

Child and Youth Policy Alignment Summit 2017 Summit Memorandum

Overview

The Forum for Youth Investment is committed to supporting leaders as they focus on children and youth. The Forum's goal is to ensure that all young people are ready by 21 for college, work and life. Policies that provide support for children through adulthood (cradle to career) and allow communities to tackle broader problems together (collective impact) have become increasingly popular throughout the country. These innovative policies cannot happen without strong leadership and community engagement, effective use of data and evidence, and availability and alignment of financial resources.

The 2017 Child and Youth Policy Alignment Summit on June 14 and 15 was a collaboration between multiple national organizations that brought together federal, state and local leaders to:

- 1) Exchange best practices and challenges to build on each other's progress;
- 2) Harness the collective power of the participants; and
- 3) Provide a venue to build vertical alignment across levels of government.

This memorandum includes key themes that arose in the 2017 summit, examples of innovative strategies being implemented around the country and a list of resources and tools that participants and other policymakers could find useful for their own work. Prior summit memos are available upon request.

We would like to thank the following organizations for their partnership in supporting this meeting and the collective impact policy movement: the American Public Human Services Association, the National Governors Association, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties. We must give a special thanks to the Annie E. Casey and Kresge Foundations for their strong leadership and generous support.

The meeting allowed for the national partners to host pre-sessions on a variety of topics with a range of stakeholders including: the Forum's Children's Cabinet Network, the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices on Social Determinants of Health, the National League of Cities Mayors' Education Policy Advisors and the Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs. For more information on those meetings or to learn how to get involved in next year's summit, please contact Elizabeth Gaines, senior fellow with the Forum for Youth Investment, at elizabeth@forumfyi.org.

People, Data & Money

The summit focused on themes related to:

- **People** and the collaboration, partnerships, structure, backbone support and engagement that make *collective* impact happen;
- **Data** and evidence as the proof that is needed to show that we are actually achieving the *collective impact* that we seek at the system, program, population and individual levels; and
- **Money**, because without a fresh look at how we invest, we will just continue to support business as usual, running the risk of redundancies and even worse, gaps.

In each of these areas we have summarized the common concerns and innovative solutions that states and communities shared at the 2017 summit.

People

Revamp systems so that they present fewer barriers to families trying to navigate them. Former Tennessee Human Services Commissioner Raquel Hatter stated, “We need systems that are inclined to humanity.” Hatter went on to suggest that systems must serve rather than subject. This can be operationalized by skillful application of the technical, administrative and policy tools at our disposal.

The **state of Tennessee** brought together multiple agencies under their governor’s cabinet to solve issues related to families with complex needs. The cabinet unites the various agencies’ expertise together in a single approach to work towards common goals for each family. The [Department of Children’s Services](#) serves as the front door agency for managing families’ cases.

The **Tennessee Department of Human Services** also reorganized its regular family team meetings, where human services cases get reviewed, to include cross-agency, state-level staff from health, education, mental health, juvenile justice, human service and income support in a single coordinated meeting to streamline services and avoid working at cross purposes. At the local level, the **City of New York** is utilizing a similar single family/single plan approach to support families with complex service needs.

Commit to ongoing partnerships with youth and families, moving beyond relying on the same set of youth or family leaders who are frequently called upon and instead engaging in broader outreach. Localities and states engage with youth and families on a range of levels depending on statutory authority and collective goals. To *effectively* engage these youth and families, systems must shift the way they operate and support professional staff development to build a more robust set of skills around engagement.

Creating a strong partnership with youth and families begins with values. Equity and readiness are core values related to ensuring young people and families not only have opportunities but that they gain the competencies needed to effectively participate in the issues and processes that affect them and their communities. While one-off engagements may do more harm than good, investment in ongoing relationships signals genuine interest and provides opportunities for more authentic exchanges.

In the area of family and youth engagement, the **Tennessee Children’s Cabinet** has developed an interagency methodology for seeking input from the families and youth they serve. Alternatively, Low-tech, high-touch methods can also be beneficial – the former State Commissioner for **Tennessee’s Human Services Department** had monthly dinners organized to engage and hear from families served by the system.

Baltimore seeks out young people who have been disconnected from traditional systems to serve on the task force that administers their new youth fund. These young people, known as “disrupters,” provide unique insights into where the system can be changed to work for the widest range of youth possible.

In **Ramsey County, Minnesota**, the health services team has engaged young people to look at the continuum of care services that are offered. The county is establishing a children’s continuum

committee which will take up the recommendations from young people, with a special focus on utilizing two-generation strategies that support youth and their families.

Build staff capacity for systems thinking. While people with the necessary skills and experience can be hard to find, summit participants identified the need to identify and cultivate staff with the capacity to approach issues from a systems-level perspective rather than just providing program-specific knowledge. Resource constraints can make it difficult to find and hire emerging talent, but the large, complex systems in which stakeholders operate increasingly require such investment in human capital. States are often reliant on outside consultants to help them build the cross-cutting infrastructure needed to manage complexity, but are motivated to find strategies to support sustainability by cultivating systems-level perspective and capacity from within. Several summit participants are making the case for permanent staff positions in their home states that would allow for such cross-cutting, systems-building work to advance.

Barrier busters and rule breakers are sometimes necessary. “There should be an entity in every state that doesn’t have to follow rules, that can bypass the system and keep the kid at the center,” one summit participant advocated. There are many rules, interpretations and procedures to untangle in any system. This creates a great deal of complexity and confusion around what can and cannot be done. Sometimes ‘policy’ is discovered to be something not actually codified by law but rather the result of long-standing assumptions about what is and is not allowed. One state policy specialist working out of a governor’s office stated, “We were seeing large numbers of kids in the juvenile justice system being kept out of school for months because of procedural policies around annual reviews. We began to ask, ‘what’s the barrier here?’ Once we opened up that question we saw more barriers, and with changes to that policy, we were eventually able to get kids back in school within three weeks. When people say, ‘It can’t be done,’ we’ve learned to ask *why*.” Such barrier busters and rule breakers must be empowered. Some states are formalizing the rule-breaking function, bringing together committees of individuals that agree to meet together to tackle specific issues, have authority to represent and act on behalf of their agencies and commit to reporting back to the governor.

A new localism has emerged in many areas of the country as communities witness gridlock at the federal and state levels. Communities are organizing themselves to make progress on priority issues, moving forward in areas where federal- or state-level investments have diminished and where progress on policymaking has stagnated. “There is a difference between state- and local-level cabinet work,” one participant observed, “It’s harder to see movement and coordinate at the state level because of the scale. We are finding that we are able to more effectively focus at the local level on where the rubber meets the road.”

Acknowledge and challenge historic disadvantage. Equity has become a topic that communities around the country are increasingly willing to address. Racial and economic disparities rooted in historic patterns of disinvestment are even more pronounced in an era of shrinking budgets. It has become increasingly important for states and localities to target their investments to the areas of highest need and to have honest discussions about what it will take to earn and build trust, redistribute power and move outcomes. This conversation often includes an examination of how historic barriers may have led to inequities in how investments have been made in individuals, in programs and in building organizational capacity to administer such programs or apply and advocate for funding. Summit participants discussed a variety of ways in which their communities are using technical assistance, consultation, investments in staffing and other capacity-building supports to bridge these gaps.

This is exactly what motivated [the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team](#) in **Fairfax County, Virginia**, to launch the “[One Fairfax](#)” initiative, an effort to bring human services, school district leadership and county officials together to focus on strategically addressing the equity issues that drive the gaps they see in academic, health and economic outcomes.

Crafting and implementing more equitable policies that change the status quo is not easy, especially for those working within cross-system structures. In order to take any action, coordinating bodies often have to get buy-in from multiple agency leaders and staff and have to account for what are often divergent goals, policies, processes and norms of each of the agencies/departments. Cabinets further along in their “equity journey” emphasized that it is *not a linear process*. Navigating the different levels of familiarity and experience with racial and social equity across agencies and crafting an inclusive process both internally and externally, while still maintaining momentum, can be a challenge. Policymakers underscored the delicate balance between creating the space for staff and community to engage in dialogue and healing, and understanding that you do not have to be perfect at each step before you can move the work forward. Despite the uncomfortable conversations and often not knowing where to begin, policymakers have been able to get started by:

- ***Following the data.*** Across the board, communities have used disaggregated data to identify, direct and “justify” the need to target their resources and supports. The data allows officials to have hard conversations around historic and current racial and social inequities. Passionate policymakers are able to share data that reveals disparate impacts on children and youth of color and other marginalized populations, which can spark conversations that challenge and evaluate the systems that young people and their families encounter.
- ***Starting in small groups and identifying champions.*** Although alarming data can often spark conversations within a larger group, in many cases a subset of champions carry the work forward behind the scenes. These champions, subcommittees or informal working groups surface the impact of explicit and implicit biases, advocate for self-reflection, provide education opportunities for staff and develop recommendations for action to combat systemic racism. Different structures and authority given to coordinating bodies can play a role in the impact of the group’s effect. One policymaker described the role of their informal, cross-agency subcommittee, “We don’t have a right to tell people [individual systems/agencies] what their outcome should be but instead we challenge folks to look more deeply at the data and root causes.”
- ***Defining success and creating a plan.*** Officials in some communities may want to define success generally as “providing opportunity” whereas other leaders may choose to more specifically articulate the equitable population-level outcomes they are working toward. Crafting an explicit policy and/or a community-wide plan around racial and social equity is critical to ensuring consistent disaggregation of data, establishing accountability mechanisms for structures, crafting mechanisms for annual assessments and tracking progress.

Build (and rebuild) trust. Don’t shortchange the process of building trust. Many communities have repeatedly seen initiatives come and go with little effect. They have also had promises made and broken over and over again. One Virginia policy development specialist stated, “We have been spending a significant amount of our time building trust in communities that don’t trust the state.” Regular, authentic engagement that leads to elevated community voices and empowerment – always a best practice – needs to be applied even more consistently and skillfully in communities where trust is being repaired. The process is ongoing and particularly critical to maintain through

changes in administrations. When a new governor changes priorities, for example, trust and relationships go a long way to offset the politics involved. As one summit participant noted, “Those relationships matter more than the different programs and what we call things at the government level.”

Data & Evidence

Develop systems for sharing data. Despite significant hurdles, states and localities are finding ways to share data across systems. These efforts are paying off; leaders are finding that they can streamline aspects of data collection, reduce administrative duplication and save costs totaling in the millions of dollars. The **Florida Governor’s Children and Youth Cabinet** has created a technology workgroup comprised of the chief information officers of several state agencies. This workgroup develops strategies for sharing data and streamlining the process of analyzing data for decision-making. The presence of the workgroup has facilitated the development of a common data dictionary that outlines how databases are setup between local, state and federal levels. The creation of this data dictionary alone has helped the state recapture \$25 million in savings.

Florida has also created a unique identifier for each young person that enters the social services system. This has allowed for integration of data and greater overall data management collaboration between departments.

In **Indiana**, the state has established a [Management and Performance Hub](#) that houses all data from executive branch agencies. The hub provides public data on the state’s financial health as well as the status of executive agencies’ key performance indicators. The hub is considered [one of the most transparent](#) public information portals in the country.

In **Philadelphia**, via their [Digital On-ramps system](#), recipients of social services are given access to their own data which facilitates individualization of their program, and enables them to validate which services they have engaged.

Data system development flexibility. Similar to what has happened on the programmatic side with waiver initiatives like the Performance Partnership Pilots, states and localities can also push for appropriations that allow for historically-siloed data systems to be upgraded and integrated. Such flexibility can help states and localities deal with complex data infrastructure issues. Such mechanisms can be useful tools to make the collection, sharing and analysis of data more efficient.

Use data to support smart investment. Effective use of data helps localities and states target their investments. Increasingly, state and local coordinating bodies have established a culture of data sharing and data transparency, putting data in front of stakeholders in order to inform decision-making. While most communities do this to some extent, all can find more ways to connect data to decision-making about investments. In Berea, Kentucky, the regular partnership meetings of Partners for Education begin with data walks on regional education outcomes. The Denver Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs produces an annual data book that informs priority-setting for the city’s investments in children, youth and families. “The data books enable us to advise policymakers where to invest based on where support is needed most,” shared Lisa Piscopo, Deputy Director at the Denver Office of Children’s Affairs. For example, she explained, “We use data to understand who Denver’s children are, where they live, and the challenges they face. These data help policy makers, advocates and community partners better coordinate support, programs and services, to ensure all Denver children have the best chance to succeed in school and life. It has provided a good foundation for using resources in an intentional way.”

Use performance data to raise accountability. As more localities move to a results-based accountability framework, they have stepped up their use of performance metrics to evaluate all the programs they fund. Such measures provide transparency as well as common metrics for assessing whether investments are achieving the results intended. Communities are also using performance data to spark a different kind of discussion with partners. In Colorado, through the use of C-Stat and performance-based strategy analysis meetings, staff examine positive trends and opportunities for improvement on a day-to-day basis. Agency leaders are able to make real-time decisions to respond to the data rather than waiting for quarterly reports to come in. State agencies can also share performance information from counties that are performing well with counties that aren't doing as well.

Money

Strategies that balance funding flexibility with accountability open the door to new financing solutions. For public funds, getting the right balance between flexibility and accountability is essential. Participants expressed strong reservations about using block grants as an approach to flexibility. In particular, they noted that consolidating discretionary funding streams into a block grant is almost always accompanied by cuts to overall funding levels and that flexibility is not enough of a value-add to compensate for reduced funds. They also noted the federal government's historical role in advancing equity and expressed concerns that block grants could reduce this focus. For example, one state noted that when TANF was turned into a block grant, over time the state ended up using only around 20% of the funds to help low-income families. There is generally a more positive opinion about federal efforts incorporating flexibility in efforts that are limited in scale, are being tested and are received based on a commitment to accountability, such as Performance Partnership Pilots (P3).

Continue to cautiously explore the promise of Pay for Success. Public-private models such as Pay for Success can leverage private investments on the front end for promising efforts and take some of the risk off of the shoulders of government. Private foundations often have the flexibility to invest dollars upfront and fill in gaps between public funding streams.

Build support for ballot initiatives for children's funding— kids often win. Ballot initiatives that deal with funding for children and youth are often met with strong support. All kinds of communities tend to want to support "their kids," and providing better opportunities for our children and youth tends to have nonpartisan appeal. The petition signature collection efforts often required to establish dedicated funding for children and youth can also build awareness and momentum in a community and can create an ongoing constituency for children's issues.

Additionally, the establishment of children's funds in some communities is accompanied by a mandated structure for administering funds that protects the investment made by community members and preserves it for its intended purpose. In Florida, funds like **Broward County's Children's Services Fund (CSF)** are independent entities outside of the government. Broward's CSF brings together critical leaders of local child-serving systems to use data to determine how best to meet the needs of local children and youth through the allocation of funds levied by a dedicated tax. In communities where citizens don't trust that the taxes they pay into their government's general fund flow back to their children, an organization like the Broward County CSF may overcome this mistrust and disbelief that funds will be invested in opportunities for local children and youth.

Create as much transparency around funding as possible. Collective action around any topic requires some proverbial "putting cards on the table," -- and funding is no exception. Transparency is essential, particularly when policymakers try to make the case to voters for new or reauthorized

dedicated public funds. Lack of trust in government plays a role in whether voters will authorize such funds, and historic distrust should be acknowledged. A local or state government that has not been accountable for how money is spent is going to have a steeper climb in making the case for raising more revenues. In certain cases, establishing an independent board to administer dedicated funds boosts support for voter-approved tax initiatives by as much as 15 to 20 percent.

City leaders in **St. Petersburg, Florida** were able to make the case for a 40 percent set-aside from tax increment financing (TIF) revenue to create a community redevelopment area in the neighborhoods in which there was the highest concentration of poverty. More than \$1.6 million has been generated to-date for workforce development, economic development, education and entrepreneurship. The community was invited to interpret the data and provide input on the use of funds for the redevelopment zone.

Spotlight on Rural Policy Alignment

2017 saw a renewed national focus on rural policy. Both federal government and foundation leaders have indicated an interest in elevating the economic and social infrastructure of rural communities. The following summary highlights participants' thoughts on how best to advance rural policy development and alignment.

Rural Communities and Policy Fit

While some federal initiatives have a rural focus, most federal policy and national foundation initiatives require adaptations in order to be relevant to and work well in rural communities. One participant observed that policy often has a bias slanted towards urban communities; "It's understandable – these programs are modeled after successful initiatives that were developed in urban contexts, and from there policy develops. The bones of those programs will work anywhere, but there is always adaptation."

Not only do rural communities need more tools and guidance on how to respond to and successfully capture both public and private resources, but government and private philanthropy must do more to incorporate the needs of rural communities. Moreover, national investments must adapt their requirements, communication and commitments to meet rural realities. These realities include:

- Local corporate and foundation investment infrastructure is rare in rural regions.
- Rural regions do not have the population density that meets the traditional return-on-investment calculations that are made when selecting places to invest in.
- Many place-based initiatives assume that there are a lot of providers and an established service delivery infrastructure to execute plans. Rural communities have limited infrastructure – "schools and churches," noted one participant.
- Rural communities are often overlooked by major national foundation investments; rural communities are particularly dependent on federal dollars to make collective efforts stick.

These and other realities shape the rural perspective. Participants discussed approaches that hold promise for raising the profile of rural communities, including the development of a national rural agenda and investment in innovative approaches that advance rural efforts.

A National Rural Agenda

The federal government has signaled interest in the development of rural communities. This renewed focus could present an opening for a national public-private agenda for these communities. Rural communities have a hard time building the capacity to compete in national initiatives unless they collaborate. Communities are eager to partner to address this capacity issue. Most often, the funding that does come into rural communities is skewed towards federal funding – little local corporate investment infrastructure exists and rural communities tend to be less visible to national philanthropic partners that are located primarily in urban centers.

"We need a new narrative on rural, a new way of evaluating return on investment that is not tied to population density," one participant observed. "A smaller investment in a rural community can turn the curve in a way that would be difficult to see in a larger environment." At the same time, rural communities need to be reframed not solely around their needs, but rather in a way that highlights their vital importance to the larger American fabric. Included in this narrative is a strong frame that recognizes and broadens the lens on the diversity within rural communities rather than the limited frame from the 2016 elections that may have masked the full diversity of rural white, black, tribal and multiracial communities.

Innovative Rural Approaches

A new national rural agenda would pave the way for increased investments in innovative approaches. Such approaches are already underway, and can benefit from stronger supports. For example, in eastern Kentucky, a [small program to retrain former coal miners to write code](#) is being funded with Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) dollars. Additional rural-focused investments could also make a difference – particularly on key economic development issues such as creating more viable options for young people to stay in their local communities (or to return later in life), and tying educational and youth development efforts to larger infrastructure development projects to improve transportation systems, broadband access and agriculture. Ultimately, investments might lead to an integrated strategy that connects rural communities to their closest urban counterparts in a regional economic development approach.

Appendix I: Tools & Resources

Overview

The 2017 Child and Youth Policy Alignment Summit attendees shared a wealth of experiences and promising practices with one another. Policymakers at the federal, state and local level are pursuing innovative reforms that utilize a collective impact approach. Examples of this innovative work are spread throughout this memo, and tools and resources that summit participants and other policymakers may find useful for their work are listed below.

People

From the Forum for Youth Investment:

- [The Children's Cabinet Network](#)
- [Children's Cabinets' Structural Options](#)
- [A Big Picture Approach to Community Impact](#)
- [Core Principles for Engaging Young People in Community Change](#)
- ["From Program Performance to Collective Impact" Framework](#)
- [Don't Stop Collaborating – Just Stop Creating New Collaboratives](#)
- [Is a Children's Cabinet right for your Mayor and County Executive?](#)

From others:

- America's Promise's [Parent Engagement Toolkit](#)
- Hampton, Virginia's [Systems of Care Approach PPT](#)
- Hampton, Virginia's [Youth Engagement Issue Brief](#)
- Fairfax County, Virginia's [Opportunity Neighborhood Model](#)
- Oakland, California's [Oakland Promise Overview](#)
- Iowa's [Youth Advisory Council](#)
- Tamarack Institute's [Collective Impact 3.0: An Evolving Framework for Community Change Issue Brief](#)
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation's [Embracing Equity: 7 Steps to Advance and Embed Race Equity and Inclusion Within Your Organization](#)
- [Collaborating for Equity and Justice Toolkit](#)

Data & Evidence

- [Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy Brief](#)
 - [AISP Best Practices Paper on Data Integration](#)
 - [AISP: Integrated Data Brief](#)
 - [AISP Best Practices Paper on Legal Issues](#)
 - [Network Site Case Studies](#)

- [Sharing Data for Better Results: A Guide to Building Integrated Data Systems Compatible with Federal Privacy Laws.](#)
- *Data Quality Campaign's* [Local Data Use resources](#)
- *Philadelphia's* [“Examining Multiple Early Childhood Risks” Brief](#)
- *Philadelphia's* [Pre-K Recommendations Report](#)
- *Brookings Institution's* [Presentation on Federal Use of Data and Evidence](#)
- *Florida Children and Youth Cabinet* [Technology Workgroup Presentation](#)
- *Maryland's* [Results for Child Well-Being Presentation](#)
- [Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative](#)
 - [Results First Initiative Fact Sheet](#)
 - [Evidence-Based Policymaking: A Guide for Effective Government](#)
- [Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab](#)
- [Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab](#)
- *Annie E. Casey Foundation* [Evidence2Success Initiative](#)
- [Evidence-Based Policymaking Collaborative](#)

Money

From the Forum for Youth Investment:

- [Adding It Up: Mapping Public Resources for Children, Youth and Families](#)
- [The Children's Funding Project](#)
- [Funding Brighter Futures paper](#)
- [Taking Bold Action to Fund What Matters](#)
- [Developing A Public Local Dedicated Funding Stream for Children and Youth](#)
- [Using SIBs to Support a Bundle of Youth Interventions](#)
- [Performance Partnership Pilots \(P3\) Hub](#)

From others:

- *National Association of State Budget Officers* [State Expenditure Report](#)
- *Annie E. Casey Foundation Evidence2Success* [Strategic Financing Toolkit for Tested, Effective Programs & webinar](#)
- *W. K. Kellogg Foundation's* [“The Business Case for Racial Equity” Report](#)
- [Jobs for the Future: A Guide to Leveraging Federal Funding Streams](#)
- [Funding the Next Generation](#)
- [Oakland Fund for Children and Youth](#)
- *Colorado's* [Guide to blending and braiding funds](#)
- *APHSA's* [Framework for Alternative Human Services Financing](#)
- [Pay for Success Learning Hub](#)
- [SIB Lab](#)
- For general expertise on budgeting in states visit:
 - the [National Association of State Budget Officers](#)