

State Children's Cabinets and Councils

Elements of Success Issue 1: Structural Options

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**the
forum**
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

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About the Forum for Youth Investment

The Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan “action tank” dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are Ready by 21[®] – ready for college, work and life. Informed by rigorous research and practical experience, the Forum forges innovative ideas, strategies and partnerships to strengthen solutions for young people and those who care about them. A trusted resource for policy makers, advocates, researchers and practitioners, the Forum provides youth and adult leaders with the information, connections and tools they need to create greater opportunities and outcomes for young people.

The Forum was founded in 1998 by Karen Pittman and Merita Irby, two of the country’s top leaders on youth issues and youth policy. The Forum’s 25-person staff is headquartered in Washington D.C. in the historic Cady-Lee House with a satellite office in Michigan and staff in Missouri, New Mexico and Virginia.



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Acknowledgements

In states across the country, established through legislation or executive order, cross-agency coordinating bodies called children's cabinets, commissions, or councils are systematically changing the fragmented and ineffective way states often do business for children and youth. Children's cabinets are typically made up of heads of government agencies with child and youth-serving programs, who meet on a regular basis with the collective goal of coordinating services, developing a common set of outcomes and collaboratively deciding upon and implementing plans to foster the well-being of young people. We will refer to these bodies as children's cabinets or, simply, cabinets for purposes of brevity in this issue brief.

Since 2005, the Forum for Youth Investment has convened the Children's Cabinets and Councils Network (the Network). In depth interviews conducted in 2007 with each of the children's cabinets staff have provided the information that you will find in this issue brief. This is the first in a series of four issue briefs examining the critical elements involved in creating and sustaining a successful children's cabinet or council. This issue brief delves into the structural decisions that states have to make when outlining their cabinet or council. It outlines the current range of children's cabinet and council structures and offer tips, options and recommendations for putting together the most effective structure.

Susan Robison, a former staff member and consultant with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the founder of Connexus, researched and wrote a report on a wide range of collaborative bodies for NCSL in 2003 and 2004. In the report, Robison lays out a number of strategies and recommendations to improve the quality, effectiveness and reach of publicly funded human services. This brief builds heavily on the work done by Susan Robison, as well as the work of the National Governors Association Center on Best Practices in *A Governor's Guide to Children's Cabinets*.

About the Elements of Success Series

Although each Children's Cabinet is unique, the experience of the Children's Cabinets and Councils Network (the Network) suggests there are several key structural components that are necessary for success. In addition the effectiveness of a state-level cabinet or council is linked to its members' ability to articulate a common vision, engage all stakeholders in creating a climate and metrics for shared accountability and implement an integrated set of change strategies. The remaining issue briefs will explore these other elements. We do not recommend a particular order in achieving these elements. In fact lessons from the states show that getting too far down the road in developing a structure without articulating a vision can be damaging and likewise the reverse. It is best, from our observations, to begin to operationalize each of these elements at the same time.

This series is intended to capture and organize the decisions and experiences of more than 20 children's cabinets and councils and present them, for the first time, against an emerging set of expectations about what the public and policy makers could and should expect from them. Thanks to each of the state contacts for their time spent reviewing the documents. They include: Eva Lester (AZ), Mary Ann Hanley (CT), Janice Gruendel (CT), Laura Keisler (DC), Jen Bennecke (GA), Elaine DeCostanzo (GA), Carol Behrer (IA), Shanelle Wagler (IA), Jim Redmon (KS), Mark Washington (KY), TJ Delahanty (KY), Adren Wilson (LA), Sylvia Andrews (LA), Lauren Sterling (ME), Karen Finn (MD), Cassie Motz (MD), Lisa Brewer-Walraven (MI), Julianne Smrcka (NM), Debbie Benson (NY), Bob Frawley (NY), Angela Sausser Short (OH), Janice Hendryx (OK), Mickey Lansing (OR), Terry Maloney (PA), Shelly Yanoff (PA) and Amanda Singer (UT).

As always, while the series reflects the wisdom of many contributors and advisors, in the end it reflects the Forum's point of view. The Forum assumed full responsibility for the development of the series and assumes full responsibility for the conclusions and recommendations offered.

Introduction

As with any organization or entity, a cabinet's ability to do its work effectively is deeply influenced by its structural characteristics. These characteristics tend to fall along a continuum of options. This issue brief delves into the benefits and challenges of certain structural options. Though the political context in some states necessitates beginning at different points on a continuum, there are lessons to be learned from the experiences of existing children's cabinets that indicate a preferred structure. Despite the different approaches to coordination, many states identified the same six components of structure that they associate with positive systemic change:

- 1. *Scope of the Vision and Mission*** – points on the continuum are determined by the breadth of the vision (outcomes, ages, geographic range, etc.) and the parameters of its mission.
- 2. *Authority*** – the power to control resources, set policy, formulate strategies and give direction to state agencies.
- 3. *Organizational Home*** – the administrative and fiscal agent of the cabinet.
- 4. *Scale of Composition and Formality*** – the composition of stakeholders involved and their formal and informal roles and the time devoted to cabinet duties.
- 5. *Resources*** – the staffing configurations for the cabinet and the financial commitment of the state to the operation of the cabinet.
- 6. *Local Connections*** – the way in which the cabinet interacts with local communities from a funding, infrastructure, technical assistance and data collection perspective.

Trade Offs among the Components

As the continuum shows, there are a range of options for each component. Each of the decisions made about the structure of the cabinet

interrelate. For instance, if the vision of the cabinet is comprehensive, then the composition should naturally be comprehensive. The right composition can increase the authority and decision-making power of the cabinet. A wide range of agency heads serving as members increases the legitimacy of the cabinet, which leads to greater commitment from the agencies to the decisions of the cabinet. The organizational home of the cabinet can impact its scope, mission and composition. Cabinets that are located centrally, such as within a governor's office, are more likely to have a broader focus and greater ability to impact cross-system issues. On the other hand, cabinets located within a single department may have the advantage of the staff and resources that may come with that department.

Realities

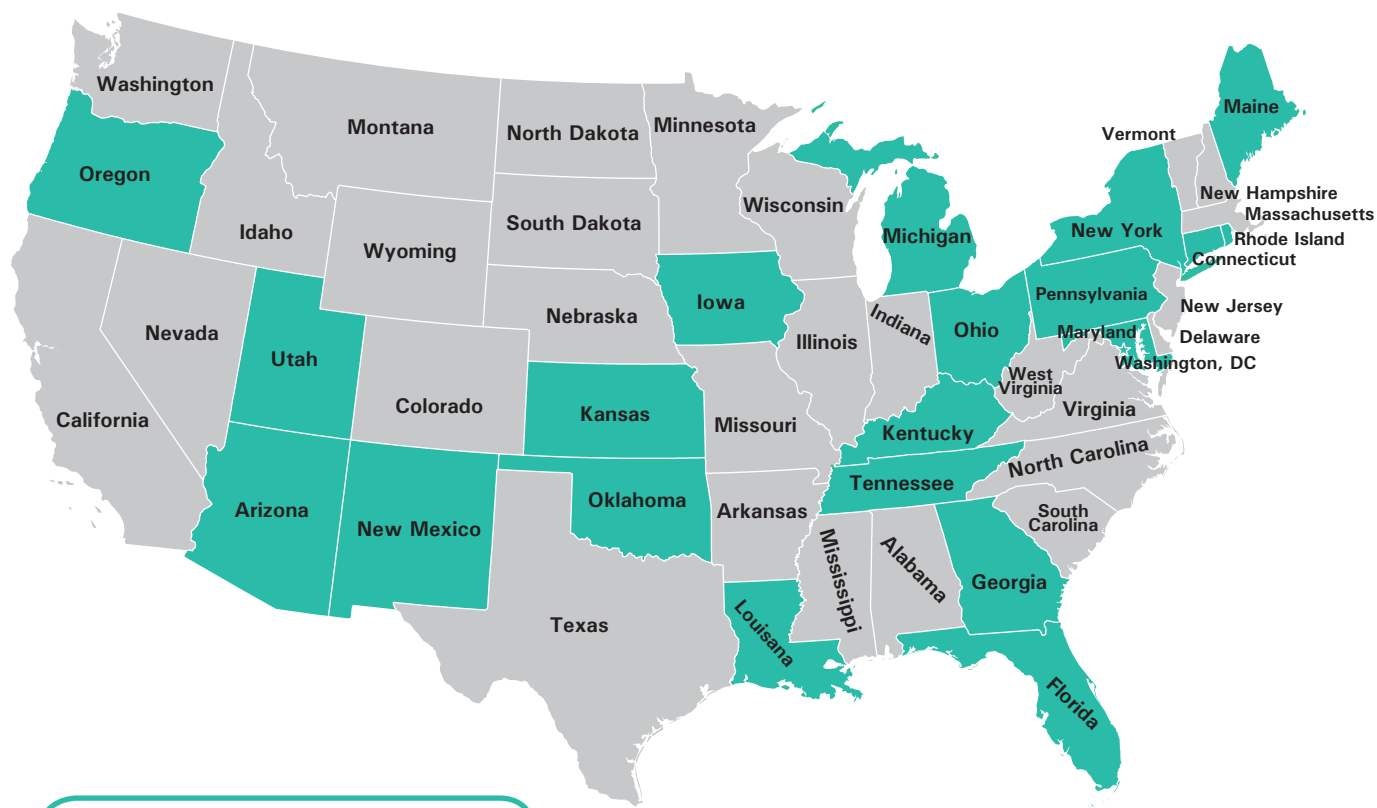
Cabinets do not exist in a vacuum. The political realities and context in a particular place must be considered in the formation of a cabinet. Important considerations include: ***solid leadership/champions, the right timing, a workable political context and enough flexibility.***

It is not necessary to have all the above elements in place for a cabinet to succeed at its mission. But, be aware of these realities going into the process. For instance, an executive order at the end of a governor's term does not ensure sustainability and permanency. On the other hand, legislation mandating the creation of a children's cabinet can be detrimental if proper communication with key stakeholders is not conducted. Start-up cabinets may find they need to change aspects of their structure to ensure that they are effective. Changing mandates by statute is a long and arduous process, so cabinets may want to start with an executive order and move toward legislative authorization. Conducting a scan of the realities in a particular state is important to choosing the best structural components along the continuum.

The following pages represent suggestions based on the Forum's work with the Children's

Cabinet Network. The recommendations should be thoughtfully considered by new and existing cabinets, but should not be considered an absolute roadmap to success in improving the lives of youth. Cabinets can be formed in a variety of different ways and many different types of cabinets have achieved significant accomplishments.

Figure 1: Locations of Statewide Children's Cabinets and Councils

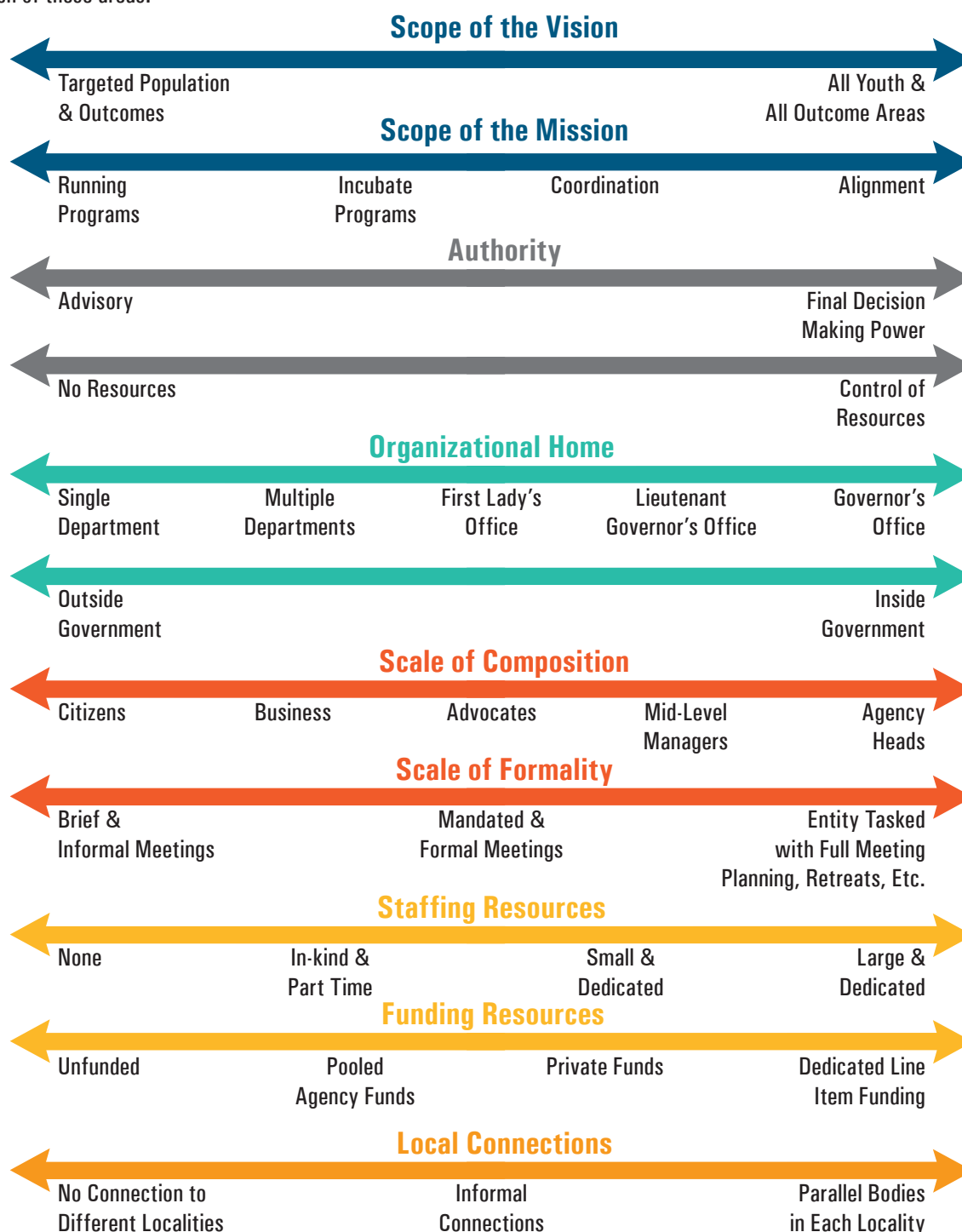


Key

■ **Statewide Children's Cabinet or Council**

Six Structural Components of Children's Cabinets & Councils

The components of scope, authority, home, scale, resources and local connections have been consistently identified by those heading Children's Cabinets to be the determinants of a successful structure. These components interrelate and there is yet to be a single approach proven most successful, but attention should be paid to how a structure is established in each of these areas.



1 Scope of the Vision and Mission

The scope of a cabinet should be as broad as possible.

Cabinets must make critical decisions to determine the breadth of their scope. Cabinets may choose to focus on a targeted population, age group or issue area. Another possibility is to focus on all youth and outcome areas. The Forum's observations suggest that the most successful entities have a broad focus. A report from the Center for the Study of Social Policy found that "Collaboratives that concentrated on one or two population-level outcomes were no more likely to accomplish measurable changes than were groups that focused on an entire set of results or outcomes." Coordinating bodies that adopt a broad scope are better positioned to coordinate and improve services for children and youth. It is no longer sufficient to singly tackle issues in isolation from bigger picture planning that cuts across systems and settings.

Having broad goals requires a high level of commitment from key decision makers. Entities with a broad focus are better positioned to engage important officials because they are more likely to be invested in the major issues concerning children and youth. The cabinet thus becomes an umbrella organization for all children and youth issues, which increases the capacity to secure commitments for change. For instance, engaging the Secretary of Human Services is easier if the scope includes areas within their purview and not only academic outcomes.

New Mexico adopted a broad focus and has prioritized engaging high level leaders such as cabinet secretaries as well as having youth voice at the table. The mission of the cabinet is exclusively to facilitate coordination among state agencies to improve youth outcomes across all age ranges and populations. These two elements have led to numerous successes by the New Mexico Cabinet including:

- Development of a statewide youth alliance that provides an avenue for positive youth development;

- Development of a clear report card and budget analysis accessible to the public;
- Legislative and other policy successes such as the passage of the Next Generation Fund, voluntary Pre-Kindergarten and school based health centers in all New Mexico counties;
- and public/private partnerships which allow leveraging of funds to bring in such initiatives as the New Mexico Middle School Initiative.

The mission of a cabinet should be clear and adhered to.

A clear mission is vital for the success and effectiveness of a cabinet. A mission describes why the body exists and its specific tasks. A clearly defined mission provides specificity to the types of activities the body engages in. A clear mission also guides the work of the cabinet and ensures coordination of efforts for children and youth.

A Cautionary Tale on the Need for a Clear Mission

Many years ago, The Maryland Children's Cabinet was established to focus on coordination and collaboration but over time became increasingly engaged in direct program work. The Cabinet grew in scale and adopted a wide range of initiatives that were not related to its original mission to promote coordination, leading to confusion by advocates, the public and the legislature as to the Cabinet's role. As a result, the Maryland Legislature did not re-authorize the Cabinet in 2005. Ultimately, the Governor issued an executive order re-creating the body but scaled back the size of the Children's Cabinet support office and hired an individual to bring the work of the cabinet back to its central mission. From that lesson, the Maryland Children's Cabinet has come back to be a central player in shaping policy for children and youth in the state and has, through much hard work, regained the confidence of the many stakeholders across the state.

Once the mission for the cabinet is created, it is important to develop clear short and long range plans for how to achieve that mission. Having a long range plan will help keep the work of the cabinet focused on the goals initially outlined by its membership. The plans should include short and long term indicators of mission success to ensure that cabinet members, elected officials and the public all see the progress being made to improve the odds for children and youth. The following issue in this series will delve more deeply into the vision and framework considerations.

A cabinet must balance the goal of a broad scope with political context.

Although it is recommended to form a cabinet with a broad focus, political realities may necessitate a cabinet begin with a limited scope and expand over time. Unfortunately, many cabinets that begin with a limited scope find it challenging to expand in later years due to being identified with one or a few specific issue areas. In addition, cabinets that are established to have a narrow focus are likely to have fewer resources and limited capacity to expand. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund is a body that has focused largely on early childhood. The Michigan Children's Cabinet has successfully united the early childhood community in Michigan and has begun to focus on improving early childhood outcomes. Though well respected in the early childhood arena, it would be difficult for these cabinets to expand their focus to include older youth.

A cabinet must carefully consider federal mandates to coordinate.

Increasingly, the federal government is recognizing the value of asking state agencies to coordinate and collaborate around children and youth issues. However, without a central federal Children's Cabinet the directives to coordinate often come from single departments or small groups of federal departments to states seeking federal funding. These types of opportunities can then present the challenge of how best to meet the requirement and maintain the

integrity and mission of the state children's cabinet. Some states are meeting federal expectations by folding those requests into the general operation of the children's cabinet or creating work groups or subcommittees of their cabinet. Others are creating new time limited entities that are connected to and/or report to the Cabinet.

Federal Coordination Efforts

Vertical alignment of policies for children among the state, federal and local levels is as important as the horizontal alignment within any given jurisdiction. The Network of Children's Cabinets has been tackling this issue in discussions with federal agencies concerned about the well being of children and youth as well as attempting to align their state work with that occurring at the community level. At the federal level, the Department of Labor Shared Youth Vision team made up of multiple federal agencies has given grants to states to form collaborative teams to promote and coordinate a shared youth vision. Those teams are, in some cases, a part of the children's cabinet, in others, not. The DOL and the Forum have been working together to build those connections by convening them jointly and hosting calls, etc.

As part of the federal Head Start Reauthorization bill, there was a requirement that states create State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care. The bill states that the Council may be an existing entity that is modified to meet the membership requirements, which means that in some cases, the state would need to consider forming a subcommittee of the children's cabinet.

2 Authority

A cabinet should have the ability to make policy decisions and control resources.

The range of authority a cabinet may possess includes the ability to directly control resources, develop policy and formulate strategies that agencies are responsible for implementing. The ability of a cabinet to authorize implementation and control resources has a direct link to its effectiveness and its ability to implement long-lasting change.

The ability to make administrative changes and direct resources are critical elements of authority for a cabinet. Some effective cabinets and councils do not have the direct authority to allocate funds but their membership includes leaders who have control over the funds and administration of individual agencies and so they are able to influence resource allocation.

Some cabinets have the authority to direct and allocate resources. This authority allows the coordinating body to perform quality control on what is being funded on

State Spotlight: Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund

The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund was established in 1999 to coordinate the allocation of tobacco settlement payments to the state. The Cabinet advises the Governor and state legislature about programmatic use of \$65 million per year of the Master Tobacco Settlement Fund and directly oversees \$20 million for early childhood initiatives. Having direct control over this pool of resources allows the Cabinet the ability to establish indicators and reviews for programs and guide funding to those programs and services with the best results. The Cabinet also examines new and promising evidence-based practices and programs and funds those it determines to be the most effective in improving early childhood outcomes. This authority grants the Kansas Cabinet the unique opportunity to demand and achieve systemic changes within the state.

behalf of children and youth and implement the best strategies for achieving the desired outcomes.

A cabinet should have agency heads as members.

The most effective cabinets have at the core of their membership the heads of all the agencies and departments which offer programs, services and supports within the scope of the cabinet's mission. Without the regular engagement of all relevant agency heads, it is extremely difficult for a cabinet to exercise the needed authority to make and implement policy decisions.

It is essential that members, especially agency heads and key decision makers, understand their roles and make a dedicated commitment to attend meetings. Some coordinating bodies allow official members to appoint designees to attend meetings. Designee representation at meetings reduces the decision making ability of the group, as the designees do not have adequate authority. For example, the Kentucky Youth Coordinating Council members often send designees, which the chair of the Cabinet indicates could be a challenge for the Cabinet's decision making power.

A cabinet should have the governor, lieutenant governor or first spouse as chair.

Selecting a leader for the cabinet is a critical decision a state must make. Ideally, a cabinet should have the governor, lieutenant governor or first spouse as chair, for three reasons. First, engaging the governor will help maintain the breadth and focus state level attention on the work of the cabinet, which in turn will help promote the cabinet's sustainability and funding. Second, the governor's presence at cabinet meetings will promote attendance by other high ranking officials. Lastly, the governor's engagement will add additional weight to the decision making and resource allocation power of the cabinet, improving the cabinet's ability to change the odds for children and youth. Ohio's first

lady only allows directors of agencies to attend official cabinet meetings, not designees. She leaves their seat empty with their nameplate.

There is concern that engaging the highest elected leader in a state will diminish frank conversation within the cabinet and will end up solely focusing on the governor's priority issues. This is a legitimate concern and one that should not be taken lightly. Cabinets should develop training guides for incoming chairs to clarify their role, the cabinet's role and how best to conduct meetings to promote frank discussions. Also, the scope of the body and the mission should be constantly referred to in order to keep the cabinet on track to meeting its long term goals for children in the state.

Engaging the Governor

In Arizona, the Governor chairs the Children's Cabinet. This ensures that the priorities of the Cabinet are met, decisions are made and changes are implemented in a timely and efficient manner. This model guarantees that leadership is involved as decisions are made. Cabinet members and staff prepare to discuss issues before the Cabinet in order to maximize their time together to discuss cross agency issues. Engaging the Governor in this way has focused the work of the Cabinet and enhanced its effectiveness. Accomplishments of the Arizona Children's Cabinet since 2003 include:

- The state currently has no waiting list of families seeking child care subsidies;
- The number of low income families claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit has nearly tripled;
- Arizona has seen a 70% increase in adoptions and a 66% increase in permanent guardianships.

3 Organizational Home

There are advantages and disadvantages to all cabinet locations. Ideally, a cabinet should be housed in a governor's office.

A cabinet can be housed inside a governor's office, an existing state agency, an agency created to staff the cabinet, a nonprofit organization or it may be an informal structure. The most common three organizational homes are inside a governor's office, inside an existing agency, or an agency whose primary responsibility is staffing the cabinet. The home impacts credibility with stakeholder groups and the ability to convene key stakeholders. It also affects the authority to receive and expend funds and to maintain dedicated staff. There are inherent advantages and disadvantages to any choice of home. In terms of positioning, the ideal location for a cabinet is inside a governor's office.

Housing a cabinet in a governor's office increases authority and ability to see across agencies, though there is a concern of being too closely tied to one administration.

Many cabinets are located as a unit of the governor's, lieutenant governor's or the first spouse's office. Being located inside the executive branch enhances the ability of the body to develop a vision for all state agencies, particularly when the governor is engaged in the work. Susan Robison argues that this arrangement increases the body's authority and ability to convene leaders and interest groups. This arrangement also provides the entity direct access to state leadership and establishes consistent communication to the governor. Lastly, this arrangement increases the cabinet's ability to review and expend funds.

There are some drawbacks to consider. If an entity is established by one administration, successive governors may not feel ownership over the entity or be as committed to the work. They may not feel compelled to fund or engage in the cabinet. In order to ensure the stability of the cabinet, it is essential

that the cabinet be authorized both through executive order and legislation.

Working through Administration Changes

Some cabinets which are housed in the governor's office have made intentional preparation for administration change a key component of their work. The Ohio Family and Children First Council works with incoming state agency heads and incorporates new priority initiatives into the Council's work. The Maine Children's Cabinet works closely with the First Lady's Office and maintains open communication with the Governor's Office to identify priority issues for the Governor. These strategies allow the Cabinet to remain relevant through changes in administration. Providing the balance of meeting the needs of a new incoming governor while staying true to the broader long range vision of the cabinet is key.

Housing a cabinet in a state agency improves access to funding, staffing and resources, but a cabinet may not be perceived as independent.

There are several cabinets that are housed within a state agency. A key advantage to being housed in a state agency is improved access to the staff, funding and resources of that agency. Parent agencies can assume fiscal and administrative responsibility for the coordinating body, freeing up staff and resources to focus entirely on the mission.

A major obstacle to the effectiveness of these cabinets is the perception that the cabinet is an initiative of the home agency. This perception hinders the ability to implement change across systems and perpetuates the idea that the work is not relevant to all state agencies. A cabinet in this position must engage in rigorous education and articulation of its independent status. The New York Council on Children and Families

transitioned from an independent agency to being housed within another department. The move required the Council to spend a significant amount of time articulating its independent status to other agencies.

House a cabinet in a neutral location linked to governor/first spouse, but ensure a cabinet is supported with pooled multiple agency resources.

In some cases, Cabinets may choose not to directly link to one office, whether that be the Governor's Office or a specific state agency, but to multiple ones. This can be a helpful way to establish sustainability for the Cabinet and keep it from being solely owned by one office. It also can create shared accountability for the Cabinet because resources are coming from multiple sources.

In Maine, the Governor's Children's Cabinet reports to the Governor and is chaired by the First Lady with the highest-level agency commissioners as its membership from Education, Health and Human Services, Juvenile Corrections, Labor and Public Safety, with the Chief Justice as an informal partner. Staff are housed between Education and DHHS, with operating expenses covered by Corrections and Labor and office space provided in-kind by Public Safety ensuring that all Cabinet members take responsibility for and ownership of staff oversight, Cabinet operation and resource commitment for sustainability.

Housing a cabinet outside of existing agencies enhances the appearance of neutrality and the ability to foster collaboration, but there can be issues in securing adequate resources and attention to issues.

Freestanding agencies operate independently and maintain their own budget, resources and staff. Children's Cabinets housed in these agencies have more latitude than others to conduct functions such

as advocacy, research and oversight. They have the authority to seek, receive and expend both public and private funds. The independent status of these cabinets enhances their appearance of neutrality and increases their ability to foster collaboration, gather information and evaluate programs. A freestanding independent agency is well positioned to objectively analyze cross-system progress on youth outcomes.

Housing a cabinet in a freestanding agency also offers challenges. These agencies tend to be small, which can lead to being dwarfed by larger agencies. The body may not receive sufficient attention and may not be able to garner support from key leaders. Freestanding agencies not furnished with adequate resources and authority may not be able to accomplish their goals. If they lack strong champions to support and promote the mission they may be vulnerable to budget cuts or elimination, far more so than a body within an existing agency or structure with many responsibilities.

**State Spotlight: Oregon
Commission on Children and Families**

The Commission was established as a free standing agency, which has allowed the body to set its own priorities and operate with independence. This independence has allowed the Commission to create local plans to drive policy and resource decisions and improve community level engagement and ownership. Unfortunately, due to the lack of connections to existing agencies, the Commission has struggled to incorporate the body's priority issues into the agenda of the state level executive and legislative branches.

4 Scale of Composition and Formality

Composition of a cabinet varies based on scope and mission, but should be as broad as possible.

Composition of the cabinet or council is dependent on the body's mission. A cabinet or council with a broad scope is more likely to select members from a wide range of agencies, whereas a coordinating body with a narrow focus may only draw from a small pool of agencies related to that focus. The Coordinating Bodies Membership Structure table, on the next page, illustrates the range of membership among state coordinating bodies. Note that all of the coordinating bodies include some type of executive branch participation which was used as a criteria for distinguishing them from other coalitions, task forces or commissions that may be in place in states.

A broad range of membership is vital for implementing big picture change, fostering coordination and identifying and removing barriers to assistance. Susan Robison argues that a wide ranging membership ensures that there are incentives for challenging the status quo across systems and having accountability for results and outcomes.

A cabinet's official membership should include high level leadership as official members.

It is essential to engage high level government leaders in the cabinet or council to demonstrate the importance of the body and to ensure that there is adequate capacity to make key decisions. Engaging the full range of government agency and department heads demonstrates the scope of the state government's involvement with youth and empowers all the appropriate programs and agencies to involve themselves with the cabinet's work.

A frequently debated point among cabinets is how to include and engage non-governmental stakeholders such as parents groups, advocacy groups, business leaders, service providers, youth leaders and the public at large. Frequently, the creation of a cabinet is seen as an opportunity to engage the full range of stakeholders in one decision making body. The Forum's observation has

been that limiting official membership of the cabinet to agency heads is the preferred structure for an effective cabinet. Limiting membership to government officials creates an environment where policy and issues can be fully vetted before going to the public and issues can be discussed openly and candidly. This environment also allows for objective discussions about outcomes, policies and resource allocation to take place.

Non-governmental stakeholders should be included as advisory members.

It is critical to capture the voices and concerns of nongovernmental stakeholders, including youth, in the work of the cabinet. Many cabinets have created advisory groups and workgroups to include the broader set of stakeholders. This dual structure ensures that high level officials are able to make decisions while also incorporating nongovernmental voices in the decision making process.

Advisory groups serve to contain the size of the cabinet or council. Expanding membership to include nongovernmental sectors can limit the openness of a cabinet. Having a closed environment made up of agency heads allows for the ability to work through cross-system issues in a confidential environment

Maine Stakeholders Advise the Cabinet

In Maine, Cabinet members meet annually with the Maine Youth Advisory Council. Staff members regularly attend the Youth Advisory Council meetings and find opportunities to integrate recommended initiatives into the work of the Cabinet. Likewise, two stakeholder groups exist, one by legislative action and one through executive order, to engage a variety of public and private partners, youth and families to explore barriers to effective service delivery and positive child and youth outcomes based on their collective knowledge, which is shared with the Children's Cabinet for policy considerations. Such groups include the Task Force on Early Childhood (Children's Growth Council under new statute) and Shared Youth Vision Council focused on youth in transition.

| Coordinating Bodies Membership Structure | | Membership | | | | | | Level Engaged | |
|---|---|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|--|
| | | <i>Executive</i> | <i>Legislative</i> | <i>Judicial</i> | <i>Advocate/ Nonprofit/ Philanthropy</i> | <i>Youth/ Citizens</i> | <i>Business</i> | <i>Top (e.g., Dept. Heads)</i> | <i>Mid-Level (e.g., Dept. Staff)</i> |
| <i>Cabinets</i> | <i>Arizona Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet</i> | ✓ | ✓ | | ○ | | ○ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Florida Children & Youth Cabinet</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| | <i>Georgia Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>Kansas Children's Cabinet & Trust Fund</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Louisiana Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>Maine Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | | ○ | ○ | ○ | | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>Maryland Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | ○ | | ○ | ○ | | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>Michigan Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | |
| | <i>New York Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>New Mexico Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | | | ○ | ○ | | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>Ohio Family & Children First</i> | ✓ | ○ | | ○ | ○ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Tennessee Children's Cabinet</i> | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| | <i>Utah Child & Family Cabinet Council</i> | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| <i>Councils</i> | <i>Connecticut Governor's Research & Policy Council</i> | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Kentucky Youth Development Coordinating Council</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ○ | ✓ | | ✓ | ○ |
| | <i>New York State Council on Children & Families</i> | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | |
| <i>Commissions</i> | <i>District of Columbia Interagency Collaboration & Services Integration Commission</i> | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| | <i>Oklahoma Commission on Children & Youth</i> | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Pennsylvania Commission for Children & Families</i> | ○ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ○ | |
| <i>Collaborations</i> | <i>Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development</i> | ✓ | | | ✓ | ○ | | | ✓ |
| | <i>Iowa Empowerment Board</i> | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Oregon Children's Collaborative</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Committee</i> | <i>Connecticut Youth Futures Committee</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |

✓ Denotes Official or more formal/voting membership on the cabinet.

○ Denotes representatives who are not official members of the cabinet but have roles in workgroups or function as liaisons or advisors.

where members can be open about challenges and test new solutions.

Formality ranges from lunch meetings to fully staffed governor's offices for children.

The level of formality of cabinets range from quarterly lunch meetings between cabinet secretaries to fully staffed meetings and retreats planned for by a governor's office for children. For an example of a formal structure, see Maryland's youth policy structure on the next page. A definitive pattern on what level of formality leads to the most effective cabinet has not emerged. The Forum recommends convening the core stakeholders for the cabinet and working with that group to determine the appropriate level of formality given the state's needs and political realities.

Over time, the cabinet may have to grow to take in new members or establish a higher level of formality. Cabinets should be cautious in their approach to growth. A lack of purpose and plan for growth can lead to a build-up of membership and staff that are not connected to the mission of the body. States should periodically assess the goals and capacity of the cabinet.

A cabinet should be established as a permanent structure. Establishment through executive order AND THEN legislative statute is the recommended process to achieving permanency.

All cabinets should work to become permanent structures. Permanency increases legitimacy, facilitates the ability to coordinate and ensures the authority to bring key stakeholders together and implement change. Permanent structures ensure that changes are sustained by evaluating the successes of initiatives and working to continually improve systems, services and outcomes for children and youth. The strategies that children's cabinets engage in are not about solving static problems, but about creating a responsive and proactive system to enable collaboration to improve youth outcomes.

Many cabinets are established through executive order and later adopted under statute. This process allows a new cabinet to establish a structure and make necessary adjustments before becoming a permanent entity. Both forms of authorization are important for coordinating bodies. Executive orders bring the weight of the governor's office in introducing the collaborative and increasing its legitimacy. Executive orders also ensure that the cabinet and its work receive adequate attention from the governor and his/her office. Unfortunately, cabinets formed through executive order alone have to be concerned for their existence during administration changes, due to the perception of being too closely tied to the exiting administration.

Legislative authorization ensures sustainability and tenure beyond a single administration. It is important for a cabinet to make key decisions and work out its structure prior to seeking statutory authorization. Legislative authorization is permanent and is thus very difficult to make adjustments to in terms of purpose, form or function once set. In Kentucky, the Education Commissioner was not initially included as a member of the Kentucky Youth Development Coordinating Council. Upon reflection, the drafters of the bill would have included this important stakeholder. Unfortunately, bringing the bill back to the legislature to make that change would open it up to all kinds of potential changes.

A cabinet is rarely operating within a static policy structure.

A cabinet must find ways to work with the various entities in a state's youth policy landscape in a coordinated way. In the case of Maryland, there are legislative, advisory and local structures to consider and roles must be clearly articulated and distinguishable (See Maryland's youth policy structure on the next page). In the case of Connecticut, there are three entities working to coordinate children and youth issues: the Early Childhood Cabinet, the Governor's Research and Policy Council and the Connecticut Youth Futures Committee. Each knows its role and target population and work is being done to ensure a seamless transition of policy efforts from one body to the next.

Maryland's Youth Policy Structure

Maryland has one of the most comprehensive structures in place for promoting, aligning and generally managing the flow of policies, programs and services for children and youth. This chart illustrates the different bodies in place and the roles they play in the state.

Key



Advisory Roles in Policy Structure



Key Pieces in Policy Structure



Flow of Information in the Policy Structure

Joint Committee for Children, Youth & Families

Coordinate state efforts, investigate harming factors to state's children, recommend new laws, regulations & budget priorities in a effort to achieve conditions of well-being for Maryland's children, youth and families.

Children's Cabinet

Promote the state's vision for a stable, safe & healthy environment for children & their families, provide a regular forum for coordination & prepare a 3 year Children's plan. The cabinet utilizes a Children's Cabinet Results Team, made up of career staff, in vetting and implementing policies and plans.

Youth Council

A statewide advisory group made up of youth to enable state leaders to create & refine policies with input from the population they are designed to serve.

Advisory Council for Children

Make recommendations for integrated children & family programs, coordinate with local government, LMBs & private groups.

Governor's Office for Children

Support the work of the Cabinet, promote policies for improving youth outcomes, partner with LMBs and administer funds per the Cabinet.

Local Management Boards (LMBs)

Strengthen decision making capacity at the local level, design and implement strategies at the local level and coordinate services.

5 Resources: Staffing & Funding

A cabinet's staff size should fit its scope.

The staff of the cabinet performs essential functions between meetings to ensure decisions are implemented. They often work in conjunction with the staff of the member agencies and departments. The functions for the staff include research, needs assessment, policy analysis and grants management. They also represent the cabinet or council in public forums and events that solicit public input and build public will for the work of the cabinet. Additionally, cabinet staff provide assistance to local collaboratives. The Oregon Commission on Children and Families employs several staff to provide technical assistance support to the local level coordinating bodies.

Although it seems that cabinets and councils with a large staff have a greater chance of success, it is important to be strategic about staffing decisions. The Maine Children's Cabinet is one of the most successful and effective coordinating bodies, but only maintains one general staff person, one special projects staff and a shared administrative support staff. Whether the cabinet or council maintains a small or large staff, leaders must consider the reasons for staff build-up and whether the staff time will be related to the body's mission. There should be confidence that the staff size is appropriate to the level of responsibilities and tasks arising from the cabinet.

Cabinet staff can be organized in different ways and should not be responsible for all cabinet work.

Several coordinating bodies have created separate entities who are responsible for supporting and staffing the initiatives and implementing the work plan arising from the cabinet or council. Arizona's Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families has 40 staff and Maryland's Governor's Office for Children has 20 staff. Staff of those offices work in conjunction with department secretaries and their staff to implement the cabinets' decisions.

Other entities utilize department secretaries and their staff to complete the work of the cabinet. In Maine, the Children's Cabinet looks to its agency's senior staff to coordinate, plan for and implement the work of the Cabinet. The senior team made up of career staff from the departments work on implementation of the Children's Cabinets decisions between meetings on an as needed basis.

Although a dedicated staff is important, all the work of the cabinet should not be the responsibility of cabinet staff. Members of the cabinet should be responsible for some results and initiatives. This will empower members and increase investment and dedication to the work. The cabinet should ensure that each department has action items they must follow through on which will increase engagement in the cabinet and its work.

Funding for a cabinet is essential. A cabinet should be cautious when engaging in funding of programs.

States vary widely on the sources and level of funding provided for the cabinet. Funding ranges from unfunded structures to cabinets with a steady stream of resources. All cabinets, regardless of their funding levels, rely on some form of operational resources to fund their work. Georgia's Children's Cabinet is an unfunded entity, but several departments provide staff time as in-kind contributions to ensure the Cabinet's successful operation.

Some cabinets, like the Kansas Children's Cabinet, administer funds. It is crucial to carefully consider the type of funding cabinets engage in. Allocating resources can be a great way of establishing legitimacy and authority for a cabinet, but the cabinet needs to safeguard from the danger of becoming perceived as a grant making agency that supports program work. Such a role can distract the cabinet from its mission and can lead to a lack of focus. It also diminishes the credibility of the cabinet as a neutral convener.

6 Local Connections

A cabinet must maintain contact with local jurisdictions.

There are both formal and informal ways that cabinets and councils can connect to local jurisdictions. Some states have long standing and formalized connections to coordinating structures in every county in their state. Others have very little connection to local level stakeholders. It is not essential to have formalized ties to local structures, though it is critical to establish and maintain two-way communication between the state and local levels. Having this connection will help guide the cabinet's work to provide the supports and resources most needed at the local level and will improve the cabinet's ability to understand the impact of its work. It will also improve the implementation of the cabinet's work if all jurisdictions use the same language and frameworks to measure child and youth outcomes, indicators and benchmarks.

Approximately half of the cabinets in the Network have direct links to local level structures. In Maryland, Oregon and Ohio, there are coordinating structures in every county that receive some level of financial and technical assistance from the state cabinet. See Maryland's Youth Policy Structures on page 17 for Local Management Boards' (LMBs) roles. The local bodies are set up in statute and operate much the same way as their state counterparts. There are direct lines of accountability for the high level results that their state is promoting for children and youth.

Other states have less formalized though high impact connections with their local bodies. Some states provide assistance with county planning or provide grants to communities to do coordinated work for children and youth. For example, the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development provides grant support to five communities for specific capacity-building and collaboration projects.

A new or recently established cabinet may not have these types of well-developed connections to the local level structures. In order to begin the process, some states have made successful initial efforts to connect through town hall meetings or by holding cabinet meetings in different regions of the state.

State Spotlight: Ohio's Family & Children First Cabinet Council

In 1993, legislation in Ohio created the 88 county councils convened by the county commissioners with members from city and county government, schools, nonprofits and families. Their role is to inform the development and implementation of future state and local intersystem priorities and funding. They do so by developing and implementing strategies to achieve their county's highest priorities while also using strategies that make a positive impact on state initiated priorities. The state level Family and Children First Cabinet Council employs five regional coordinators located and housed in each region to provide technical assistance and act as a conduit between the state and local levels. In 2006, the state legislature passed HB 289, which requires local and state annual planning and reporting against a set of commitments to child and youth well being.

Final Thoughts

The core purposes of a Children's Cabinet are to coordinate youth services, develop a common set of outcomes across programs and agencies and develop a system for collaborative decision making and implementation for improving the well-being of young people. State officials working to establish or refine a cabinet need to establish the purpose, mission and vision of the body and then link those pieces to decisions regarding structure. All of the structural considerations have an impact on the strategies and effectiveness of the body so each should be carefully considered.

Champions will change over time, from the governor, the state legislature and advocates, to local communities. To enable the Cabinet to sustain its mission all of those sectors should be engaged in the work. However, the effectiveness of the Children's Cabinet is derived from the Governor. The Cabinet should be a high priority with the Governor, who in turn inspires his/her staff. This ensures that agency heads will work across the system, rather than in silos, to plan for and implement policies and programs for children and youth.

Arlene Lee, former Chair, Maryland Children's Cabinet

Gubernatorial support allows for agency heads to take the necessary time and begin to think outside of the box, regarding how they plan for and implement policies and programs for children and youth.

Unfortunately, there is no magic formula for guaranteeing the success of a cabinet to improve the lives of children and youth within a state. The recommendations contained within this document and the rest of the series represent the experience of the Forum in working with state cabinets from across the country and should serve as a roadmap of best practices

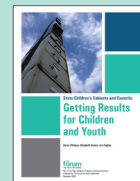
and lessons learned. Continued research into what works and what does not is needed. Additionally, the ongoing peer to peer exchange of Children's Cabinet and Council leaders through the Network provides an opportunity to document those successes and challenges. The Forum plans to continue to facilitate the Children's Cabinet Network and identify opportunities to support their success and growth.

About the State Children's Cabinets and Councils Series

"Getting Results: A Rationale," the State Directory and the "Elements of Success" Issue Briefs that comprise this series capture and organize the decisions and experiences of more than 20 children's cabinets and councils and presents them, for the first time, against an emerging set of expectations about what the public and policy makers could and should expect from them.

State Children's Cabinets and Councils: Getting Results for Children and Youth provides the rationale behind the Forum's assertion that children's cabinets and councils should be taken seriously, spells out how state children's cabinets and councils are operating in ways that are consistent with the Forum's assumptions about change, identifies challenge areas, and introduces the Ready by 21 Change Model that is used to frame the issue briefs and directory.

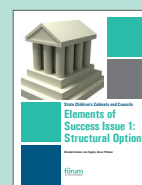
The 2008 Directory of State Children's Cabinets and Councils provides at-a-glance responses to basic but important questions in summaries of interviews done with children's cabinet and council directors in the latter half of 2007. The Forum is committed to working with these directors to update this information each year.



About the Children's Cabinets and Councils: Elements of Success Issue Briefs

These issue briefs draw from the experience and stories of children's cabinets and councils across the country. These briefs give recommendations on how to establish and run an effective state coordinating council by providing more in-depth information on four elements of success:

- **Structural Options** outlines the range of current children's cabinet and council structures in place and offers tips and warnings for getting the most effective structure in place. This issue brief builds heavily on the detailed documentation work done by Susan Robison for the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and Anne Segal for the National Governors Association (NGA) Center on Best Practices.
- **Creating a Common Framework** documents the experience of states attempting to develop comprehensive and yet organized goals (results), select indicators, and communicate a common vision for children and youth that cuts across systems and sectors. This issue also discusses the value of blending the popular Results Based Accountability approach with the Forum's Ready by 21® Big Picture planning approach, a process that has proven useful to several cabinets and councils.
- **Integrated Change Strategies** reviews both common and innovative strategies and tactics being employed by children's cabinets and councils to increase demand, align policies, improve services and engage youth and families and provides examples of trend setting states.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Shared Accountability** delves into two of the unique roles that a children's cabinet or council is positioned to fill. There are numerous lessons learned from children's cabinets and councils, some of which are no longer active, that suggest that coordinating bodies need to address how to a) develop shared accountability and b) engage a wide range of stakeholders in order to have the momentum and support base needed to be effective and sustainable.



In addition to these short reports, the Forum regularly posts documents or links that provide examples of enabling legislation, state report cards and action agendas, children's resource maps and other documents. We encourage those interested in learning more about coordinating bodies to visit the Publications Area of the Forum's web site, www.forumfyi.org. Also, check out the Children's Cabinets Area at www.forumfyi.org/readyby21/groups for the latest announcements and documents from and about existing children's cabinets and councils.

To order printed copies of these publications and more, please email Laura Mattis at laura@forumfyi.org.

Related Publications from the Forum for Youth Investment

Adding It Up: A Guide for Mapping Public Resources for Children, Youth and Families

This guide is a joint effort from the Forum for Youth Investment and The Finance Project designed to help decision makers and community leaders both learn the importance of a good children youth and families (CYF) resource map and map out the process of creating or improving a CYF map of their own. In order to help busy leaders organize their time and the process of getting started, we have packaged the guide in three parts:

- **A Brochure**

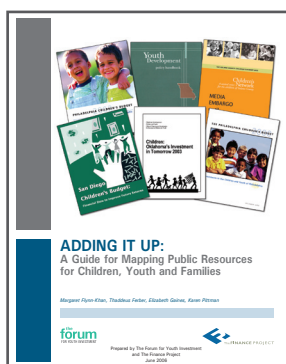
Offering the highlights of what a CYF map can do and why a state or community might benefit from one. Available online at www.forumfyi.org/node/86.

- **A Rationale for Mapping Public Resources for Children, Youth and Families**

This introduction explains the why, how and what behind creating a CYF resource map. Setting the stage for what's involved in the process, this overview provides a good framework for understanding both the benefits and the challenges of getting the job done right. Available online at www.forumfyi.org/node/86.

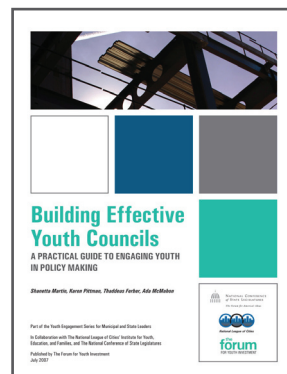
- **A Guide for Mapping Public Resources for Children, Youth and Families**

The “meat and potatoes” of the guide, the handbook has been designed to clarify the process of creating and implementing an effective CYF resource map. With special attention paid to helping users avoid pitfalls and work from examples of others' experience, the guide combines tips, tools, worksheets and everything a planning team might need to kick off a CYF resource map development process or reconfigure an existing one for greater success. Available online at www.forumfyi.org/node/86.



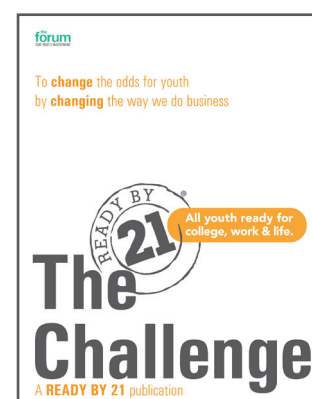
Building Effective Youth Councils: A Practical Guide to Engaging Youth in Policy Making

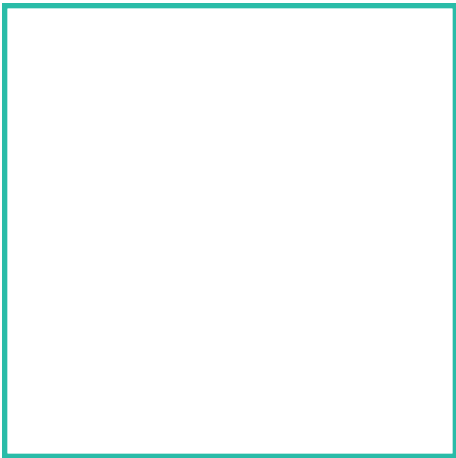
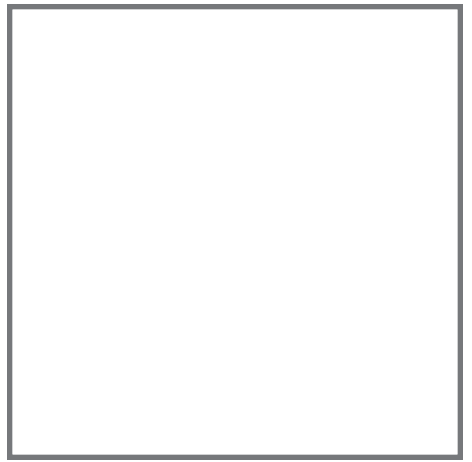
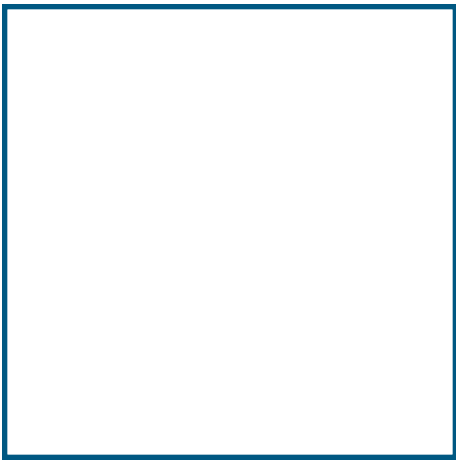
This guide is designed to help state and localities to create or strengthen their own youth councils. It is a synthesis of theory and practice. This guide provides a general framework for thinking about youth councils, explaining the principles of youth action and the importance of youth engagement. It also incorporates advice and lessons from people “in the field” who have started or currently staff youth councils across the country.



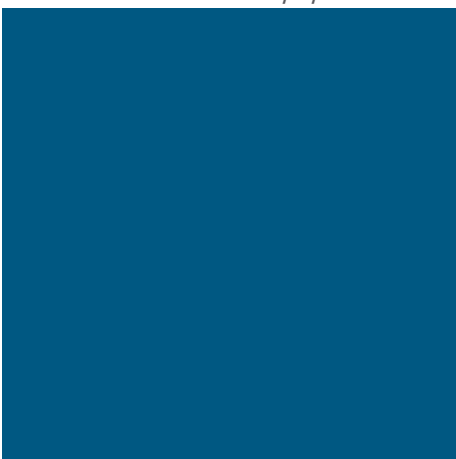
Ready by 21®: The Challenge

“The Challenge” is the definitive guide to the key ideas and resources behind the Ready by 21 Challenge. Too few young people are entering adulthood ready and our collective efforts to make a difference are far too fragmented to have a big impact. Changing the way we do business means that we need to throw out old assumptions about how change happens and engage youth and adult change makers with the ideas, resources and tools that help them. Leaders need to learn to focus and prioritize differently using a Big Picture Approach, so that together they can set bigger goals, use bolder strategies and be better partners, within an overall Blueprint for Action.





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