

FORM: DOES YOUR COMMUNITY HAVE THE CHANGE HORSEPOWER IT NEEDS?

After more than a decade of work with state and local leaders committed to improving population-level outcomes, the Forum for Youth Investment created a short list of the basics that are found behind every successful effort. Whether they are starting a planning process or making mid-course corrections, leadership groups that pay attention to these fundamentals go farther faster. The chart below introduces you to the standards we believe every community and state should hold themselves to if they are serious about getting the highest return on their investments. Take the quiz. Talk to your colleagues and partners. Do you have all the horsepower you need to improve the odds for children and youth?

INSTRUCTIONS:		HOW IMPORTANT? 1 (lo) – 5 (hi)	HOW WELL BEING DONE? 1 (lo) – 5 (hi)
BROADER PARTNERSHIPS	Build an Overarching Leadership Council – Has any entity taken on the task of “adding it up” – figuring out how to bring the pieces together and keep the work coordinated? Does that organization have the capacity, motivation and authority to align resources? Is there a strong backbone support organization undergirding the effort?		
	Align and strengthen coalitions, commissions and intermediaries – Are the current coalitions and coordinating bodies concerned with related issues intentionally linked? Are there ongoing mechanisms for mapping, aligning and coordinating their efforts? As new initiatives are started, are they brought to a common table?		
	Engage key stakeholders – Is there a broad base of stakeholders – public, private and nonprofit – who have the capacity, motivation and resources to affect change? Are stakeholders from all systems and settings connected and committed? Are all levels of leadership involved, from top-level to frontline, from policymakers to families and young people?		
BIGGER GOALS	Establish a balanced set of goals and indicators for your target populations- that reflect what we know about how people develop and thrive. Do the goals span all relevant age groups? Do they address key outcome areas (e.g., cognitive, health, social, civic) and the needs of special populations? Do they focus on reducing problems and promoting preparation and leadership?		
	Define supports that the full community must provide – to achieve goals. Are there supports (e.g., supportive relationships, safe environments, challenging experiences) that are widely seen as essential? Are all systems, settings and programs asked to speak to these community goals in their plans?		
	Create a big picture, goal oriented action plan – Do you have an action plan that establishes strategies to reach your goals? That establishes stakeholder commitments? And ongoing accountability mechanisms?		
	Define common terms and communicate core messages – Are your population-level goals linked to core messages which are marketable to the public and to key stakeholders? Are your goals connected to planning/decision-making frameworks and used for reporting progress?		
BETTER DATA	Collect complete data about population-level outcomes, community context and leadership capacity – Is data collected across a range of outcomes and a range of ages? Does it reflect what the community wants to promote as well as what it wants to prevent? Do you collect data on what supports are being offered and what actions leaders are taking? Are data gaps identified and addressed and agendas developed to improve data collection?		
	Align and connect data for decision-making – Can you provide data on goals across programs and systems? Are the various sources for data and information aligned and linked horizontally (across systems and settings) as well as vertically (individual to aggregate)?		
	Use the best information about what works – Are improvements in everything, from programmatic supports to community engagement, informed by the best of what is known about promising and proven practices? Is there a focus on continuous improvement?		
BOLDER ACTIONS	Improve systems and settings – Are significant efforts underway to improve alignment and coordination of services within the various systems and settings? Are efforts underway that improve the quality of these services, supports and opportunities?		
	Align policies and resources – Are there efforts to review and improve policies? Are policies aligned so that they are more consistent and effective? Are resources assessed and reassigned to maximize the return on investment? Are clear sustainability plans in place and activated?		
	Increase Demand – Is there strong demand for change from young people, families, providers, business leaders, funders, advocates and policy makers? Are there ways to assess public and political will? Is there an effective communications strategy in place?		
	Engage youth, families and community members in solutions – Are young people, families and community members involved in meaningful ways? Are they involved in decision making? Trained in policy and data analysis? Are there mechanisms for them to collectively identify and represent the perspectives of their peers?		

