

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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ABOUT THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB

The Education Redesign Lab was founded and is led by Paul Reville, the Francis Keppel Professor of Educational Policy and Administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and former Massachusetts Secretary of Education. The Lab's mission is to partner with communities to build integrated education and child development systems, to research and disseminate best practices in the field, and to advance a new vision for education in order to restore social mobility and close achievement and opportunity gaps.

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When Paul Reville ended his five-year tenure as the Massachusetts Secretary of Education in 2013, the state was widely acknowledged as a nationwide leader in K–12 education. Massachusetts students consistently ranked at or near the top of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other national rankings of student achievement, and Massachusetts students also outperformed those of many other countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) exams. Despite these successes, Reville could not shake an uncomfortable truth: the overall achievements of Massachusetts students masked large gaps on every measure of performance that correlated strongly with socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, disability, and English language learner status.

These gaps are not unique to Massachusetts; they exist in every state across the country. Poverty in particular has been a persistent and overwhelming predictor of poor outcomes on all measures of child achievement and wellbeing across the United States, which several decades of school reform have not been able to change. Conversations about education reform have generally avoided or minimized the impact of poverty on student success, either because of the belief that poverty is too difficult a challenge to address directly or out of concern that poverty will be used as an excuse for poor performance.

Despite this reluctance to discuss the effects of poverty directly, its impact on children is clear and pervasive. Children living in poverty experience disadvantages at every life stage relative to their better-resourced peers. By age three, children in low-income families have heard 30 million fewer words than children in better-off families. Only about 46 percent of children aged three through six in families below the federal poverty line are enrolled in center-based early childhood programming, compared to 72 percent of children in families above the federal poverty line.[1] Poor children are about 25 percent less likely to be ready for school at age five than children who are not poor.[2] Once in school, these children lag behind their better-off peers in reading and math, are less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory coursework, less likely to graduate, and over 10 percent more likely to require remediation if they attend a four-year post-secondary institution.[3] All of these issues compound one another to create a cycle of low opportunity: children in poverty are less likely to achieve high educational attainment, and low educational attainment leads to lower median weekly earnings and higher rates of unemployment.

Children in poverty are also more likely than other children to experience multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACE)—e.g., witnessing violence, having substance abuse in the home, or having an incarcerated parent—which have been shown to hinder academic and social-emotional growth. Children in families below the poverty level are more than three times as likely to experience two or more adverse child and family events as children in families at 400 percent or more of the poverty level.[4] These ACEs in turn contribute to disproportionately high adverse health and mental health outcomes for children in low-income households. This multitude of non-academic and academic challenges traps low-income children in a self-reinforcing cycle that causes and perpetuates gaps between them and children with access to more resources.

Socioeconomic status is not the only category in which disparities persist. Substantial opportunity and outcome gaps are also prevalent between white students and students of color, students with disabilities and students without, and English learners and those proficient in English. While 20 years of education reform has yielded some progress for America's students, it has failed to achieve the central goals of American public education: excellence and equity for all.

Creating the Education Redesign Lab and the *By All Means* Consortium

Recognizing the need for a new children's opportunity agenda, Reville founded the Education Redesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2014. The Lab's goal is to create systemic, silo-breaking approaches to addressing the comprehensive needs of children, especially those living in poverty, by developing personalized systems of support and opportunity both within and outside of school. The core ideas underpinning the Lab's work are that schools alone cannot address all the factors that lead to negative outcomes for children and that it will take a coordinated, system-wide approach to make real change.

To overcome widespread inequity in supports, opportunities, and outcomes for children, the Lab is working to ensure that all children have access to personalized systems of support and opportunity starting in early childhood and throughout a developmental pathway that builds student engagement and agency while preparing them for success in higher education and careers. Features of these personalized systems include:

Systems of whole-child support: No matter how much schools improve, children need more than academic supports or improved schools to thrive; they must also be physically and emotionally healthy to be prepared to learn throughout their K-12 years. In a true support model, early childhood, health, mental health, and social service supports will be comprehensive, braided with educational services, and designed to address critical barriers to learning and development.

Student-centered, tailored learning: Meet children where they are and give them what they need to succeed. Through well-executed, student-centered learning, each student is able to achieve academically to the best of his or her abilities. This definition of learning broadens the typical "personalization"

field to include a whole-child personalized approach, so that cities create learning environments where students are at the center.

Systems of opportunity: Systems of opportunity enable each student to chart his or her own path toward a rewarding career. Low-income children are much less likely to participate in preschool or out-of-school enrichment activities than their more affluent peers, and when they do, the programs are generally inconsistent in quality and availability. To address these gaps, a coordinated system of programs and services needs to be crafted so that every child has access to preschool, expanded learning, summer, and work-based opportunities that enrich them as learners and help them build the important skills, networks, and social capital that will serve them in the future.
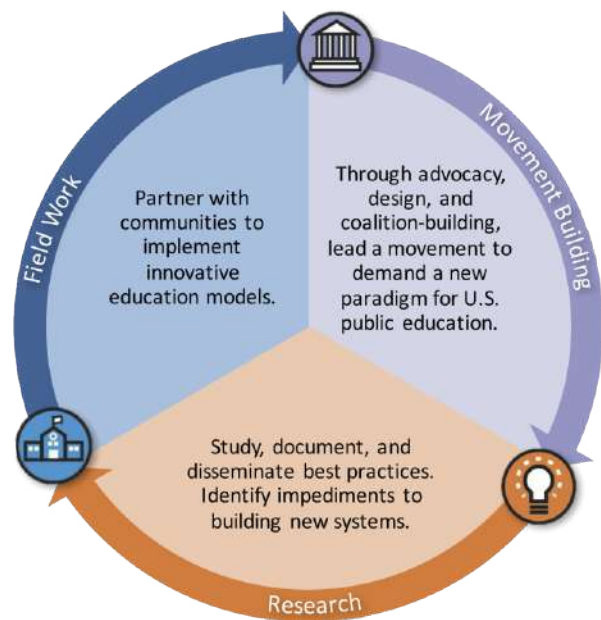
THE LAB'S INTEGRATED STRATEGY

The Lab leverages three key strategies to define and advance this vision for whole-child personalized systems:

1. **Field Work:** Supporting city leaders and teams to accelerate the implementation of effective practices, enabling conditions, and systems integration;

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2. **Research:** Disseminating curated and original actionable research on the critical components and examples of redesigned education systems; and

3. **Movement Building:** Promoting this vision, in collaboration with key partners, through strategic communication, capacity building, and advocacy around critical state and local policies.

In February of 2016, the Lab launched the *By All Means* initiative to test and refine its theory that meeting the complex array of children's needs and developing their interests and talents requires a system-wide approach. Six small- to mid-sized cities joined the initiative to work in partnership with the Lab over a two-and-a-half-year period: Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton in Massachusetts.

The goal was for the cities to begin designing and implementing new, personalized systems for serving children while the Lab supported and documented this process in order to identify enablers of and barriers to progress that could help other cities take on this work.

By All Means (BAM) is informed by a mayor-driven "collective impact" approach to addressing social challenges through collaborative action.[5] Mayors have a unique ability to drive this work. According to Oakland mayor Libby Schaaf, "As mayors, we have the opportunity to change how public systems work, as opposed to just starting another program. . . . We can change the expectations and beliefs of an entire generation of children. There is no nonprofit organization that can deliver that kind of promise, and we should really be aware of that opportunity that only government has."

Collective impact encompasses a number of core practices, including having one or more strong champions, identifying shared goals and common metrics, and creating a "backbone" organization to support the work.[6] A second defining frame for this work is the central role of leadership in effecting change. Ronald Heifetz' theory of "adaptive leadership" acknowledges the complexity of many leadership challenges and the need for new mindsets and ways of leading rather than simply technical solutions to many leadership challenges.[7]

The Lab chose to work with cities as the unit of change because they are increasingly emerging as sites of innovation and leadership on issues that are struggling to gain traction nationally. Cities also represent relatively discrete systems that already provide a number of direct services to children. Four of the six BAM cities are in New England, one is in the South, and one on the West Coast. The cities range in population from 760,000 (Louisville, KY) to 43,000 (Salem, MA). They represent the complex array of governance relationships between mayors, school superintendents, and school boards across the country, from mayors who directly select superintendents, to those with have no formal influence on the schools at all. Finally, they vary demographically, with differing levels of poverty, different racial and ethnic makeups, and different histories. The variations among the cities have afforded the Lab opportunities to compare how a city-wide initiative could be implemented in different contexts.

FORMING THE CONSORTIUM

The Lab identified cities for potential inclusion in BAM through a combination of word of mouth, research, and outreach, which included a presentation at an October 2015 meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors. Using the criteria below, the Lab then invited the cities to submit applications for membership.

Mayoral Commitment and Leadership: Mayoral commitment and willingness to lead a collective action approach was the first essential element for participation. The rationale for this is that addressing all the factors affecting children's wellbeing requires a city-wide effort, and that this starts with strong leadership from the top. The Lab believes that mayors have the political capital and convening power to make BAM a high-visibility, high-impact effort.

City-School District Partnership: While mayoral leadership is central to the Lab's theory of action, schools are and will continue to be the hub of service provision for children. The aim of BAM is to

create a broad coalition to share the responsibility for children with the schools. For this to happen, it is essential that the mayor and school superintendent have a strong working relationship and a shared commitment to the BAM work.

Existing Work: By design, each of the cities chosen for the consortium had already begun to take action toward a more comprehensive approach to serving children. The expectation was that BAM would build on and accelerate these actions while knitting together different initiatives under a single framework, rather than helping cities build something completely new. In some cases, cities already had a substantial number of initiatives underway.

Stability: Although there is no way to guarantee this—as shown by the unexpected leadership departures in several BAM cities—the Lab looked for cities that appeared to have some degree of stability in their key leadership positions. It also looked for sites that were relatively stable financially, while recognizing that cities and school districts face constant financial pressures.

Size: The Lab intentionally targeted small- and mid-sized cities for BAM, since these offered the greatest chance of success and learning in the early stages of the work.

CORE COMMITMENTS AND SUPPORTS

Because BAM is intentionally designed to be experimental, with variation across cities, the Lab took a "light touch" approach to core city commitments and Lab supports. Each city agreed to participate in the following required elements of BAM's model, and the Lab provided resources on best practices rather than prescriptive requirements on how to best implement or take advantage of them:

Children's Cabinet: Children's Cabinets are the governance structure for each city's BAM work. These cabinets create a high-level mechanism to coordinate services for children across city and non-governmental organizations. Each city in the consortium has formed a cabinet that is chaired

by the mayor, is co-chaired by the superintendent or another city leader, and includes representation from health and social services and other government and community organizations.

Consultant: To ensure the work of the cabinet moves forward between cabinet meetings and has a designated facilitator, the Lab supports a part-time consultant in each city. The Lab and the cities worked together to identify candidates for these positions; in some cases, the consultants already had deep local experience, while in others they were newcomers to the city contexts. The role is envisioned as a process facilitator rather than a content expert.

Twice-Yearly Convenings: To further support the cities' work, the Lab sponsors a semi-annual series of convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Starting with the first convening in May 2016, city teams have come together with the Lab staff and outside experts as a way to deepen and accelerate the work and to build opportunities for cross-city sharing of information and resources. Each convening has included a mix of presentations and panels by top education and policy experts, "team time" for city teams to work together, and opportunities for cross-city sharing of progress. The Lab also arranges for individual meetings between cities and experts in particular areas of interest, such as financing, equity, or early childhood education.

Documentation and Evaluation: Cities agreed to participate in an ongoing documentation and evaluation process, which serves multiple purposes: to share lessons with a broader audience; to assist cities in tracking their progress on a range of process, opportunity, and outcome measures; and to inform the Lab's iterative approach to supporting the cities in this work.

Additional Supports: The Lab has provided a range of additional supports tailored to the needs of each city that has included Reville and others' participation in key city events, helping cities identify and connect with program partners and potential funders, and assistance with data use and outcome measures.
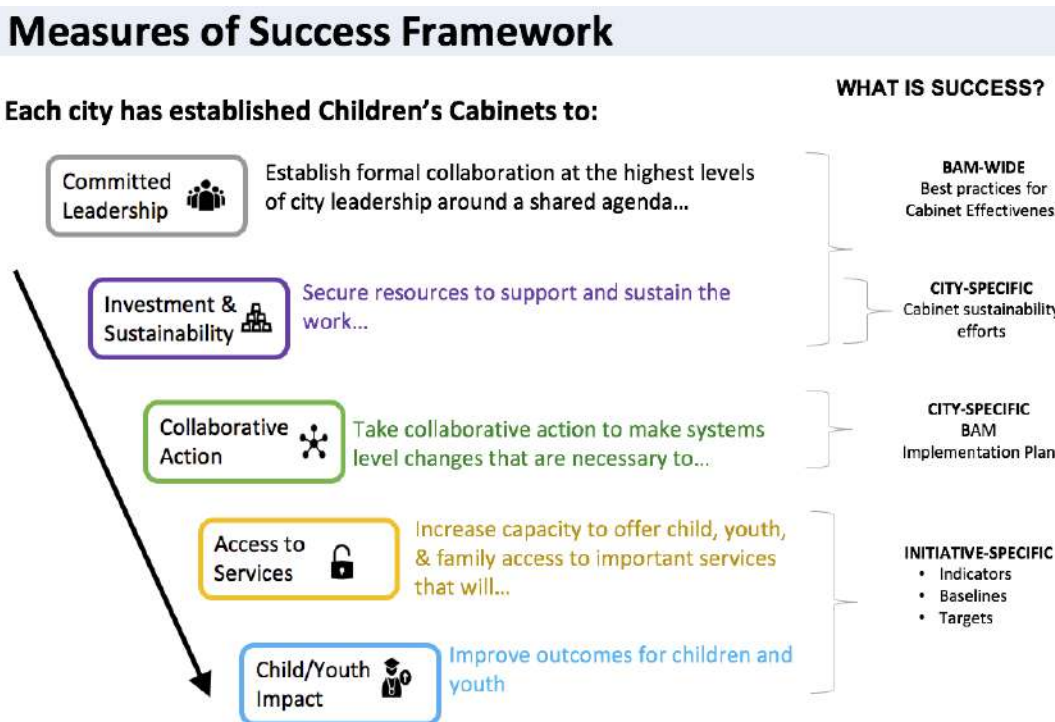
MEASURES OF SUCCESS

As the cities began their work, there was an obvious need to create a way of measuring each city's progress toward its goals. For an initiative initially designed to last only two-and-a-half years, this presented a challenge: it would take time to design and implement the elements of the work that could lead to improvements in student outcomes, with the first potential child outcomes likely not coming until near the end of the time period or even later. The early work in each of the cities focused on creating the Children's Cabinets, and the variation in initiatives from city to city meant that using common measures across all six cities was unfeasible.

To address these issues, the Lab developed a framework through an iterative process that acknowledged the three phases of the work in each city:

1. Creating cross-agency governance structures through the cabinets;
2. Providing increased programming and services to children; and
3. Improving outcomes for children.

The Lab shared an early version of the framework with city teams prior to the October 2016 convening and met with the cities' data or evaluation representatives during the convening to review it and its use. The current framework, derived from collective action approaches, contains three process-focused categories that can be measured qualitatively through evidence, and two outcome-focused categories that can be measured quantitatively through data.

This Measures of Success framework serves several functions: it tells a story about the systems-level work to better serve children and youth across multiple initiatives, it provides accessible information that can be used to inform cabinet-level conversations and discussions with potential partners and funders, and it can trigger conversations and collaborative action to improve capacity to use data for effective decision-making. The Lab also hoped to identify a small set of common quantitative measures that could provide some cross-city comparison of progress, but this proved impossible given the range of initiatives and focus on different age groups. Instead, the Lab has included chronic absenteeism as the single measure to be tracked in

Measures of Success Framework

Each city has established Children's Cabinets to:

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Committed Leadership — Establish formal collaboration at the highest levels of city leadership around a shared agenda...

Investment & Sustainability — Secure resources to support and sustain the work...

Collaborative Action — Take collaborative action to make systems level changes that are necessary to...

Access to Services — Increase capacity to offer child, youth, & family access to important services that will...

Child/Youth Impact — Improve outcomes for children and youth

BAM-WIDE
Best practices for Cabinet Effectiveness

CITY-SPECIFIC
Cabinet sustainability efforts

CITY-SPECIFIC
BAM Implementation Plan

INITIATIVE-SPECIFIC
- Indicators
- Baselines
- Targets

each city. While this measure will not make it possible to compare progress across city initiatives in any meaningful way, it does provide a common indicator that can serve as a proxy for a number of factors that influence child wellbeing, including health, mental health, and family stability.

The Lab asked each city to define its outcomes and obtain cabinet approval for them prior to the May 2017 convening. Though this was accomplished, the measures carry different levels of weight in different cities: while several cabinets have begun using the measures framework during meetings to track their progress, others have not yet incorporated them into ongoing discussions about the work. In addition, some teams have seen the work shift in a way that necessitates a change in the outcomes. Since the spring of 2017, the Lab has been working with the consultants and city data leads to identify and collect the specific data that cities will use to track their outcomes.

DOCUMENTATION OF PROGRESS

Documenting and learning from the work of the *By All Means* consortium is a central component of the Lab's iterative approach. This research is designed to distill the enablers of and barriers to this cross-sector work, in order to inform the ongoing work of the consortium as well as to provide actionable research for other cities interested in undertaking a similar comprehensive agenda for children. This report documents the first 18 months of BAM's initial two-and-a-half-year duration and focuses on the following elements: leadership, including cabinet effectiveness; partnerships and relationships; external factors; data; and funding. The final report, to be released in 2019, will focus on sustainability, moving to implementation, the experiences of participants in the new programs and services, and trends in outcomes for children across a range of metrics.

Data for this overview include multiple, in-depth interviews with each city's mayor, superintendent, and other key participants in the change process;

observations of Children's Cabinet meetings; reviews of minutes from additional cabinet meetings; and anonymous surveys given to participants at the conclusion of each of the Lab's convenings. To date, Lab researchers have visited each of the six cities twice, at approximately six-month intervals.

Building Collaborative City-Wide Change

During the early stages of *By All Means*, the six cities in the consortium created Children's Cabinets if they did not already have one, identified specific areas of focus for their work, and began, in most places, implementing initiatives directly benefiting children. Among the initiatives the cabinets have undertaken are increasing access to preschool, improving behavioral health services, expanding access to personalized learning and summer programming, and implementing individualized supports and enrichment plans. Several cities have also focused on creating data-sharing agreements between different agencies. In each case, the goal is to move toward creating systems that integrate services and supports in order to make it possible for every child to come to school ready to learn every day. In addition, each city has identified an initial set of measures by which it will track its progress, and most have either secured funding or developed a funding strategy.

The following overview provides initial findings of the enabling factors that have been important in determining how the work has unfolded and some of the challenges cities have faced in their efforts to create new systems. It features brief illustrations of these enabling factors and challenges where possible. The city-specific summaries that accompany this overview provide greater detail on how BAM has evolved in each city.

LEADERSHIP

Mayoral Leadership Enables High-Level Collaborative Action

Putting mayors at the forefront of BAM marked a notable change from many collective impact efforts. The Lab's goal was to ensure that this would be a collaborative, city-wide effort with the political clout that comes from mayoral involvement. The experiences of the BAM cities confirm the value of leading with mayors: cabinet members pointed to the mayors as the most crucial factor signaling BAM's high priority and a key draw in bringing cabinet members and executives to the table.

Mayors also have a unique platform to shine a spotlight on the joint moral and economic imperatives of ensuring the success of the children in their cities. A number of mayors have spoken out forcefully on the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing poverty that goes beyond schools. In addition, several mayors have used their political capital to help raise money for their cities' BAM and other child-focused efforts. In one city, the mayor expended significant political capital on behalf of an effort to bring integrated student supports to schools by pushing through a funding mechanism that was not initially supported by the City Council; this persistence resulted in substantial benefits for K–8 students that fall. In another city, the mayor has used her prominent position to raise millions of dollars in scholarships for students, including an annual birthday celebration that raises money for the cause.

Mayors have highlighted the value of the twice-yearly convenings, mentioning four elements in particular: the opportunity to talk informally with other mayors about the work; the opportunity to meet with their teams outside of their cities, which enables them to form closer relationships and make substantial progress on strategy and planning; the "peer pressure" of publicly sharing their progress at each convening; and the leadership sessions with Ronald Heifetz, an internationally recognized expert on adaptive leadership. Mayors have, in all but one city, regularly attended the Children's Cabinet meetings,

and all mayors have participated in the convenings at Harvard.

There are also risks to linking collective action efforts so closely to mayors. If a mayor leaves, it may be difficult to sustain momentum under the new leadership. For this reason, it is important for the entire cabinet to be deeply engaged in and committed to the effort.

Cabinet Members Need the Decision-Making Authority to Enact Change

Setting up a Children's Cabinet and calling it to meet is—with mayoral leadership—relatively straightforward; creating a cabinet with the right members and a clear plan that enables cross-agency work is much harder. An important feature of successful cabinets is the decision-making authority necessary to enact real change. In all but one city, the mayor and superintendent attended nearly every meeting, which signaled to their staff and other cabinet members that the work was a priority and catalyzed action; their absence affected the level of discussion at the meetings. Successful cabinets also saw serendipitous funding opportunities arise when representatives from local businesses or foundations participated as cabinet members. Additionally, cabinets with the most productive meetings established clearly defined, action-oriented agendas, as well as processes for capturing and sharing updates and action items from each meeting.

In the early stages of BAM, most cities struggled to find the right membership and function for the cabinets. To this end, Elizabeth Gaines, Senior Fellow at the Forum for Youth Investment and an expert in supporting Children's Cabinets, shared best practices with the city teams at the first BAM convening. Still, it took time for cities to determine who should be at the table, how frequently they should meet, and what the goals of the meetings should be.

A few cabinets initially did not reflect a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Several cities tackled this issue by engaging in a stakeholder mapping process and bringing on leadership that represented constituents who were not initially included. All six

cities refined their initial membership over time, and most also created one or more separate working groups to move the effort forward between meetings.

One city refined its cabinet structure and processes after seeing meetings swell to as many as 30 people. The team set clear guidelines for inclusion: only the top executive from each organization would be at the table. Should that executive be unable to attend, a designee granted decision-making authority attends in his or her place if possible; if not, the absent cabinet member is expected to respond to any action items within 48 hours. Cabinet members can bring additional staff from their organizations, but those staff do not sit at the table. This new setup allows the group to clearly determine who is on the cabinet, but also enables critical staff to share updates with the cabinet and stay up-to-date on cabinet work. Every cabinet meeting has action items, from crafting an elevator speech that each member can use to talk about the work in the same way, to agreeing on the broad frame for a data-sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). A cross-sector core team meets weekly between cabinet meetings to move projects forward, oversee other working groups, and set future agendas. These formal structures and processes were built around the work that had already been initiated, enabling the team to produce a structure that made sense and would not impose unnecessary rigidity.

Across cities, the frequency of cabinet meetings varied from every three or four weeks to just a few a year, with the BAM convenings providing two additional meeting opportunities per year. The cities meeting most regularly made substantial progress in their BAM work: they formed the strongest relationships between the cabinet members, engaged most stakeholders regularly, and generated collective decisions and plans. Among those meeting less frequently, the amount of progress was highly dependent on whether there were people on the team making a strong effort to move the work forward more informally.

Strategies for Effective Cabinets

- ☐ Consist of decision-makers and executives who are representative of the community. Meet regularly (monthly or bi-monthly).
- ☐ Collectively establish a common vision for and understanding of the work.
- ☐ Articulate structures and processes that help streamline complex efforts.
- ☐ Create action-oriented agendas to make cross-agency decisions, share progress, and plan next steps.
- ☐ Carry the work forward between meetings via working groups or small teams.

Cities Must Create Dedicated Internal Capacity

The part-time consultants hired by the Lab are tasked with moving the work forward and providing process support to the city teams, but this logistical and motivational work cannot depend on them alone. Since cabinets rely heavily on executive leadership, it is important for supporting staff to be deeply embedded in the work as well. Otherwise, these high-level leaders would not have the capacity to coordinate the logistics of day-to-day systems change. In several of our cities, internal support has come from the deep involvement of one to three staff members, from either the school or city side (or both), who work closely with the consultant. In one city, for example, the consultant works closely with staff across three sectors: one from the mayor's office, one from the school district, and one from a nonprofit organization with experience as a backbone structure. This structure is ideal, since the transition of any one person would be less likely to deliver a significant blow to the work's momentum.

In another city, a school district employee has taken on much of the work in partnership with the consultant. While this has resulted in a strong and fruitful partnership, it poses risks to sustainability if one should leave. Another city, with a similarly heavy reliance but on city staff, experienced some

momentum loss when both the consultant and the key city staff role turned over mid-initiative. It is beneficial, then, for staff support to come from multiple people across multiple sectors, both to maintain momentum and to ensure long-term sustainability.

In addition to having key support staff participate in the logistics and moving the work forward, broader staff involvement is beneficial to generating a truly collective approach. This involvement fosters relationships between agencies and creates a network of activity that is harder to disrupt when there is a leadership change or an unexpected obstacle. Several consultants saw a rapid uptick in productivity when cabinets formed working groups to move the content-based work forward between meetings. Across the cities, these working groups focused on topics like governance, data sharing, out-of-school time initiatives, preschool access, and communications.

Strategies for Creating Internal Capacity

☐ Determine who will be responsible for moving the work forward and how much time they will need to do it.

☐ Free up time for staff people to do this work or identify funding to hire additional staff.

☐ Clarify roles and responsibilities.

Sustaining Momentum Despite Leadership Turnover

Given the high rates of turnover among urban superintendents and mayors, changes in leadership are inevitable. There is no denying that this can pose serious challenges to the momentum and sustainability of a leadership-initiated collective impact model, and *By All Means* has not been immune to this phenomenon. Within 15 months of the launch of BAM, three key leaders left or announced plans to leave their positions. One superintendent opted to leave mid-year to become the chancellor of a different urban school district, while another superintendent resigned under pressure from the local school board. In late 2016, a mayor in the cohort announced he was not running for reelection, and announced his bid for governor that spring.

One city navigated a superintendent transition smoothly because, according to participant interviews, the cabinet had already identified and articulated a shared vision for children prior to the superintendent's departure. In addition, the strong relationships that had formed across leaders and staff as a result of frequent cabinet meetings enabled them to proceed without disruption. When encountering this obstacle and others, the cabinet members agreed that the work was too far along to stop or slow. Reflecting the district's commitment to the work, the incoming acting superintendent began attending cabinet meetings during the transition period, ensuring there would be no gap in school department involvement. While it is too early to assess the long-term persistence of BAM in any city, the factors interviewees identified as most central to its continuation through leadership changes at the district are the continued support of the mayor, the continuity of key staff, the cross-agency relationships developed among staff, the existence of tangible plans to carry out the work, and the strength of broad-based support in the cabinet and the community.

Community understanding of and demand for a comprehensive agenda to support children is important for long-term sustainability, especially as the work begins to involve changing practices and new funding. As the work has progressed, most cities have begun developing strategies for engaging their communities and linking the elements of BAM together to create a city-wide movement. One city held a community-based education summit in the spring of 2017, with grant support facilitated by the Lab, to solicit input on a cohesive local vision for education. That summit resulted in a report with recommendations that are being incorporated into the local work. Several other cities are giving the work a name, such as Our Salem, Our Kids or Louisville Promise, as a way of succinctly framing and messaging a complex set of undertakings. Other efforts to engage the

community include the co-creation of short elevator speeches that all cabinet members can use to describe goals and actions using common language, and the development of websites that describe the comprehensive work and include links to a broad set of community resources. While these efforts are still in the early stages, cities are finding that engaging with their communities more actively—particularly the communities they are hoping to positively impact—is an important component of the work, and is likely an effective strategy for sustaining momentum through leadership change.

PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Collective impact approaches require strong individual relationships and organizational partnerships to succeed. In the context of BAM, the most important partnership is between the mayor and superintendent; while mayors lead the effort to create a new city-wide responsibility for children, superintendents govern the largest and most important child-serving agency. All BAM superintendents welcomed the recognition that schools alone cannot address all the challenges of children living in poverty and the shift to a more collaborative responsibility for providing practical supports.

Strong City-School Relationships Are a Primary Predictor of Progress

Cities with strong partnerships between the mayor and superintendent were, not surprisingly, able to move forward more quickly to implement child-facing initiatives. There is a complex array of governance relationships between mayors, school superintendents, and school boards across the country, and the cities in the consortium reflect this range. In a number of the cities, the mayor has a role in selecting the superintendent. In one city, for example, the mayor chairs the school committee, which then selects the superintendent. In another city, the mayor appoints all members of the school committee. At the other end of the spectrum, two of the cohort's mayors have no direct influence over the selection of the superintendent.

In some cities, the mayor-superintendent relationships were collaborative even before joining the consortium, while in others there had been little shared work. In two cities, the shared vision between the mayor and superintendent around developing a comprehensive agenda for children was strong enough that the school district's strategic plan was created in alignment with the cabinet's priorities. There was strong consensus that the convenings were effective as a means of deepening relationships between mayors and superintendents and in facilitating the creation of a common vision. Cities in which the superintendent left in the midst of the initiative found that the continuation of the city-school partnership depended on whether there was strong staff support and buy-in.

Children's Cabinets Facilitate New Working Partnerships

Partnerships and relationships with other city agencies and outside organizations are also crucial to this work. As cabinet members developed relationships with each other, unanticipated partnerships emerged. Cabinet members across the six cities highlighted examples of ways their new relationships facilitated innovative and efficient partnerships, from informal arrangements, like the Department of Health and Human Services lending a bus to facilitate transportation for growing afterschool programming, to the creation of formal MOUs and data-sharing agreements signed across agencies. A few cities benefited from having already built at least a partial foundation of cross-agency work, and saw those relationships and partnerships accelerate with BAM.

Partnerships have also emerged with organizations not present on the cabinet. From fully-developed interventions that come with institutional infrastructure to funding support to thought partnership, ongoing connections with outside organizations expand the scope of what cities are able to accomplish. Several cities, for example, partnered with nonprofit organizations that provide out-of-school programming or in-school integrated student supports that allowed them to expand the services available to children without having to build the capacity internally.

EXTERNAL FACTORS: LAB SUPPORT

External Consultants Serve a Key Role as "Honest Brokers" and Facilitators

The role of the BAM-sponsored consultants in each city is to facilitate the work of the cabinets, both during and between meetings, and to ensure that the work continues to move forward. Consultants are also the primary point of contact between the cities and the Lab, facilitating a range of tasks that includes overseeing the adoption of Measures of Success indicators (see page 7), developing city presentations for the convenings, and reviewing city-specific materials produced by the Lab.

The consultant's role varied across the cities. Larger cities relied on their consultants to coordinate and align BAM with other related efforts as a part of their work; one city even combined the consultant's role with another role to create a full-time position based out of the mayor's office. In contrast, the consultant in another city took a more peripheral role in facilitating the work, while in yet another, the consultant did much of the content-based work herself. The importance of the consultant's role was apparent in one city where the consultant did not join the team until well into the first year of BAM: without the consultant's presence, the BAM work struggled to take hold amongst competing priorities.

The consultants came to BAM with different backgrounds and areas of expertise, including politics, education, equity, and change management. Observing their experience with the cities has yielded a number of early lessons for cities looking to begin this work. First, it is beneficial for the consultant to have an in-depth understanding of the local context; at the same time, it is helpful for the consultant to be distant enough to bring a fresh, neutral perspective to the work. In several cities, participants stressed the importance of having a facilitator who was seen as an "honest broker" who worked independently of the mayor and the superintendent. In one city, the consultant was officially an employee of the mayor, which at times impeded the consultant's ability to navigate political situations. In another city, the initial consultant was deeply embedded in the city's

collective impact work before BAM, and though she had strong prior relationships with both the mayor and the superintendent, many participants felt that the consultant was too close to the work of the role to offer a fresh take on ways of working together.

Second, cities should recognize the time commitment needed to do this work, especially early on, for consultants to get to know key players and facilitate the early work of establishing initial structures and processes—on top of their charge to handle logistics, manage goal setting and the identification of outcomes, and act as a liaison with neutral third parties (such as Harvard). Most of the consultants supported by the Lab felt they needed more than the quarter-time they were allotted to support the cabinets effectively. Finally, given the innovative and cross-sector nature of BAM efforts, consultants with change management expertise can greatly accelerate the process. Additional skills the Lab has observed that contribute to high performance in this role include strong interpersonal, political, and project management skills. These skills were particularly helpful during times of turnover and facilitated the continuation of work amidst disruption.

Strategies for Effective Facilitation

- ☐ Look for a facilitator who is independent yet, ideally, familiar with the community.
- ☐ Ensure the facilitator has the confidence of the mayor, superintendent, and cabinet members.
- ☐ Seek qualities such as change management expertise, a high level of organizational ability, and political/interpersonal aptitude, as these are well-suited for this silo-breaking work.
- ☐ Plan for significant upfront coordination and facilitation time (especially in the larger cities); once systems are in place, the facilitator's time can often be reduced.

The Lab communicated regularly with the consultants through monthly group conference calls,

individual calls, and email. The consultants also had opportunities to meet as a group at the convenings and through a consultant retreat during the summer of 2017. Feedback from the retreat was positive, with attendees welcoming the opportunity to share successes and get input on the challenges of this difficult work. A follow-up retreat was planned following the November 2017 convening.

The Convenings Provided Support and Planning Time

The convenings have proven essential to the work of the consortium: all cities have highlighted the value of having focused, extended team time away from their cities as an important contributor to their progress. Of the many benefits articulated by participants, the most common related to the power of bringing everybody together in a neutral location, which facilitated a high level of focus on the work and relationship-building among the cabinet members; the value of opportunities to learn from other cities and from national experts on topics relevant to their cabinet work; and the importance of the friendly "pressure" and natural accountability that emerges when convening with other cities, since cabinets are eager to demonstrate progress and, simultaneously, do not want to feel as if they've fallen behind their peers.

DATA USE AND INTEGRATION

Data is essential both to identify high priority needs in the community and to evaluate the effectiveness of the cabinet's interventions to address those needs. During BAM's early months, cities began asking for support on data use and integration. Some cities already had sophisticated data operations, but wanted to take the next steps toward integrating data across different agencies to support collective impact; other cities had data they collected but did not fully utilize and wanted to develop stronger practices for using data as a tool for decision-making and change. To address this, Lab staff began supporting cities individually on the development of, and data collection for, their Measures of Success.

The Lab is also supporting one of the cities in creating a broader strategy for data use.

Several other cities have been developing additional data capacity in support of this work, including creating MOUs to share data across agencies, surveying students about their school connectedness, asking families about the barriers they face in accessing preschool, and making use of data collected through a programmatic partnership to improve their understanding of community and individual student needs. For example, one city in the cohort doubled the number of summer learning slots available to children in 2017, and did so using the following data-based strategies: analyzing student data to identify the need for summer programming, requiring providers to agree to track certain data about participants, and implementing pre- and post-tests to determine how effective these programs were in reducing summer learning loss. The city's contract with summer program providers will be re-negotiated annually according to these results, thereby making effective use of funding as well. Another member of the cohort has addressed data gaps in particular areas of interest by moving the school registration processes online, allowing the city—for the first time—to gather data on the community's childcare needs in real time.

Two cities in particular have excelled at incorporating data into their decision-making, with one poised to become a national leader in this work thanks to a significant external grant. This grant is supporting the city in the creation of a data dashboard that aligns with collectively determined goals across the areas of education, health, economic security, housing, and safety. In the other city, the mayor's data lead is a member of the cabinet, enabling that culture of data to permeate the cabinet's work. This city is pioneering innovative systems strategies to address the needs of children, including the possibility of assigning an ID at birth to track children's progress from infancy to early childhood to K–12. Doing so would allow agencies to coordinate interventions, identify children's individual needs sooner, and address them faster and more effectively. Due to FRPA and HIPAA laws, this effort has hit a number

of roadblocks, but the cabinet has overcome challenges with persistence, knowing that effective roll-out of such a project is central to their shared vision.

It is important to note, too, that cities have moved ahead on projects that benefit children and increase access to services even where they lack nuanced data, knowing the importance of meeting children's needs sooner rather than later while also iterating and refining the work.

Strategies for Using Data

☐ Use data to guide cabinet decision-making, to make a compelling case for change, and to create demand for cabinet initiatives.

☐ Create ways to share data across agencies to facilitate better service delivery.

☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of programs.

☐ Track the success of collective impact initiatives.

☐ Use individual student data to develop an understanding of each student's needs.

☐ Link students with personalized services and supports.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

Finding startup and sustained funding is a perennial challenge of collective action work as well as a key measure of its success and sustainability. The Lab has provided indirect financial support to the cities through the part-time consultants, the convenings, and strategy and fundraising contacts, but it does not provide direct grants to carry out the work. The cities have found success utilizing several different strategies for funding, including reallocating or raising public dollars, identifying private funding, or securing in-kind support. In some cases, this support was provided by a cabinet member's organization; in other cases, the cabinet successfully sought outside funding.

Cities Took Multiple Approaches to Funding

All of BAM's cities have made investments in developing a comprehensive opportunity agenda for children, and the cabinets have influenced those investments in a number of locales. One city increased funding for education for the first time in nearly 10 years. In others, the mayor repurposed funds to support cross-sector projects and specific cabinet initiatives. The recognition that outside funding rarely addresses long-term needs spurred one mayor to consider a new trash collection fee that would support the expansion of preschool access.

In many cases, city funding has been met with matching funds from the school district. On one cabinet, the mayor and superintendent have agreed to jointly fund a part-time position to support the logistical work of the cabinet. This role, while officially housed in the school department, is intended to work across sectors and agencies to sustain the momentum of the cabinet's work. Another cabinet has agreed to undergo a fiscal analysis of the city and school's funding allocations to determine whether they are allocating funds according to their shared priorities and to avoid duplication of efforts. In one district facing financial challenges, the work has turned to optimizing the alignment and collective impact of pre-existing initiatives. Another district was able to afford bringing in a major provider of new services for students by creatively repurposing existing staff.

Several of the cohort's cabinets have found surprising success in receiving funding from cabinet member's organizations, which is likely a result of the collective buy-in of the group: there is no need for a pitch or grant proposal when the funder is equally invested in seeing the work come to fruition. In one city, a nonprofit organization and a local institution of higher education spoke up during cabinet meetings to offer in-kind support or funding for a city-wide training model. These on-the-spot suggestions were pursued between meetings by the consultant and a district staff member, and the project came to fruition quickly and efficiently. In another city, which has several foundation leaders on the cabinet, substantial funding has been offered to support an ambitious college scholarship goal. In a third, a major health

provider and local employer funded staff to support the city's efforts to align its existing collective impact initiatives in a strategic and data-driven way. These partners, being well aware of and deeply embedded in the work, knew their money was going to an effective and worthwhile cause that they were already invested in seeing succeed.

Several of the cohort's cities have been particularly effective in obtaining outside funding from grant-making organizations to finance aspects of their work. These efforts have been enabled by the commitment of leadership as well as by internal capacity in those cities with grant-writing staff; cities lacking a grant-writing function have faced challenges in finding the time to dedicate to this additional task.

Successful Funding Strategies

☐ Utilize a multi-pronged plan that includes private and public funding as well as short- and long-term strategies.

☐ Leverage the mayor's leadership to identify and secure resources from external sources, create new revenue streams, and develop long-term funding strategies.

☐ Reallocate existing funding to match spending with city priorities.

☐ Develop new ways to share funding across agencies to address common goals.

☐ Access all available state and federal funding opportunities.

Conclusion

The first 18 months of the *By All Means* initiative have demonstrated both the power of a comprehensive agenda to support children and the challenges in implementing new systems to further this agenda. Leadership is essential for the work to be sustainable long term, but so are structural supports, staffing capacity, and broad stakeholder buy-in. As much as anything else, persistence matters: our strongest cities proceeded with the work amidst changes in leadership, cabinet membership, focus areas, structures, and processes. They forged innovative new relationships and connections while overcoming complex political histories and gaps in data.

As the Lab anticipated, *By All Means* has progressed at different rates in different cities for a variety of reasons. For example, the size of the larger cities presented challenges—more complex governance structures, greater needs for funding, more children to serve—but also advantages, such as more robust staffing and more community partners. In these larger cities, the cabinets needed to strategically align BAM with the complex landscape of existing initiatives, in a way that generated coherence and broad buy-in, to ensure the sustainability and success of the work. The progress of each city's work was influenced by each of the themes reviewed in this document: leadership, partnerships and relationships, external factors, data, and funding. The Education Redesign Lab has, in its capacity as a partner and convener, worked to support the individual needs of each city as leaders there have encountered obstacles and celebrated successes.

The accompanying **Keys to Success** (see page 18) are distilled from the Lab's observations of the first 18 months of this initiative. To learn more about the experiences of each city, visit the individual case studies (beginning on page 20). As the work continues to unfold and cities forge ahead on implementing new and innovative ways of working across traditional sectors, the Lab will be looking for the barriers to and enablers for sustaining the work on behalf of children after this initial startup phase.

ENDNOTES

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KEYS TO SUCCESS:
EARLY LESSONS

Lead with the mayors.

The shift from putting the responsibility for children's success and wellbeing solely on the schools to making it a community-wide effort must start from the top leadership. No one in a city has more ability than the mayor to signal a city-wide commitment to children, and the mayor also has a unique ability to bring executives and key partners to the table, to raise or redirect funds, and to coordinate across disparate groups.

Define the need locally.

The first step to solving a problem is understanding it. Naming the problem and illustrating its urgency in concrete, data-based, locally meaningful terms are important prerequisites to building the public and institutional will to change practices.

Build a city-wide movement.

City-wide efforts will only be sustainable with broad stakeholder and community buy-in. The cabinet must create a public demand for change by making a case to the community through a concise, engaging messaging campaign. This effort should engage the whole community, including parents, taxpayers, and voters, to make the case for a new, comprehensive approach to serving children and to ensure community voices and needs are fully reflected in the cabinet.

Form a children's cabinet to coordinate across sectors.

The cabinet needs to consist of the right people—those with the authority to make change and who represent the full community, create a shared vision, identify goals, and define individual responsibilities for moving the work forward.

Develop a shared vision for the whole system, but also create tangible interim successes.

The Lab asked cities to accomplish two different things at the same time: to build toward a comprehensive, cradle-to-career system of education and support for children, while also taking on more tangible, programmatic work. To accomplish this, cities need to articulate a shared vision of what the fully realized system looks like so everyone understands the goal and how the programmatic changes—expanding access to summer learning, for example, or introducing personalized learning into the schools—helps move the city closer to that vision.

Create backbone and internal capacity to start and sustain the work.

Even with the best intentions in the world, meaningful collaboration will not move forward without people who are committed to doing the time-consuming and often difficult day-to-day connective work. The cabinet needs a facilitator to coordinate meetings and move the work forward, with support from staff in cabinet member organizations.

Use data strategically and share data across different parts of the system.

Data is an important tool at every step of the process. It is important for identifying community needs and building a case for change, and an essential element of personalization: without data on individual children, there is no way to know their strengths or needs. Shared data on access to services and programs as well as on child outcomes provide important metric evidence of the effect of collective action.

Build true partnerships between the city and schools, across city organizations, and with funders.

While mayoral leadership is central to spurring new approaches for cities to address the needs of children, a strong partnership between the mayor and superintendent is essential. Schools are the place where children spend much of their time, and they can serve an important role as a connector to other services. Partnerships with funders and with other city organizations that can provide services ranging from health supports to afterschool programming are also key to the success of this work.

Anticipate turnover.

Turnover in key roles is inevitable, even in a short timeframe. Ensuring the initiative will be sustained through these changes depends on the strong commitment of multiple actors, both conceptually and through tangible effort, to ensure its survival. Having a formal, funded backbone structure, a broad-based movement, and codified practices can mitigate the effects of leadership change or key staff departures.

Create time and space for deep collaboration. Build relationships.

Cabinet meetings are important for carrying out the ongoing work, but making time for deeper collaboration through convenings or retreats builds relationships and nurtures common understanding of and commitment to goals and strategies for achieving them. While it can be challenging to create the time for this, it has proven immensely valuable to participants.