

REPORT

FINAL REPORT

Promise Neighborhoods Case Studies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Promise Neighborhoods seek to offset the effects of growing up in poverty by building a comprehensive continuum of “cradle-to-career” supports that enable children to reach their potential. Since 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has awarded three rounds of Promise Neighborhoods grants totaling nearly \$100 million to nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and American Indian tribes, including 46 planning grants and 12 implementation grants to 48 lead agencies in 23 states and the District of Columbia. The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI) provides a national system of supports—ranging from technology tools to engagement with peers and advice from experts—to Promise Neighborhoods and other communities interested in implementing similar place-based strategies.

To document the complexity of the Promise Neighborhoods and their implementation experiences, PNI contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods. The sites included three from the first cohort of implementation grantees, Berea, Kentucky; Buffalo, New York; and Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and two from the second cohort, Chula Vista, California and Los Angeles, California. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and site visits to each Promise Neighborhood. Three primary questions guided the case studies:

1. How do Promise Neighborhoods build the infrastructure to support and sustain a pipeline of programs for children from birth through college and career?
2. How does the resulting system work on the ground? What are the take-up rates of high quality services and schools?
3. Are Promise Neighborhoods meeting their partnership and service coordination goals? What barriers and facilitators do they face? What is needed to create a positive climate for successful partnerships and achievement of Promise Neighborhoods’ goals?

Building infrastructure

To develop the infrastructure necessary for a successful Promise Neighborhood, the five case study sites have taken several simultaneous approaches. The lead agency for each site has expanded its own capacity to manage and provide structure for the complex efforts, by building on their areas of expertise and hiring additional staff to fill new roles. Although lead agencies typically provide some direct services in addition to their coordination functions, they are partnering with schools, community-based organizations, government agencies, and other groups to cover the range of expertise needed to complete a comprehensive cradle-to-career continuum of solutions. Key structures that sites have developed to support the success of their cradle-to-career strategies include common data systems for continuous improvement and shared accountability and staffing structures that connect pipeline components and facilitate ongoing communication. To finance Promise Neighborhoods activities, now and in the future, sites are identifying and braiding funding from a variety of sources, ranging from small local organizations to larger national foundations and including private entities as well as government agencies.

Continuum of solutions and take-up rates

To achieve their goals, Promise Neighborhoods sites are implementing a comprehensive cradle-to-career continuum of solutions for children and their communities, including:

- Early childhood offerings, ranging from new preschools to supports for existing center- and home-based caregivers.
- Academic and enrichment activities for K–12 students, provided before, during, and after regular school hours.
- Targeted programs, primarily for high school students, to support transitions to college and careers.
- Family and community supports from parenting classes and adult education to health programs and housing assistance.

School-based activities reach the largest numbers of participants in the case study sites. Virtually all students who attend partner schools are touched by Promise Neighborhoods' services to some extent—whether through a new curriculum, fine arts programming, or other school-wide reform. Smaller numbers participate in more intensive K–12 activities and in programs for younger children and adults. Differences in take-up rates across sites and activities are driven by a combination of program capacity and participant interest.

Progress, barriers, and facilitators

Promise Neighborhoods are working to improve the outcomes reflected in the 10 results and 15 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) indicators specified by ED. Early efforts toward assessing progress have focused on defining measures and establishing baselines and targets. By the end of the 2013–2014 school year, the three case study sites in the first cohort of implementation grantees were able to report baseline data for most of the GPRA indicators; sites in the second cohort reported data for fewer indicators. Across the indicators with data available for more than one year, all sites reported upward trends in some measures and downward trends in others, but across sites and measures, there were more upward than downward trends. The most consistent positive trends reported were in GPRA indicators related to early child development. However, these changes over time cannot be considered definitive indications of the impact of the Promise Neighborhoods efforts, because factors unrelated to their efforts also influence these measures.

Although Promise Neighborhoods have experienced early successes in some areas, sites have also encountered numerous challenges in their early implementation efforts.

- ***Lack of experience building a cradle-to-career continuum of solutions.*** The organizations involved in the Promise Neighborhoods case studies all have experience serving their communities and working with partners, but efforts of this scale and complexity require new approaches. Building relationships among the many different organizations involved can be a slow process. Developing and achieving full use of the shared data systems needed to track Promise Neighborhoods results—and learning to use the data effectively—also takes time.

- ***Varying levels of commitment and flexibility among stakeholders.*** Each partner organization comes to a Promise Neighborhood with its own expertise, mission, policies, and culture. Although all are drawn by the Promise Neighborhoods goals and commit to working toward the same results, the depth of commitment to the initiative as a whole can vary. The case study sites found that the policies and structures of school districts are often more unyielding than those of other partners.
- ***Staff and partner turnover.*** As these complex initiatives evolve, changes can occur in partners or in staff within partners. Turnover at either the organizational or the individual level can hamper effective implementation as new relationships are built and staff are oriented to the Promise Neighborhoods initiative. Turnover of organizations, regardless of cause, can also result in gaps in services.
- ***Unrealistic expectations.*** Some respondents in the case study sites found defining and communicating what the Promise Neighborhood and its staff can and cannot do a challenge. Unrealistic expectations about how quickly the initiative could achieve target impacts are one aspect of this challenge. Funders and other stakeholders sometimes fail to realize that it will take more than two decades for the first children born in a new Promise Neighborhood to make their way through the full pipeline and complete college.

Despite the challenges inherent in such an ambitious undertaking, sites have identified factors that facilitate the development of Promise Neighborhoods.

- ***A robust results framework with shared accountability.*** All Promise Neighborhoods are working to achieve the same goals that were specified in the federal grant announcement, with locally defined targets and measurement for each indicator. Rigorous use of data to assess progress toward targeted outcomes supports continuous improvement and shared accountability. The case study sites have found that training in Results-Based Accountability™, which PNI provided as part of the national system of supports, facilitates effective use of data.
- ***Strong interpersonal and institutional relationships.*** Developing and maintaining a continuum of quality services requires strong relationships among a set of partners with a broad range of expertise. Strategies such as co-location of staff and referral systems can facilitate the on-the-ground linkages necessary to ensure seamless connections between programs and transitions for families. Building relationships with community residents is also critical, and staff at case study sites noted the importance of being open to community input in designing Promise Neighborhoods programs and services.
- ***Flexible, patient, and sustainable capital.*** It is important that Promise Neighborhoods and their supporters remain flexible to meet changing needs, respond to lessons learned, and address new circumstances as they arise. Funding streams that target a Promise Neighborhoods initiative as a whole support this flexibility by enabling lead agencies to adapt their initiatives and refocus efforts in a more productive direction, rather than tying them to a specific program or partner organization that might not be working as well as expected. Funders that understand that a long-term commitment is needed to achieve population-level results could prove the most reliable for sustaining the continued efforts of Promise Neighborhoods.

Promise Neighborhoods are in the early implementation stage of a long-term endeavor to improve the educational outcomes of the communities they serve. The efforts that the case study sites have put into developing their cradle-to-career continuums of solutions and systematically tracking outcomes over time have laid the groundwork for continued assessment of progress towards their goals. However, the complexity of the Promise Neighborhoods effort makes it challenging to study, and future research will need to take that into account.

I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty has broad, pernicious effects on children, reflected in compromised cognitive skills that emerge early and increase over time; rising rates of asthma, obesity, and diabetes; and the prevalence of violence, mental health problems, and risk behaviors. All of these effects can inhibit poor children’s development into educated, productive citizens. Economic and social instability and inadequate access to high quality education, health, and social resources in low-income communities contribute to poor outcomes in children (Danziger and Cancian 2009). Given poverty’s complex effects, interventions that seek to counteract its impact must address multiple systems, not single components (Kubisch et al. 2010).

The Harlem Children’s Zone model

During the past 18 years, the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) has developed and refined a model to revitalize distressed neighborhoods (Box I.1). HCZ’s theory of change is rooted in five key principles: (1) target a well-defined community; (2) develop a system for providing comprehensive, coordinated services to children and their families from the prenatal stage through college and career; (3) facilitate community-building efforts; (4) rigorously evaluate program outcomes and use the results to inform continuous program improvement; and (5) cultivate a shared vision and culture of accountability (HCZ 2009). These operating principles served as the foundation for Promise Neighborhoods.

The Promise Neighborhoods cradle-to-career strategy

Promise Neighborhoods seek to offset the effects of growing up in poverty by building a comprehensive continuum of “cradle-to-career” supports that enable children to reach their potential. They are designed to be anchored by high quality schools and focus on the integration of solutions throughout communities and the incorporation of proven effective practices. Promise Neighborhoods represent both a “place” and a “strategy” (Office of the Federal Register 2011). Promise Neighborhoods boundaries are intended to be drawn around a distinct geographical area with a demonstrated need for intense revitalization efforts. The Promise Neighborhoods strategy involves building a seamless system, or pipeline, of interconnected supports throughout each stage of a child’s life. In recognition of the significant influence of home and community contexts on child development, services for families and the broader community are a major component of the Promise Neighborhoods strategy and complement the education pipeline by enhancing the community’s capacity to support its children. The four primary components of the cradle-to-career continuums of solutions are: (1) early learning, (2) K–12 education reform, (3) college and career preparation, and (4) family and community supports (Figure I.1).

Federal planning and implementation grants. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) laid the initial groundwork for the development of long-term Promise Neighborhoods cradle-to-career strategies in communities across the country by funding nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and American Indian tribes to plan and begin implementing Promise Neighborhoods in their communities. ED created a two-phase grant process by offering planning and implementation grants. At both the planning and implementation stages, communities must acquire substantial matching funds, demonstrating the buy-in of the community and other funders, encouraging public/private partnerships, and better facilitating sustainability. Implementation grantees are required to obtain matching funds or in-kind

donations equal to at least 100 percent (50 percent for rural and tribal communities) of the federal grant award. Although some matching contributions can come from government sources, such as school districts and social service agencies, at least 10 percent of the match must be contributed by the private sector.

Box I.1. A blueprint for Promise Neighborhoods: The development of the Harlem Children's Zone

The HCZ began in 1970 as the Rheedlen Foundation and was quickly renamed the Rheedlen Center for Children and Families. Over the next 20 years, the organization initiated a number of programs for families and children living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The HCZ project, a comprehensive, community-building initiative targeting a 24-block area in Harlem, began in 1997 with six programs and a budget of \$7.5 million. In 1999, a three-phase, 11-year strategic plan to expand and strengthen the project was launched. At that time, the program had a budget of nearly \$10 million and was serving 4,300 residents, including 3,000 children. As of 2014, the HCZ covers a 97-block radius and serves more than 24,000 residents, including 12,000 children, with more than 25 programs and initiatives. By 2015, the project estimates it will have achieved its maximum community saturation goal, but it will not see the full expression of its pipeline for another 10 years, when the students who started in the early childhood program graduate from college (HCZ 2009; B. Jean-Louis, personal communication, September 4, 2014).

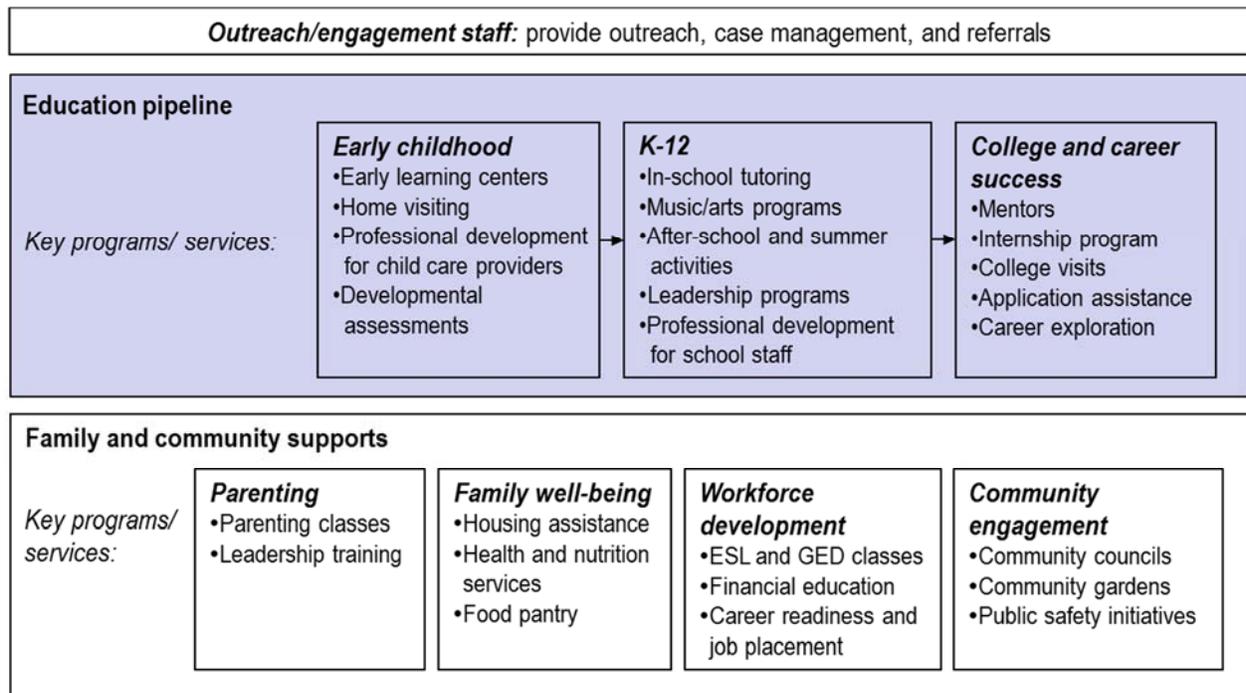
HCZ's success has generated widespread interest among local, state, and national leaders in replicating its model. In response, HCZ developed an implementation framework based on its experience, guided by five operating principles (HCZ 2009):

- Target a well-defined community to reach a critical mass of residents.
- Develop a system for providing comprehensive, coordinated services to children and their families from the prenatal stage through college and career with schools at the centerpiece, as well as support for the broader community.
- Facilitate community-building efforts such as community organizing and neighborhood beautification.
- Rigorously evaluate program outcomes and use the results to inform continuous program improvement.
- Cultivate a shared vision and culture of teamwork and accountability in which staff are held responsible for effecting change within the community.

One key recommendation from the HCZ to others implementing similar models is that, although sites might begin to see initial results in three to four years, it takes at least 10 years to fully implement an effective cradle-to-career continuum of solutions (HCZ 2009).

The one-year planning grants of \$500,000 were designed to support organizations in their efforts to unite the community and foster commitments to establish an integrated cradle-to-career continuum of solutions for the families and children based on a needs assessment and segmentation analysis of the target neighborhood. In three rounds since 2010, ED has awarded 46 planning grants to communities in 22 states and the District of Columbia (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO] 2014).

Figure I.1. Sample Promise Neighborhoods continuum of solutions



ESL = English as a Second Language; GED = General Educational Development.

Five-year implementation grants of up to \$6 million per year were awarded in two rounds, in 2011 and 2012. Twelve organizations received these grants, including 10 that had previously received planning grants (Table I.1).¹ Implementation grantees are expected to:

4. Implement a seamless pipeline of support for families and children, including early learning services, education reforms, college and career preparation services, and family and community supports.
5. Foster partnerships with community service organizations, foundations, and other stakeholders to build and support a comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable system.
6. Enhance and integrate longitudinal data systems and use data to support decision making, quality improvement, and accountability.
7. Report progress on 15 education and family and community support indicators (Box I.2) annually.
8. Demonstrate progress toward achieving systems-level changes to enhance the Promise Neighborhood, such as facilitating revisions in policy and identifying new funding mechanisms (Office of the Federal Register 2011).

¹ The grants were designed to work in tandem, with implementation grants arising from the most successful planning efforts, but organizations did not need to receive a planning grant to be eligible to apply for an implementation grant.

Table I.1. Promise Neighborhoods implementation grantees

Promise Neighborhood	Grantee	Organization type	Location	Year planning grant received	Year implementation grant received ^a	Amount of first-year implementation grant	Size of population	Racial/ethnic composition
Case study sites								
Berea College Promise Neighborhood	Partners for Education at Berea College	Institution of higher education	Clay, Jackson, Owsley counties, Kentucky ^b	2010	2011	\$5,993,546	39,533 residents, including 6,297 public school students	97% white, 3% other
Buffalo Promise Neighborhood	Westminster Foundation	Nonprofit	Buffalo, New York	2010	2011	\$1,499,500	12,000 residents including 3,000 children	72% African American, 23% white, 5% other
Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood	South Bay Community Services	Nonprofit	Chula Vista, California	2011	2012	\$4,998,609	6,744 residents, including 1,848 children	71% Latino, 18% white, 6% African American, 5% other
Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood	Youth Policy Institute	Nonprofit	Los Angeles, California	2010	2012	\$6,000,000	97,778 residents, including 23,404 children	One area is 90% Latino, the other is 48% Latino, 34% white, 12% Asian, 4% African American
Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ)	Northside Achievement Zone	Nonprofit	Minneapolis, Minnesota	NA	2011	\$5,664,925	14,798 residents, including 5,615 children	47% African American, 20% white, 18% Asian, 8% Latino, 7% other
Other implementation grantees								
Boston Promise Initiative	Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative	Nonprofit	Boston and Roxbury, Massachusetts	2010	2012	\$1,485,001	24,359 residents, including 8,000 children	31% African American, 28% Latino, 25% Cape Verdean, 14% white, 2% Asian

Promise Neighborhood	Grantee	Organization type	Location	Year planning grant received	Year implementation grant received ^a	Amount of first-year implementation grant	Size of population	Racial/ethnic composition
East Lubbock Promise Neighborhood	Texas Tech University	Institution of higher education	Lubbock, Texas	NA	2012	\$3,263,789	33,000 residents, including 5,062 K–12 students	49% Hispanic, 29% African American, 21% white
Five Promises for Two Generations	DC Promise Neighborhood, Inc.	Nonprofit	Washington, D.C.	2010	2012	\$1,967,748	5,725 residents, including 1,880 children	98% African American, 2% other
Hayward Promise Neighborhood	California State University East Bay	Institution of higher education	Hayward, California	2010	2011	\$3,964,289	10,662 residents, including 3,123 children	72% Latino, 11% African American, 9% Asian/South Asian, 4% white, 4% other
Indianola Promise Community	Delta Health Alliance	Nonprofit	Indianola, Mississippi ^b	2010	2012	\$5,997,093	10,683 residents, including 2,260 public school students	79% African American, 19% white, 2% other
Mission Promise Neighborhood	Mission Economic Development Agency	Nonprofit	San Francisco, California	2011	2012	\$6,000,000	57,298 residents; 40% of the families have children younger than 18	41% Latino, 40% white, 12% Asian, 3% African American, 3% other
San Antonio Eastside Promise Neighborhood	United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County, Inc.	Nonprofit	San Antonio, Texas	2010	2011	\$4,364,141	17,955 residents, including 5,925 children	68% Hispanic, 25% African American, 7% white

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, Promise Neighborhoods awards and grantee applications.

^a 2011 implementation grants were not disbursed until 2012.

^b Rural grantee.

NA = not applicable.

Box I.2. The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) results and indicators

- **Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school**

GPRA 1. Number and percentage of children from birth to kindergarten entry who have a place where they usually go, other than an emergency room, when they are sick or in need of advice about their health

GPRA 2. Number and percentage of 3-year-olds and children in kindergarten who demonstrate at the beginning of the program or school year age-appropriate functioning across multiple domains of early learning, as determined using developmentally appropriate early learning measures

GPRA 3. Number and percentage of children from birth to kindergarten entry participating in center-based or formal home-based early learning settings or programs, which may include Early Head Start, Head Start, child care, or preschool

- **Students are proficient in core academic subjects**

GPRA 4. Number and percentage of students at or above grade level according to state mathematics and reading or language arts assessments

- **Students successfully transition from middle school grades to high school**

GPRA 5. Attendance rate of students in 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grade

- **Youth graduate from high school**

GPRA 6. Graduation rate

- **High school graduates obtain a postsecondary degree, certification, or credential**

GPRA 7. Number and percentage of Promise Neighborhoods students who graduate with a regular high school diploma and obtain postsecondary degrees, vocational certificates, or other industry-recognized certifications or credentials without the need for remediation

- **Students are healthy**

GPRA 8. Number and percentage of children who participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily

GPRA 9. Number and percentage of children who consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily

- **Students feel safe at school and in their community**

GPRA 10. Number and percentage of students who feel safe at school and traveling to and from school, as measured by a school climate needs assessment

- **Students live in stable communities**

GPRA 11. Student mobility rate

- **Families and community members support learning in Promise Neighborhood schools**

GPRA 12. For children from birth to kindergarten entry, the number and percentage of parents or family members who report that they read to their child three or more times per week

GPRA 13. For children in kindergarten through 8th grade, the number and percentage of parents or family members who report encouraging their child to read books outside of school

GPRA 14. For children in 9th through 12th grade, the number and percentage of parents or family members who report talking with their child about the importance of college and career

- **Students have access to 21st century learning tools**

GPRA 15. Number and percentage of students who have school and home access (and percentage of the day they have access) to broadband Internet and a connected computing device

Source: Office of the Federal Register 2011.

In recognition of the challenges inherent in achieving these goals, ED contracted with the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) and the Urban Institute to provide training and technical assistance to the grantees PolicyLink, HCZ, and CSSP partnered to form the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI), which provides central support for Promise Neighborhoods.

Targeted outcomes. Promise Neighborhoods are working to achieve 10 results, as measured by 15 performance indicators, specified by ED in the Promise Neighborhoods grant solicitation notice (Box I.2). The Urban Institute, as part of its technical assistance contract with ED, issued a lengthy data guidance document to grantees in February 2013, more than a year after the first implementation grants were awarded (Comey et al. 2013). Representatives from each implementation grantee also participate in leadership training offered by PNI in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which provides information on the Results-Based Accountability™ (RBA) framework for data-driven decision making and results-based action. Based on these inputs and other advice from CSSP, the Urban Institute, and others, Promise Neighborhoods reassessed their plans regarding data collection and definitions of measures for the 15 indicators. ED gave the grantees an opportunity to revise the baselines and annual targets proposed in the initial grant applications, and sites submitted revised data plans in April 2014.

The target population for some of these indicators is the group of children attending school at a certain set of grade levels, but for many indicators the target population is all children living in the Promise Neighborhood. Although the specific proportion of the population each Promise Neighborhood intends to reach varies to some extent by site (see site profiles in Appendix C), all are working to achieve population-level results, defined by PNI as when at least half of children and families are connected to needed services and supports and experiencing improved results.

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink

To facilitate the success of the Promise Neighborhoods grantees and other communities interested in implementing similar cradle-to-career strategies, the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI)—a partnership among PolicyLink, HCZ, and CSSP—established a national infrastructure to support these efforts. PNI assists communities that are building a seamlessly linked cradle-to-career pipeline of education, health, and social supports to create a community of opportunity for children and their families by offering an extensive array of supports, ranging from data and infrastructure tools to engagement with peers and advice from experts.

Some types of assistance are available to a broad audience, others specifically target recipients of federal Promise Neighborhoods grants. Box I.3 lists the types of technical assistance PNI provides for federal implementation grantees. Many of these types of support are also available to Promise Neighborhoods planning grantees. Participation in PNI's community of practice provides opportunities for leaders from communities with and without federal grants to learn from one another, and webinars on key tools and strategies are available to all communities. In addition, PNI provides guidance on how to apply for federal Promise Neighborhoods grants and workshops for applicants.

Box I.3. Types of technical assistance PNI provides to Promise Neighborhoods implementation grantees

- Results-Based Accountability (RBA) training: supports leaders in taking a disciplined approach in progressing from talk to action
- In-person and online community of practice: allows leaders to learn from peers and national experts, share ideas, identify key gaps in knowledge, find and implement solutions, and build innovations
- Continuum of solutions and operations webinar series: focuses on the 15 indicators associated with Promise Neighborhoods and the essential operating competencies that enable leaders to gain the knowledge and skills to build a continuum of solutions that result in improvement in the indicators
- Promise Scorecard data dashboard: cornerstone of PNI's community of practice; used to support the implementation of RBA, systematically drive decision making with data, accelerate progressing from talk to action, and promote accountability for investment in Promise Neighborhoods
- Efforts to Outcomes™ (ETO): longitudinal data/case management system that helps organizations track efforts, results, and participants' progress. ETO automatically updates the Promise Scorecard, and easily produces reports required by the U.S. Department of Education
- Skills to Achieve Results (STAR) leadership development program: provides Promise Neighborhoods leaders with coaching, tools, and other resources to meet the adaptive challenges that accompany large-scale reform and execution
- Promise Stat: engagement between senior leaders within a Promise Neighborhood and PNI to regularly assess progress against targets and identify and encourage the changes necessary to demonstrate improvement in the 15 indicators
- HCZ's Vault of Knowledge: provides access to HCZ's operational and programmatic documents and senior executives, enabling Promise Neighborhoods leaders to shadow and receive coaching from HCZ staff
- Personalized expert coaching: national experts assist leaders in strengthening their continuums of solutions

Source: PNI.

The Promise Neighborhoods case studies

Although targeted evaluations have assessed impacts of specific HCZ components, such as the Promise Academy Charter Schools, on children's academic outcomes (Dobbie and Fryer 2011) and additional studies are underway, little systematic knowledge is available concerning the functioning of the diverse Promise Neighborhoods initiatives.² In a recent report to the House of Representatives' Committee on Education and the Workforce, the GAO (2014) recommended that a national evaluation of Promise Neighborhoods be undertaken. The Promise Neighborhoods funding announcement from ED required that applicants describe their commitment to work with a national evaluator for Promise Neighborhoods.

Thus, the policy context is ripe for a richer and deeper understanding of Promise Neighborhoods' development. To this end, PNI contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth, multimethod case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods grantees. The case studies provide foundational knowledge of cradle-to-career programs by examining the early implementation efforts of five Promise Neighborhoods grantees and providing ED, PNI,

² Throughout this report, the word "initiative" refers to a site's Promise Neighborhood effort as a whole, including the structures, partnerships, and cradle-to-career continuum of solutions they are building, and the strategies to accomplish their goals.

and the grantees with short-term formative input to strengthening cradle-to-career continuums of solutions.

In addition to documenting the complexity of the implementation of the Promise Neighborhoods cradle-to-career strategy on the ground, PNI is interested in identifying the implications for developing a national evaluation that is true to the complex systems-change goals of the investments. The expected second phase of the current project will be the development of a national evaluation design informed by the case studies.

Research questions. The Mathematica study team worked closely with PNI to refine the case study research questions. Three primary questions guided the case studies:

- How do Promise Neighborhoods build the infrastructure to support and sustain a pipeline of programs for children from birth through college and career?
- How does the resulting system work on the ground? What are the take-up rates of high quality services and schools?
- Are Promise Neighborhoods meeting their partnership and service coordination goals? What barriers and facilitators do they face? What is needed to create a positive climate for successful partnerships and achievement of Promise Neighborhoods' goals?

Selection of study sites. PNI invited the directors of five Promise Neighborhoods to participate in the case studies. To be eligible for inclusion, the sites had to: (1) hold an implementation grant in spring 2014; (2) demonstrate some implementation success (based on frequent conversations between PNI and the grantees, as well as the performance measures data); (3) represent diversity in location, service population, and approach to implementation; and (4) agree to participate in the evaluation and host a site visit in May or June 2014. The five Promise Neighborhoods included in the case studies are Berea, Kentucky; Buffalo, New York; Chula Vista, California; Los Angeles, California; and Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Although purposively selected, the case study sites represent diversity of the implementation grantees along several dimensions—including award amount, neighborhood population size, and racial/ethnic composition (Table I.1). The sites selected for the case studies include one of two rural grantees, one of three led by institutions of higher education, and the only implementation grantee serving a predominantly white population. Three were from the first implementation grant cohort, and two were from the second cohort; all but one had also received a planning grant before the implementation grant. The case study communities vary in geographic size and population, ranging from a 33-block area with 6,700 residents to a Promise Neighborhood that encompasses two separate geographical areas with a combined population of more than 97,000 residents. Most are urban areas measured in numbers of blocks, but one is located in a rural area and serves three adjacent counties covering 961 square miles. The selected grantees received \$1.5 to \$6 million for their first year of implementation, and their number of partners range from about a dozen to more than 60.

The case study findings reflect the experiences of the five sites and cannot be generalized to all of the grantees. The findings provide a flavor of the shared and unique issues each case study Promise Neighborhood has faced and the diverse contexts in which they operate.

Data sources. To develop a comprehensive picture of the grantees' Promise Neighborhoods and their implementation experiences, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from three sources: (1) documents collected from the sites and PNI, (2) telephone interviews with grantee directors, and (3) site visits. Appendix A provides a more detailed description of the case study methodology and data sources, and Appendix B contains the protocols used to guide the data collection activities.

Document collection. We collected a wide range of documents from the case study sites, including their Promise Neighborhoods grant applications, organizational charts, annual performance reports, local evaluation reports, sample partnership agreements, budgets, and descriptive documents specific to individual partners or programs. In addition, we reviewed materials available on grantees' websites and documents provided by PNI.

Telephone interviews. We conducted a 90-minute telephone interview with the director of each of the five selected Promise Neighborhoods sites to learn about the Promise Neighborhoods' organizational structure, primary programs and services, and unique features.

Site visits. Researchers spent three to four days on site at each Promise Neighborhood during spring and summer 2014. Activities during the site visits included interviews with the grantee management team, local evaluator, and other community partners; focus groups with direct service providers and families; and observations of key program activities.

Analytic approach. We used a systematic, yet flexible approach to analyzing the large quantity of data we collected. We completed an initial round of coding based on the major topic areas in our interview protocols and then updated our codebook to capture cross-cutting themes as they emerged during the coding and analysis.

Structure of the report

The goal of this report is to examine the unique aspects of the five selected Promise Neighborhoods grantees and cross-cutting themes based on their initial implementation experiences. Chapter II describes how Promise Neighborhoods build the infrastructure to support their cradle-to-career continuums of solutions, including expanding the lead agency's capacity, forming partnerships with a variety of organizations, developing shared data systems, and securing funding. Chapter III describes how the resulting system works on the ground, including the continuum of support the Promise Neighborhoods have implemented and the take-up rates of services along the continuum from cradle to career. We conclude in Chapter IV with an analysis of grantees' accomplishments, including their progress in developing the initiative and achieving their target student and community outcomes. The chapter also discusses the factors that have helped or hindered achievement of grantees' goals for their Promise Neighborhood. Appendices A and B provide additional methodological details, and Appendix C includes a profile of each site..

II. HOW DO PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN A PIPELINE OF PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN FROM CRADLE TO CAREER?

Collective impact theory notes the importance of a backbone organization and partners that engage in mutually reinforcing activities working toward a common agenda, using shared measurement systems and maintaining continuous communication (PNI 2014). Promise Neighborhoods seek to build a comprehensive pipeline of cradle-to-career services by connecting existing resources and bridging the gaps in the available supports. The federal implementation grants were awarded to lead agencies that serve as the backbone organizations of their initiatives, providing the leadership and infrastructure necessary to manage the seamless delivery of the continuum components. The complexity of Promise Neighborhoods efforts requires the combined skills, efforts, and resources of many different organizations, linked by communication structures and data systems established to support continuous improvement. At the national level, PNI serves as a backbone organization, convening stakeholders across sites, providing technical assistance (described in Box I.3, page 8) and structures that facilitate results, guiding strategy, and advancing policy.

In this chapter, we describe the ways in which the Promise Neighborhoods case study sites are developing the infrastructure necessary for a successful community-wide effort. We begin by describing the expanding capacity of the lead agencies and the partnerships they formed with other organizations to design and implement the cradle-to-career continuum of solutions. Next, we examine how sites are building and using shared data systems to facilitate accountability and continuous improvement. We then discuss staffing structures designed to promote linkages between programs and ongoing communication between partners. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the funding sources sites are bringing together to support and sustain the cradle-to-career continuum.

Expanding the capacity of the lead agency

The federal grant for each Promise Neighborhood was awarded to a lead agency responsible for serving as the backbone organization of the initiative. Although other partners can also be involved in providing leadership, the lead agency in each Promise Neighborhood naturally holds a central position. Lead agency staff deliver some direct services to children and families as well. The specific roles each lead agency plays depend in part on its background and existing areas of expertise, but all have needed to expand their capacity to pursue the Promise Neighborhood goals.

Lead agency staff assume primary responsibility for managing and providing structure to the Promise Neighborhoods. Key responsibilities include establishing communication protocols, developing shared data systems, and coordinating accountability and continuous improvement processes. A director from the lead agency oversees each Promise Neighborhood, supported by several associate directors for different administrative or content areas. The specific titles and divisions vary by site (see organizational charts in each site's profile in Appendix C), but often correspond to key service area components of the continuum. The leadership team composed of the director and associate directors serves as a key decision-making body, me

regularly (as often as weekly in some sites) to monitor implementation of the entire Promise Neighborhoods initiative.

Across sites, lead agencies also work directly with community residents along the cradle-to-career continuum. However, as discussed in the next section, partner organizations provide a broader range of direct services. In the case study sites, lead agency staff most often play outreach and case management roles and provide full-time support in schools.

In developing their initiatives, lead agencies drew on their previous experience working with communities to improve the lives of children and families and used their Promise Neighborhoods grants to expand and enhance their existing service models. Although most lead agencies had experience working with schools, some had more expertise in other content areas. For example, the lead agency in Chula Vista, South Bay Community Services, has a long history of providing a comprehensive spectrum of services—from housing assistance to child abuse prevention and intervention to after-school programs—for children and families in South San Diego County. The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, reinvented itself from an organization devoted to violence prevention (the Peace Foundation) to one dedicated to serving as the backbone organization for a place-based strategy focused on raising the community out of poverty. The lead agency for the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood, the Youth Policy Institute, has operated since 1983 and provides a range of education, training, and technology services for low-income families and communities in Los Angeles, beginning in community centers and expanding into Full-Service Community Schools. The lead agency of the Berea College Promise Neighborhood, Partners for Education at Berea College, has worked with local schools throughout Appalachia to enhance college readiness through programs offered to middle and high school students and has supported families through financial education and parent empowerment programs. The lead agency in Buffalo is a foundation established by a bank to support—and ultimately operate as a charter—the elementary school around which the Promise Neighborhoods initiative was built. Each of these agencies brought its own strengths to its Promise Neighborhood but required partners with expertise in other areas to complete the pipeline, as discussed later in this chapter.

Capacity expansions required hiring additional lead agency staff. For example, the lead agency in Buffalo hired approximately 20 new direct staff, who primarily provide oversight and coordination for the complex Promise Neighborhoods undertaking. In contrast, the lead agency in Chula Vista, which has broader historical experience and staff who provide a larger portion of the Promise Neighborhoods programming (as discussed in the next section), expanded its staff more substantially, by almost 100 people. NAZ expanded from just six staff to almost 100—including leaders, direct service providers, and administrative support staff.

Partnering with service providers covering the range of expertise needed to complete a comprehensive cradle-to-career continuum of solutions

No single organization can build a Promise Neighborhood on its own. Federal guidance for planning and implementation grants highlighted the importance of developing effective partnerships to provide solutions along the continuum. Consistent with this guidance, lead agencies have engaged a wide variety of partners in their efforts to implement a comprehensive continuum of support for children from cradle to career. Lead agencies' backgrounds affected

their reliance on partners and the types of organizations with which they needed to partner to complement their own expertise.

The number of partners participating in the Promise Neighborhoods is fluid.

Additional collaborations form to meet changing or newly identified needs while others end. At the end of the 2013–2014 school year, the number of organizations partnering in the case study sites ranged from about a dozen to more than 60.

Local school districts and individual schools are major partners in all sites, consistent with the focus of Promise Neighborhoods on developing great schools. The Berea College Promise Neighborhood includes all schools in the three county-based public school districts within its geographical boundaries—a total of 16 schools. Five schools across two districts are served by the Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood: an elementary school and the two middle schools and two high schools that the elementary feeds into. The remaining three sites partner with both district and charter schools. The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood includes two elementary schools (one serving students in prekindergarten through 8th grade, the other serving students in kindergarten through 8th grade) and a high school.³ NAZ has nine partner schools, including charter and parochial schools, as well as Minneapolis Public Schools. Eighteen schools are partners in the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood.

Partner organizations include a mix of community-based organizations, government agencies, hospitals, postsecondary institutions, foundations, and local businesses, in addition to schools. Most partners are local organizations but some are branches of national nonprofits. Government agency partners include local police and health departments, a public housing authority, and a state health and human services agency. Both small local foundations and larger national foundations are represented across the case study partnerships. In addition, sites often include partner organizations with evaluation or data systems expertise. Individuals are also key partners in Promise Neighborhoods, and foremost among them are community members.

In establishing Promise Neighborhoods partnerships, lead agencies both drew on existing relationships and reached out to new partner organizations. For example, the lead agency in Chula Vista was able to “call the usual partners to the table” to apply for the Promise Neighborhoods grant and begin building the continuum. In contrast, the lead agency for the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood spent more time during the planning process identifying the strongest offerings available from the interested local organizations. The Berea College Promise Neighborhood is located in an area with few local resources and limited regional access, so the lead agency looked outside the community for partners, recruiting one statewide and one national organization to join the Promise Neighborhoods partnership. The lead agency for Los Angeles drew the boundaries for one of the two communities comprising its Promise Neighborhood based in part on the location of its existing partnerships, to avoid having to “start from scratch” in building collaborative relationships. However, the agency had limited experience in the second community in the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood.

³ As discussed in Chapter IV, the high school was no longer included in the Promise Neighborhood in the school year after the data collection for these case studies.

The extent to which lead agencies rely on partners to provide services along the continuum—and the specific areas in which each is active—depends in part on lead agencies’ experience. For example, for Berea’s lead agency, using the Promise Neighborhoods grant as an opportunity to create a more comprehensive continuum of support to further its existing college success goals required Berea’s lead agency to forge new partnerships to expand into service areas such as early childhood and health and wellness. In Buffalo, Promise Neighborhoods partners provide the majority of direct services to children and families. In contrast, the lead agency in Chula Vista—which has broader direct service experience and more direct staff—provides a larger portion of the Promise Neighborhoods programming. As an example of how these two approaches differ, both Buffalo and Chula Vista opened new early learning centers as part of their Promise Neighborhoods continuums of solutions. Buffalo’s lead agency built a new early learning center in the neighborhood and identified a partner (Bethel Head Start⁴) with strong expertise in providing early education programs to staff and operate the new program. Chula Vista’s lead agency identified a site on the campus of the partner elementary school and staffed the preschool by hiring a preschool coordinator, developmental specialist, teachers, and others to work directly for the lead agency.

Partners also have opportunities to provide input on the development of the Promise Neighborhood. All five case study sites have regular meetings of partner organizations, across content areas. The frequency of these meetings varies from weekly to annually. In two sites, respondents reported that the meetings had occurred more frequently earlier in the evolution of the partnership, when relationships were being established and activities initially developed. One purpose of these meetings has been to provide training, such as on the effective use of data. The meetings also provide the opportunity to review aspects that are working well or need improvement. In some sites, the partners also discuss issues of coordination and strategies for creating more seamless transitions for families. Parents and other community residents also participate in some of these meetings.

Partners typically have substantial input concerning the programs and services with which they are directly involved. Service provider organizations bear major responsibility for developing, as well as implementing, the specific programs or services they provide. In addition, school leaders have input on programs and services provided by other organizations on their campuses. All five sites created work groups of partners, typically one group for each major pipeline component area, including lead agency staff and representatives of partners that provide services in that area. In most sites, each work group is led by the lead agency associate director who oversees the area. However, NAZ’s work groups (called action teams) are typically chaired by leaders of key partner organizations. Based on best practices literature and their own expertise, the members of each action team collectively develop the solution plan that, after independent peer review, serves as their blueprint for the programs and services that will be offered in their content area. The teams also brainstorm ways to coordinate their efforts and pool their resources to create an effective, seamless system.

⁴ In the 2014–2015 school year, the Community Action Organization replaced Bethel Head Start in this role.

Berea College Promise Neighborhood

The Berea College Promise Neighborhood serves the Appalachian counties of Clay, Jackson, and Owsley in Kentucky, covering 961 square miles and reaching about 6,300 children. Berea College received a planning grant in 2010 and the following year was awarded an implementation grant of \$5,993,546 for the first year. The lead agency collaborates with multiple local partners, including all schools in the three county-based school districts, to deliver services and improve lives in the community.

The Early Steps to School Success home visiting program (operated by partner Save the Children) is a central component of the Berea College Promise Neighborhood's early childhood programming, which also includes coaching for child care providers (through another partner, the Eastern Kentucky Child Care Coalition). In elementary through high school, academic specialists provide tutoring and mentoring to academically struggling students, and artist residencies and programs to support health, wellness, and safety reach a broader student population. Family engagement staff work to integrate parents into their children's academic lives.

Building shared data systems for learning, continuous improvement, and shared accountability

In addition to establishing pipelines and partnerships, Promise Neighborhoods devoted early efforts to clarifying common goals and shared measurement systems. Steps toward this included developing data systems, refining their measures of key indicators, and learning to effectively use the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework for data-driven decision making. The lead agencies also focused on promoting the value of these approaches with their staff and partners.

Shared goals and accountability are central to Promise Neighborhoods partnerships.

All Promise Neighborhoods are working to achieve the same population-level goals specified by ED in the Promise Neighborhoods grant announcement (Box I.2, page 6). Although some of the desired results might be more directly aligned with the services provided by a particular partner than others, focusing collectively on a uniform set of measures contributes to a shared culture of accountability and fosters collaboration. In addition to holding themselves accountable for results, the lead agencies also require partners to play an active role in ensuring the success of the Promise Neighborhoods endeavor. For example, three of the five sites use performance-based contracts as a mechanism to motivate partners and promote progress toward the desired outcomes. The contracts help to ensure that partners know what is expected of them and that everyone is focused on the same goals. One lead agency representative noted that having the expectations spelled out clearly can be helpful in conducting difficult conversations with partners who are not meeting their targets. In another site, partners can earn a bonus if they exceed their targets.

Promise Neighborhoods use RBA to foster continuous program improvement. Leaders review Promise Neighborhoods data to determine progress toward targeted results, and data are a regular topic of discussion during the partner group meetings described earlier in this chapter. Reviewing data encourages reflective practice, helping Promise Neighborhoods identify aspects that are and are not working well, so they can make program adjustments. If a partner or program

does not meet a target, the lead agency can use the data to initiate a conversation about possible reasons and needed alterations. For example, when the data in one site showed that a program had not met its targets for the number of parents participating in financial counseling sessions, lead agency and partner staff in that content area discussed possible causes of the low participation and collectively decided to adjust the strategy to build relationships with families and hold group workshops before asking parents to participate in individual sessions.

Data use and RBA are works in progress, due to time required to develop data systems.

In addition to promoting RBA, a central data system can facilitate interactions between partners by providing access to central information on individual cases (including for referrals, as discussed later in this chapter) and tracking aggregate results. However, for most sites, these uses of data are not yet as central to their operations as they might be, because the Promise Neighborhoods have not yet (or only recently) fully implemented new shared data systems.

Each of the case study sites acquired or developed a new data system to meet the complex needs of its Promise Neighborhood, but sites approached data systems in different ways. The two second-cohort sites, Chula Vista and Los Angeles, use Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), which PNI provides to grantees as part of its technical assistance. The other three case study sites developed their own data systems. For example, Berea hired a local contactor to design a system that could coordinate between other lead agency initiatives in addition to the Promise Neighborhood. Buffalo contracted with the same information technology vendor that operates the public school district's data system, which eased the process of accessing district data. NAZ's local evaluator explained that the Promise Neighborhood chose a system that places greater emphasis on case management functions than on research needs, although it does both.

Achieving full, shared implementation of these new central data systems across lead agencies and partner organizations is taking time. One site's data system was not yet operational at the time of the site visit (more than two years after grant award), although it was expected to be in place during the following school year (2014–2015). In other sites, staff noted that their data systems had undergone a series of revisions in their first year or two of use. In some sites, lead agency staff have let their own staff gain experience with the systems—and resolve technical issues—before rolling them out to partners. Even where this approach was not explicitly planned, lead agencies have been flexible during the early stages of development, and have allowed some partners to submit data in different ways, such as via Excel spreadsheets. Some partners were eager to use the central data systems, whereas others were either reluctant to shift from their own systems or were simply less data savvy. Lead agencies—and national technical assistance providers—are working with their partners as necessary to build capacity. In most sites, partners were at least beginning to use the data systems by the end of the 2013–2014 school year, and some had been doing so for a while.

Establishing staffing structures that connect pipeline components and facilitate communication

Promise Neighborhoods are designed to be more than just a directory of discrete programs. The goal is to build a coordinated system of mutually reinforcing activities that envelops a community. Achieving this requires an unprecedented level of cooperation between organizations to ensure that families are supported at every step of a child’s journey from birth through college or a fulfilling career. To support this coordination and provide a seamless pipeline of services for families, sites use staffing strategies such as co-location of staff and referral systems to facilitate on-the-ground connections.

One common approach to facilitating connections between Promise Neighborhoods components and partners is to co-locate staff from more than one organization. Co-location most frequently takes place in schools. In all sites, the lead agency placed full-time staff in each partner school. Many of these school-based Promise Neighborhoods staff focus on providing academic services to students attending the schools, whereas others are there to provide—or connect to—an array of other services (discussed in greater detail in Chapter III). In Los Angeles, for example, both lead agency and partner staff—such as an eligibility worker who can link families to government benefits—operate from the Promise Neighborhood office established on school grounds. Being in the same location helps the organizations that work with students and their families coordinate and better align their services. In a less intensive version of co-location, lead agency staff or partners do not have a full-time presence in the schools, but provide scheduled programs or services there, such as arts programs or after-school activities. For example, the artist-in-residence program in Berea brings artists into schools, which often lack art teachers. Locating partner services in schools is convenient for children and families who would be there anyway. Respondents noted transportation as a particular challenge to participation in the rural area served by Berea, but it was also mentioned in some of the urban sites.

Lead agency and partner staff can also be co-located in places other than schools. For example, some NAZ navigators are based full-time in key partner organizations, such as housing and workforce development agencies. In Los Angeles, a variety of partners provide services in the community resource centers; within the same building, families can access programs from financial education for adults to after-school tutoring and enrichment for children. One respondent noted that having Promise Neighborhood case managers (who work for the lead agency) and school district staff work in the same location enables case managers assisting disengaged youth to walk these youth over to the school district counselors so they can work together to devise a plan to get the youth back into school.

In addition to smoothing transitions for residents, these arrangements strengthen connections between the partners. Staff who work side by side, particularly full time every day, learn more about each other’s organizations and services and can forge interpersonal bonds that cement organizational relationships.

Co-location is not without drawbacks, however. Two principals expressed frustration with specific aspects of co-location—one because a Promise Neighborhood staff person he had trained was transferred from his school midyear, and the other because staff placed in her school lacked a background in education. Some co-located staff in two sites noted confusion about who

their boss was. However, reporting to two supervisors worked well in other sites—co-located staff in NAZ noted that it was helpful to have one supervisor with content-area expertise and another with deeper Promise Neighborhoods knowledge.

To help meet families’ needs and connect them with various components of the pipeline, sites emphasize the importance of referrals among partners and programs. Most sites designate specific staff to play key roles in the referral process, at least for family support services. Cadres of connectors in NAZ and promotoras in Chula Vista assess families’ needs and make referrals to other lead agency or partner staff (through another staff person—a referral specialist—in Chula Vista). In Berea and Los Angeles, school-based Promise Neighborhoods staff who wish to refer a child or family for a new service to meet a need that cannot be addressed at school send the information to a designated person—a family engagement specialist in Berea, or the lead case manager at a family resource center in Los Angeles—who passes the information to a partner that can provide the service.

Shared data systems are central to the referral process in some sites. In NAZ, for example, referrals are processed through the NAZ Connect database to which all partners have access. When a connector or other Promise Neighborhoods staff member enters a referral into the system, the partner agency to which it is sent confirms receipt of the referral and contacts the family. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, not all planned functionality of these data systems was in use yet as of the end of the 2013–2014 school year. For example, in Chula Vista, promotoras complete paper referral forms but were starting to use their ETO data system to enter the information from these forms and transmit it to the referral specialist. Staff in Buffalo relied on emails for referrals while their shared data system was under development but planned to make all referrals through the system beginning in the 2014–2015 school year.

Buffalo Promise Neighborhood

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood serves a one-square-mile neighborhood of Buffalo, New York, consisting of 97 city blocks and about 12,000 residents (of whom 3,000 are children and 76 percent are minorities). Buffalo received a planning grant in 2010 and the following year was awarded an implementation grant of \$1,499,500 for the first year.

Promise Neighborhood activities focus on three schools—including a charter school that the lead agency has operated since before grant application—and a new Children’s Academy early learning center. The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood relies on partners to deliver most programs and services. Another key partner is M&T Bank, which provides leadership and financial support. In the second year of the Promise Neighborhood grant, Buffalo secured funding for two additional components: (1) a Two-Generation program that provides support to the parents of children attending the Children’s Academy (and in later years, those attending other partner schools); and (2) a Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation initiative, under which the Promise Neighborhood partners with the police department and other organizations to reduce crime and improve safety in the neighborhood.

Identifying and braiding funding sources into the cradle-to-career continuum of solutions

The case study sites rely on a blend of funding sources to support their Promise Neighborhoods. The federal Promise Neighborhoods implementation grants are central, providing \$6 to \$30 million in funding over five years. In addition, as required by the federal grant, each site has acquired substantial matching funds to build their cradle-to-career continuums.

Sources of funds range from small local organizations to larger national foundations and include private entities as well as government agencies. For example, in Buffalo, a local foundation provides funding for the Promise Neighborhood’s project to rehabilitate 10 housing units near the partner school, and the national Annie E. Casey Foundation supports the Two-Generation programs for parents. NAZ uses federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funding and state funds to provide scholarships for children to attend high quality early learning centers. Some sites required Promise Neighborhood partners to provide matching resources, either monetary or in kind.

However, Promise Neighborhood leaders had mixed expectations concerning how much of the Promise Neighborhood initiative was likely to continue in the absence of federal funding. In some sites, they expressed concern that many of the activities that began under the Promise Neighborhood would not be sustainable without federal funding. For example, one respondent noted that, although the Promise Neighborhood had leveraged substantially more funding than the federal grant amount, it would have to scale back considerably without the core federal funding because organizations currently providing matching funds are not willing to double the amount. A leader in another site noted that it is challenging to sustain an initiative as comprehensive as Promise Neighborhoods without federal funding, given the lack of resources in the region. Some other sites, however, had more confidence that the initiative could continue after the federal grant ends. One noted that it is less expensive to continue something that has been established than it is to launch it. A lead agency staff person at NAZ expressed the hope that Promise Neighborhoods would provide evidence of effectiveness within the five years, and that doing so would draw funding.

Sustainability planning includes both reliance on partnerships and seeking external funding. The case study sites have begun planning for the sustainability of their initiatives beyond the grant period and reported pursuing a combination of strategies, including both identifying new funding sources to support the Promise Neighborhood and relying on partners to continue components without central funding. Although an ideal situation would be to secure ongoing funding that can be used flexibly for the Promise Neighborhoods initiative as a whole, sites are also pursuing opportunities that would support specific components.

Leaders are seeking future support from a range of sources, including the same types of entities that have provided early funds: federal, state, and local government agencies; private foundations; and individual donors. Most lead agencies have staff dedicated to raising funds for sustainability of the Promise Neighborhood efforts. Berea received approval for Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) volunteers to identify and apply for grants.

The partners providing some programs will likely be able to continue them after the federal Promise Neighborhoods grant ends. For example, Berea leaders expect that its home visiting program will be sustained because the partner that conducts the visits is a large national organization and thus will be able to identify the necessary resources. Leaders in Chula Vista expect that some activities the Promise Neighborhood initiated “will become institutionalized” in schools. Sites that required partners to provide matching resources (monetary or in-kind) from the beginning did so in the hope that they would continue to provide that support after the federal grant period.

Another strategy for continuing Promise Neighborhood activities after the grant period is for the lead agency to assist partner agencies with seeking funding. For example, Berea leaders reported assisting partner school districts in applying for grants to sustain practices begun under the Promise Neighborhood in their locations. The lead agency of the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood “shares” its development team with partner agencies to ensure that the partner submits a strong application when it identifies a funding opportunity. This practice promotes the overall success of the Promise Neighborhood effort by strengthening partnerships, in addition to facilitating funding.

Another approach for sustaining the practices encouraged by the Promise Neighborhoods is to conduct capacity-building activities, such as providing professional development, for school staff, early child care providers, or others who will continue in their positions regardless of Promise Neighborhoods funding. For example, a Promise Neighborhood representative in Buffalo reported “bombarding” the staff at a partner school with coaches, professional development for staff, and other capacity-focused supports to ensure reforms would continue even if funding ends. Leaders in Berea reported developing and expanding community councils and identifying and training teachers who will use their new skills and train others. For example, teachers could still run the Jump Start fitness program without ongoing support from the Promise Neighborhood.

Collaborative relationships built over the years of the federal grant also could continue without ongoing funding if the various partners are committed to maintaining the connections. For example, a representative of a partner organization in Buffalo noted that the communication that had been initiated by the Promise Neighborhood would be sustainable even without funding. A partner in Chula Vista—a San Diego Health and Human Services Agency staff person stationed on a school campus—noted that her agency will maintain its presence there whether or not the Promise Neighborhood is funded beyond the current grant, now that the partnership has been established.

III. HOW DOES THE RESULTING SYSTEM WORK ON THE GROUND? WHAT ARE THE TAKE-UP RATES OF HIGH QUALITY SERVICES AND SCHOOLS?

A key purpose of the infrastructure development discussed in Chapter II is to create and sustain a cradle-to-career continuum of supports to significantly improve the outcomes of children and youth in these distressed neighborhoods. Within this continuum, Promise Neighborhoods offer a wide variety of programs and services to children, their families, and communities.

We begin this chapter with a description of the systems of supports that the five case study sites are implementing, including the relative emphasis placed on different areas of the continuum in the case study sites. We then explore the extent of participation by community residents.

How does the cradle-to-career continuum of solutions work on the ground?

The Promise Neighborhoods provide services at all stages of the cradle-to-career continuum. The programs and services that Promise Neighborhoods sites are implementing fall into four broad content areas: (1) early childhood, (2) K–12 education, (3) transition to college/careers, and (4) family and community support (Table III.1). Promise Neighborhoods representatives consider all four of these content areas to be critical pieces of a comprehensive continuum of solutions, and all five case study sites planned programs and services in each of the areas. We present more detailed information on the structures and offerings of each case study site in the site profiles (Appendix C).

Early childhood offerings range from new centers to supports for existing caregivers.

The grant solicitation from ED included a competitive preference priority for applicants that proposed to enhance, expand, or coordinate comprehensive and high quality local early learning networks. Each of the five case study Promise Neighborhoods responded to this priority, but in different ways to address the specific needs of their communities. Some established new child care or preschool options, whereas others provided supports to improve existing child care services in their neighborhoods and connect residents to high quality early education programs. Early childhood was an area of particular focus in some places. For example, Chula Vista leaders particularly noted the centrality of the Early Learning Network “because early childhood is the building block for all the learning and growth that follows.” Across the case study sites, programs and services in this area include:

- ***New centers/preschools.*** Two of the case study Promise Neighborhoods opened new early childhood education centers. Buffalo constructed a new building on the main commercial street through the neighborhood and opened the Children’s Academy (operated by a partner, Bethel Head Start), serving approximately 150 children from infancy to age 5 years. Chula Vista established two new programs with different target populations. Escuelita del Futuro is a free, full-day preschool on the campus of the elementary school serving 40 English language learners ages 3 to 5 years, and Mi Escuelita is a therapeutic preschool program for young children who have experienced family violence.

Table III.1. Key components of the Promise Neighborhoods continuums of solutions

Promise Neighborhood site	Early childhood	K-12	Transition to college and careers	Family/community supports	Cross-area supports
Berea College Promise Neighborhood	Early Steps to School Success home visiting Professional development for child care providers Early childhood specialists	Academic specialists Artist residencies Health, wellness, and safety activities Curriculum enhancements (varies by school)	Postsecondary academic specialists Advanced Placement professional development	Family engagement specialists Families and Schools Together (FAST) Family health and wellness activities Recovery coaches	
Buffalo Promise Neighborhood	Children’s Academy early learning center	AmeriCorps tutors/mentors Early literacy intervention Professional development and coaching After-school/summer programs Youth Summit events	College Success Center ^a Summer Youth Internship Program Hillside Work Scholarship Connection (Youth Advocate mentors) Adolescent Vocational Exploration Program	Ready, Set, Parent! parenting classes Two-Generation financial education and parent programs Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation initiative Community Council Housing restoration	
Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood	Escuelita del Futuro preschool Newborn home visiting	Turnaround Model Tutors Academic advocates Music programs Achieve3000 literacy software Imagine Learning English software	Chula Vista College Institute Workforce development program focused on higher education	Universidad de Padres parenting workshops Career readiness and job placement Computer access and training Food pantry Mobile medical unit	Promotoras
Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood	Developmental assessments Infant massage class	School site coordinators Tutoring After-school enrichment classes Health and wellness coordinators Summer programs	College and career ambassadors Dropout reengagement	My Parent and Me parenting classes Nutrition classes Financial coaching and matched savings accounts ESL and GED classes Job search assistance Multibenefit screening	Promotores
Northside Achievement Zone	Early childhood navigators Scholarships to high quality early learning centers	Academic navigators Expanded learning Mentors Professional development	[This component is in the planning stage]	Family Academy Navigators and partners for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Career and finance • Health/ behavioral health 	Connectors

Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This table highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhoods offer.

^aMost College and Career Connections programs in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood ended with the 2013–2014 school year.

ESL = English as a Second Language; GED = General Educational Development.

- ***Scholarships to attend high quality centers.*** NAZ distributes scholarships, using funds from Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge and state funds that cover the full cost for neighborhood residents to attend existing high quality child care programs. NAZ early childhood navigators help families identify providers, assess eligibility for scholarships or other resources to defray the costs, and determine related needs, such as transportation for the child to attend. More than 100 children have received scholarships; most attend centers operated by NAZ “anchor” partners, but a few attend other centers that have earned three or four stars in the state’s quality rating system.
- ***Home visits.*** Partners in two case study sites provide home visits to families with young children. Berea partner Save the Children operates the Early Steps to School Success (ESSS) home visiting program for families of infants and toddlers, which continues until children are 3 years old. Save the Children staff visit each home twice per month to monitor the child’s developmental progress and help parents acquire the skills to successfully support their child’s growth. In addition to these visits, ESSS participants meet monthly as a group. In Chula Vista’s home visiting program, nurse practitioners from partners Scripps Hospital and Family Health Centers conduct one visit with new parents within the first six weeks of a child’s birth to conduct developmental screenings and provide information about infant development, safety, and nutrition.
- ***Early childhood educator professional development.*** Other Promise Neighborhoods partners provide professional development for child care providers in their communities. In Berea, the Eastern Kentucky Child Care Coalition provides technical assistance, including coaching based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, and supplies and materials to center-based teachers and family child care providers. In Buffalo, Read to Succeed Buffalo provides early literacy intervention with embedded coaching at home-based child care facilities and the Children’s Academy.⁵
- ***Transition to kindergarten.*** Two Promise Neighborhoods offer short-term bridge programs to facilitate movement between the first two stages of the pipeline: early childhood and elementary school/kindergarten. Chula Vista offers a two-week summer Kindercamp on the campus of its partner elementary school for children entering kindergarten. Berea holds a picnic at each partner elementary school for all incoming kindergartners and their parents. At these picnics, Promise Neighborhoods’ early childhood specialists talk about school readiness, testing, and the importance of attendance.

Supports for K–12 education provide academic and enrichment opportunities during and outside regular school hours. Education is the cornerstone of Promise Neighborhoods, and case study sites have implemented a variety of programs for students from kindergarten through high school. In all five case study sites, large portions of their budgets, staff, and partners are concentrated in this area. In each site, more lead agency staff oversee K–12 programs or work directly with school-age children than with younger children or adults. The number of partners working with students in grades K–12 is also typically larger than the number focusing on any other populations. As discussed in Chapter II, all five case study sites have partnered with

⁵ Read to Succeed Buffalo provides similar services in pre-K through 1st grade classrooms in the two elementary schools in the Promise Neighborhood.

schools in their neighborhoods to support academics. In addition to activities held on school grounds—before, during, and after school hours—Promise Neighborhoods also serve school-age children in community settings such as one-stop community resource centers (in Los Angeles) and YMCA programs.

Activities during the school day. The programs and curricula implemented within partner schools vary not only by Promise Neighborhood, but also by school within each neighborhood. Changes implemented in schools range from whole-school reforms and new curricula in core academic areas to non-core curricular enhancements and the addition of staff with various roles.

One of the five case study sites (Chula Vista) is implementing a consistent school reform strategy—the Granger Turnaround Model (GTM)—in multiple schools (the elementary school and both middle schools in the Promise Neighborhood). The GTM involves frequent assessments, with reteaching and retesting for students who score below 70 percent, and mandatory after-school and weekend sessions for students who miss homework assignments or are frequently absent. In Berea, which gives each principal a voice in how Promise Neighborhoods resources are spent at the school, all three districts have used some Promise Neighborhoods funds to purchase curricula, but different schools have selected different curricula. For example, Clay County chose a new math curriculum (and also coordinated Promise Neighborhoods activities in nonacademic areas to support math).

The most consistent strategy—implemented in all partner schools within a given site— involves locating Promise Neighborhoods staff at the schools. Some of these staff are generalists whose primary role is to connect families to the array of Promise Neighborhoods programs and partners. Chula Vista’s promotoras, the school site coordinators in Los Angeles, and the NAZ connectors fall into this category. Other school-located Promise Neighborhoods staff provide academic services, such as tutoring. For example, academic advocates are assigned to students in Chula Vista’s middle and high schools to help them prepare for college. In addition, the GTM provides additional staff to Chula Vista partner elementary and middle schools, including a data coach at each school to support teachers and tutors who work with all students in small groups. NAZ academic navigators build relationships with individual students, work with them to reach their goals, and identify school and community supports to assist them. In Berea, academic specialists placed in all Promise Neighborhood schools monitor test scores and grades and provide individual and small-group tutoring, focusing primarily on students just below the proficient level on state standardized tests. In Buffalo, the Promise Neighborhood places two Read to Succeed literacy specialists at each school to work with students and teachers in the early elementary grades, and a grant from the Service Collaborative of Western New York AmeriCorps Builds Lives through Education program provides 23 AmeriCorps volunteers across the Promise Neighborhood schools. The principals decide how they can best use the AmeriCorps staff in their schools.

In addition to core academic areas, Promise Neighborhoods continuums of solutions include in-school programs to support growth in nonacademic areas, including arts, nutrition, health, safety, character education, and youth leadership. The federal grant solicitation included a competitive preference priority for applicants that proposed to improve access to the arts and humanities. Two of the five case study sites incorporated arts programs into the school day (two others implemented art offerings outside of school, discussed below). For example, Chula Vista provides an in-school music program to all students at the elementary school; each class has two music education periods per week. Berea partners with the local arts council to provide artist residencies connected with the academic curriculum in schools. Schools choose the topics and the artists—activities range from quilting, to choir, to a play. Most residencies are for a full school day; some are longer. They might involve a single grade, an entire school, or even parents and the broader community, if a performance is involved.

Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood

The Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood serves a 33-census-block area spread across two school districts in Chula Vista, California, with more than 6,700 residents, about 70 percent of whom are Latino. Chula Vista received a planning grant in 2011 and was awarded an implementation grant in 2012 of \$4,998,609 for the first year. The lead agency partners with five schools and approximately 30 other organizations to implement Promise Neighborhood programs and services.

Promotoras play a major role in helping the Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood connect families to services, from newborn home visiting, preschool, and parenting classes, to financial literacy, workforce training, and nutritional education. Students receive educational programs based on the Granger Turnaround Model and use computer software designed to facilitate literacy development. The Promise Neighborhood starts promoting a college-bound mentality as early as 3rd grade through Chula Vista College Institute activities, including college preparation workshops, academic counseling for students and parents, tutoring, and field trips.

Out-of-school time. All five case study sites also provide activities for K–12 students outside of school time. This strategy not only extends learning opportunities beyond school hours but also provides services to children who live in the neighborhoods but do not attend Promise Neighborhoods partner schools. The types of programs offered outside of school include the following:

- ***Before and after-school programs.*** All five case study sites offer after-school activities; some are academically focused and others enrich the core curriculum by offering physical activity, art, or other types of classes. For example, community resource centers in Los Angeles offer elementary and middle school students after-school tutoring, multicultural arts programs, computer classes, and physical activities such as martial arts and dance. NAZ provides academically focused programs, including some held at schools and one specifically for residents who do not attend partner schools. Berea holds after-school programs in some partner schools but not others, depending on how the schools prefer to use the resources the Promise Neighborhood assigns to them. Activities held before school are less common, described by respondents in only one site: nine schools in Berea have physical activity programs for students before school hours.

- *Summer programs.* Summer Promise Neighborhoods offerings include short-term activities for students transitioning into specific grades and longer programs. Chula Vista’s Camp Promise is a one-week free summer camp to help prepare Castle Park Elementary students entering grades 4–6 for the upcoming school year. NAZ’s summer school collaborative involves both school-based programs and other partners. The Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood has summer camp activities—including science projects, nutrition instruction, and a gardening club—as well as summer youth employment and middle-to-high school bridge programming at school sites. Berea has a summer reading program for 5th through 9th graders, which mails eight books home to each student for the summer. As with after-school programs, principals in Berea decide whether to use Promise Neighborhoods funds for summer or transition programs (from elementary to middle school, or middle to high school).

Targeted programs primarily for high school students support transition to college/career. Successful college completion and careers are long-term goals of Promise Neighborhoods. All components of the continuums of solutions—including the early childhood and K–12 programs described above—are designed to support progress toward these and related intermediate goals. For example, the initial enrollment process for NAZ requires parents to commit to working toward the goal of college for their children. Chula Vista’s Kindercamp attempts to get parents to start thinking about college when their children prepare to enter kindergarten. In addition, Promise Neighborhoods offer services explicitly focused on college and career preparation.

Most sites begin their intensive college preparation activities as students enter high school. For example, Berea recently expanded a pilot program placing postsecondary academic specialists at each Promise Neighborhood high school to increase graduation, college enrollment, and college completion. In addition to working one-on-one with juniors and seniors to help them prepare for college or employment, these staff build relationships with colleges to facilitate students’ transitions and spend one day per week at a local community college meeting with students from the Promise Neighborhood. The University of Buffalo developed the College Success Center in the high school that was part of the Promise Neighborhood to ensure that every student completes a college application. The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood also partnered with the City of Buffalo Mayor’s Summer Youth Internship Program and the Hillside Work Scholarship Connection, which provides services such as mentoring and youth employment training and placement. In Los Angeles, college and career ambassadors at the community resource centers answer high school students’ questions about college and careers and help them fill out financial aid forms and college applications, draft cover letters and resumes, and explore their career interests and options. Workshops for parents on the college application process are also offered. Chula Vista partner Manpower provides a three-week after-school workforce development program for high school juniors and seniors, with an emphasis on higher education, as well as offering summer employment and volunteer opportunities.

Promise Neighborhoods also offer programs to introduce families of younger children to postsecondary opportunities. Chula Vista partner Barrio Logan College Institute provides comprehensive college preparation services beginning in 3rd grade to help disadvantaged students become among the first in their families to attend and succeed in college. These services

include tutoring during and after school and helping families navigate the educational system and understand the financial aid and college application process. In addition, as noted above, academic advocates are assigned to help prepare students in Chula Vista's middle and high schools for college.

Promise Neighborhoods offer a variety of family and community supports. In recognition of the influence that the environments in which children live have on their development, ED's grant notice specified that the comprehensive continuum of solutions include family and community supports. Consistent with this requirement, Promise Neighborhoods provide a wide range of supports for children's families and the broader community, commonly aimed at enhancing parenting skills, supporting adult education and career development, addressing and preventing health issues, and stabilizing family housing situations. Examples of each of these types of support include:

- ***Parenting classes.*** Classes to improve parenting skills are common Promise Neighborhoods offerings. Chula Vista's Universidad de Padres is a 12-session workshop for parents and caregivers of children from birth to age 3 years, with instruction available in English and Spanish. NAZ Family Academy includes parenting classes with different curricula for parents with children of varying ages, along with an eight-week empowerment class. The Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood offers a My Parent and Me class for parents and toddlers and infant massage classes at community resource centers. Buffalo partner Every Person Influences Children provides a Ready, Set, Parent! program that includes a one-hour newborn class in the maternity ward at local hospitals and a workshop series on parenting infants and toddlers.
- ***Adult education/career services.*** To promote families' economic stability, Promise Neighborhoods provide adult education and career supports. The Buffalo site received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to pilot a Two-Generation initiative that provides financial education, career coaching, and mentoring to parents of children enrolled in early education programs. At a partner middle school, Chula Vista partner Manpower offers a three-week workforce development program for adults that focuses on career readiness and job placement. The San Diego Futures Foundation provides technology support to help participants learn basic computer skills and complete online applications. Los Angeles offers adult English as a Second Language and General Educational Development classes, financial coaching, and employment/job search assistance at community resource centers. NAZ career and finance navigators connect families with partners that provide adult education, job training, financial coaching, and employment/career support.
- ***Health supports for adults and families.*** Programs and services related to family health vary considerably across Promise Neighborhoods sites. Berea's health and wellness services extend beyond schools into the community and include Grilling with Dads, a structured four-week program for 10 families, and family fitness events open to the community. Los Angeles offers nutrition classes, Zumba, drug awareness workshops, and a Los Angeles Unified School District psychiatric social worker to provide mental/emotional services at community resource centers. Chula Vista partner Family Health Centers of San Diego's KidCare Express Mobile Medical Unit provides comprehensive primary health care service to Castle Park children. Chula Vista also partners with Scripps Hospital on health and

nutrition, including wellness courses and events for students and parents. The San Diego Food Bank dispenses food at some Chula Vista partner locations.

- **Housing assistance.** Two of the five case study sites have specific staff or programs targeted to improve housing for community members. NAZ housing navigators and partners help families stabilize insecure housing situations, including providing financial support through a stabilization fund and a state pilot program that provides rental subsidies for homeless and highly mobile families. Buffalo partner Belmont Housing is renovating 10 houses near Promise Neighborhood schools, using funding from the John R. Oishei Foundation.
- **Community revitalization.** Respondents at two sites described activities related to community revitalization and safety. Under the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation grant initiative, Buffalo partners with the police department and other organizations to reduce crime and improve safety in the neighborhood. Pursuing similar goals, Chula Vista partnered with San Diego Walks on the Ojos en la Calle (Eyes on the Street) program. To physically improve its neighborhood, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood has built playgrounds and community gardens. Likewise, Chula Vista promotoras and families joined KaBOOM (a nonprofit that encourages active play for children) to design a dream playground for a local park, constructed by more than 200 volunteers.

In addition to these and less common types of supports and services for families and adults, Promise Neighborhoods also engage parents and the community by involving them in governing and planning the initiatives.

Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood

The Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood serves two separate communities—Pacoima and Hollywood—in Los Angeles, California, with a combined population of almost 98,000 people. The lead agency received a planning grant in 2010 and was awarded an implementation grant in 2012 of \$6 million for the first year. Promise Neighborhood partners include 18 neighborhood schools (including district and charter schools) and more than 60 other organizations.

The Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood offers 65 programs that provide support from before birth through college and careers, and also focuses on empowering parents and families. In the early childhood area, the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood provides parenting classes and is developing additional offerings. Services for older children vary across school and community center sites, but consistently emphasize cultural arts and academic empowerment. Adults in the community can take advantage of services including GED, ESL, and financial literacy classes.

What are the take-up rates of high quality services and schools?

Promise Neighborhoods cannot achieve their goals without the active participation of community residents. The effectiveness of programs and services depends on the extent to which children and their families receive them. As noted in Table I.1, the resident population of the case study Promise Neighborhoods ranges from fewer than 7,000 to more than 97,000. Within each site, the number of individuals targeted for, and participating in, different activities varies.

Virtually all students who attend partner schools are touched by Promise Neighborhoods services to some extent—whether through a new curriculum, fine arts

programming, or other school-wide reform. Smaller numbers participate in more intensive activities. For example, of the more than 6,000 students attending Berea College Promise Neighborhood schools, more than 5,000 participated in arts and humanities programs in 2013, but a much smaller number received individual tutoring from an academic specialist—less than one-quarter of the students in one elementary school, for example. A staff member at one middle school in Chula Vista reported that all 850 students enrolled at the school are involved in Promise Neighborhoods activities in some way due to the school-wide turnaround model; 400 receive services from academic advocates; and almost 200 participate in the after-school program.

Programs for younger children and adults tend to serve smaller numbers of participants. For example, in the 2013–2014 school year, the Children’s Academy early learning center in Buffalo served 80 children ages 3 and 4 years old, and the Escuelita del Futuro preschool in Chula Vista served 40 children ages 3 to 5. NAZ has provided scholarships for more than 100 children to attend early learning programs. For adults, family fitness programs have reportedly attracted about 500 adults in the largest of Berea’s three counties, but fewer than 20 adults attend parent empowerment programs and the Grilling with Dads activity serves 10 families. In the first year of the financial education programs in Buffalo, approximately 45 parents met with the counselor and 30 attended group sessions. In Chula Vista’s first year, 40 families attended its parenting program and 17 parents participated in career readiness and job placement.

Differences in take-up rates across sites and activities are driven by a combination of program capacity and participant interest. Some programs are full, whereas others are below capacity. For example, interest in programs for the youngest children exceed the number of slots available in the Promise Neighborhood case study sites. The early learning center and programs in Buffalo and Chula Vista are fully enrolled, with waiting lists, and NAZ expects to exhaust the funds available for scholarships. Services offered in schools are often designed to reach all students in a specific population—such as those in a certain grade or whose academic performance is at a particular level, or even all students enrolled in a partner school—and full participation is automatic for activities that are part of the regular school day.

In contrast, some other Promise Neighborhoods activities are undersubscribed. For example, staff in Berea noted that transportation limits students’ participation in programs that do not take place on campus during—or immediately before or after—school hours. Across sites, programs for adults are most often below capacity. Respondents reported several reasons for low participation. Some cited limited awareness of the available activities, despite Promise Neighborhoods’ outreach efforts; residents’ high mobility rates in some sites contribute to this challenge. Other reported obstacles to participation, particularly by adults, include conflicting time commitments, competing priorities, and distrust among community residents. In Chula Vista and Los Angeles, for example, many residents are undocumented immigrants and are concerned that they might not be eligible to participate—or, worse, that they could be reported. Promise Neighborhoods strive to address the awareness and trust issues through various outreach and relationship-building efforts. To mitigate other challenges, Promise Neighborhoods provide supports such as childcare, food, and sometimes even transportation for those attending adult programs.

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IV. ARE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS MEETING THEIR GOALS? WHAT BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS DO THEY FACE?

The Promise Neighborhoods cradle-to-career strategy seeks to offset the effects of growing up in poverty and improve the educational and career outcomes of youth from some of the most distressed communities in the nation. The case study sites have taken the first steps toward achieving these ambitious aims. In doing so, they have encountered challenges and learned lessons about the factors that facilitate progress in developing effective partnerships and pipelines and working toward target outcomes.

In this chapter, we highlight the early accomplishments of the case study sites, beginning with progress in building the structural supports—such as organizational capacity, partnerships, and use of data—necessary for improving the lives of Promise Neighborhoods residents, followed by an examination of evidence of progress toward student outcomes. Then, we summarize key challenges the case study sites faced in establishing their initiatives. Finally, we discuss factors that facilitate progress toward the Promise Neighborhoods’ interim and long-term goals.

Are Promise Neighborhoods meeting their partnership and service coordination goals? Are they making progress turning the trend line in the right direction on one or more of the 15 indicators?

The first cohort of implementation grants were awarded in late 2011, and grantees received their funding in 2012. By the time of the case study data collection, these sites—including three of the five in the case studies—had been operating for approximately two school years. The second cohort grantees were just completing their first school year of implementation. Although the infrastructure for achieving the population-wide changes targeted by the Promise Neighborhoods was being developed and services were being offered and received by children and families as of summer 2014, overall, respondents noted that achieving the targeted outcomes would take a considerable amount of time. The case studies provide evidence of progress in laying the groundwork for realizing longer-term goals.

Structural achievements include developing partnerships and programs to support children along the cradle-to-career continuum of solutions. Achieving the ambitious outcomes that the Promise Neighborhoods target requires a robust support system for children and their families. The five case study sites have developed structural supports in terms of organizational capacity, collaborative partnerships, programs and services, and use of data.

The lead agencies awarded Promise Neighborhoods implementation grants have all grown in size and complexity to support the cradle-to-career continuum. Each has expanded to provide the management capacity and structures necessary to oversee major programmatic components, coordinate partners, and supervise frontline service providers. The number of additional staff ranged from 20 to almost 100, depending on the scale of the Promise Neighborhoods effort and the extent of its reliance on partners or lead agency staff to provide direct services. Some lead agencies had only a handful of staff before applying for the Promise Neighborhoods grant. For example, NAZ expanded from six staff members, and therefore needed to establish employee policies and internal administrative structures at the same time it

was developing the pipeline of services. Across sites, lead agencies extended their direct service offerings into new locations or content areas.

The five case study sites have established networks of partners collaborating in new and different ways. Promise Neighborhoods have pulled together a wide variety of partner organizations from across sectors to actively engage in building the initiatives. During the initial planning stages, large numbers of potential partner organizations—including schools, community-based organizations, foundations, and government agencies—came together to design these complex efforts. These early conversations not only helped to define the Promise Neighborhoods initiative in terms of goals and strategies, but helped leaders of different organizations get to know one another and build trust based on their commitment to the common agenda.

Since implementation began, lead agencies and partners have continued to work together to assess how the initiatives are progressing, identify areas for improvement, and develop plans to address them. Promise Neighborhoods have also identified strategies—such as training and co-locating staff—to help ensure that these collaborations occur at all levels, including among the staff providing direct services to children and families. These on-the-ground linkages are necessary to ensure seamless connections between programs and transitions for families.

These partners have built coordinated systems of mutually reinforcing activities in Promise Neighborhoods. Even in the first year of their grant, lead agencies and partners put supports in place along a cradle-to-career continuum designed to improve the outcomes of neighborhood residents. Promise Neighborhoods offer a wide variety of programs and services to children, their families, and communities. Although the specific activities are evolving as staff learn from their early experiences and sites acknowledge that some sections of their pipeline are more robust than others, having an array of supports in place within the first school year after receiving the implementation grant is an accomplishment.

Some components are still in development, however. For example, Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood staff identified early childhood as an area they plan to expand. The lead agency for that site had more experience working with students and their families than with young children and spent the first year developing relationships with partners with early childhood expertise. NAZ action teams for college success, behavioral health, and anchor schools are still working to develop solution plans—blueprints that guide the services provided—in those areas. This does not necessarily reflect NAZ’s priorities; rather, key partners in those areas are taking longer to solidify their collaborations and reach consensus on specific strategies to implement. Although some cracks in the pipeline will be filled as Promise Neighborhoods initiatives evolve, new gaps could emerge over time, requiring reconceptualization or reworking of plans.

Awareness of and participation in the Promise Neighborhoods activities are growing. Of the two case study sites that report enrollment across the Promise Neighborhoods initiative as a whole, NAZ had enrolled 642 families with 1,602 children as of summer 2014—more than halfway to its target of 1,000 households and 2,500 children. Los Angeles reported that more than 17,000 individuals, including 11,000 children, received some type of service from the Promise Neighborhood during its first year and a half of operation, in line with its target of reaching 45 percent of the approximately 23,000 residents younger than age 18 in the first year

and 50 percent in the second year. Other sites track participation for specific activities. Although participation has been a challenge for some programs, others are meeting their enrollment goals. For example, the early learning center established in Buffalo and the preschool in Chula Vista are fully enrolled, with waiting lists.

All five case study sites acquired or developed new data systems for their Promise Neighborhoods and established processes to discuss data regularly. Like the Promise Neighborhoods initiatives themselves, these data systems are complex. They were typically designed for both lead agency and partner staff to use and serve two key functions: (1) tracking participation and outcomes for program improvement and reporting, and (2) sharing information about individuals or families among partner agencies, including for referrals.

The process of developing these new data systems, refining their operation, and implementing them fully among Promise Neighborhoods staff and partners was time consuming. By the time of the case study site visits at the end of the 2013–2014 school year, staff in four of the sites had been using new data systems for at least a year (the fifth site’s data system was expected to be operational in the 2014–2015 school year); partners in most sites were beginning to use the data systems, and some had been doing so for a while.

Staff had generally positive comments about the comprehensiveness of their data systems. For example, respondents in Los Angeles and NAZ joked that if a piece of information is not in the system, it doesn’t exist. They use their systems to track overall enrollment and assess participation in specific activities and also rely on them when they need information about a particular family.

Promise Neighborhoods staff meet regularly to discuss data, and these discussions often involve partners. For example, partners in Chula Vista reported that they discuss the Promise Neighborhoods performance measures during monthly advisory committee meetings. One of these partners noted that, in addition to sharing collective progress at these meetings, frontline staff use student-level data for providing students with weekly remediation. Respondents in another site reported that they have not discussed data with partners yet, but they planned to do so the following school year by convening work groups to discuss particular outcomes and age groups, including how Promise Neighborhoods services align with particular indicators and outcomes.

Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ)

NAZ serves a contiguous 13-by-18-block area in North Minneapolis, Minnesota, with a population of almost 15,000 people. Although NAZ did not receive a Promise Neighborhoods planning grant, it successfully applied for an implementation grant in 2011 and was awarded \$5,664,925 for the first year. NAZ partners with nine schools (including district, charter, and parochial schools) and approximately 30 other “anchor” partner organizations.

NAZ connectors build relationships with families, assist them in developing achievement plans, and identify resources to address their needs. In the early childhood area, NAZ provides scholarships for children to attend high quality early learning centers. For school-age children, NAZ partners provide expanded learning opportunities after school and during the summer. College solutions are still in the planning stage. NAZ’s Family Academy offers classes on parenting and empowerment training for parents. Additional services are offered in the areas of housing, career and finance, and health and behavioral health to support academic achievement by bolstering enrolled families’ stability.

Promise Neighborhoods report some progress toward student results. The structural progress discussed above provides a foundation for achieving the ultimate goals of Promise Neighborhoods: improving the outcomes of community residents. Targeted outcomes include both the 10 results and 15 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) indicators ED specified and additional improvement objectives that individual case study sites pursued.

GPRA indicators. Establishing clearly defined metrics that can be measured consistently over time is an important step in laying the groundwork for assessing outcomes. Although the Promise Neighborhoods grant announcement/solicitation notice specified the 15 GPRA indicators that would be used to assess the performance of Promise Neighborhoods efforts (Box I.2, page 6), the specific measures of each indicator evolved in response to technical assistance provided during the early years of the grants. By the end of the 2013–2014 school year, the three sites in the first cohort were able to report baseline data for most of the GPRA indicators.⁶ (The sites in the second cohort reported data for fewer indicators than sites that began implementation a year earlier.) For some indicators, these sites had data for more than one year and thus were able to examine changes over time.⁷ In summer 2014, the most recent data available for some measures were for the 2012–2013 school year; in such cases, sites often noted that the 2013–2014 data would be available soon, which would increase both the number of indicators with baselines and the number with data for multiple points in time.

Focusing on the indicators for which data were available for multiple years, all sites reported upward trends in some measures and downward trends in others (Table IV.1).⁸ Across sites and measures, there were more upward than downward trends. The most consistent positive trends reported were in GPRA indicators related to early child development. For example, the trends in GPRA 2 (percentage of 3-year-olds and kindergartners who demonstrate age-appropriate functioning at the beginning of the program or school year) and GPRA 3 (percentage of children from birth to kindergarten entry participating in center-based or formal home-based early learning settings or programs) were upward in all sites that could report data on those indicators for more than one year. GPRA 12 (the percentage of children from birth to kindergarten entry whose parents or family members report that they read to their child three or more times per week) was also upward for both sites reporting more than one data point.

Sites highlighted some changes as likely resulting, at least in part, from the efforts of the Promise Neighborhoods. For example, after construction of the Children’s Academy in 2013, Buffalo noted improvements in GPRA indicators 2 and 3. The percentage of children age 5 and younger who attended an early learning setting increased from 62 percent in 2013 to 73 percent in 2014. The percentage of 3-year-olds and kindergartners who exhibited age-appropriate

⁶ The GPRA indicators for which the sites most commonly lacked data were GPRA 7 (college completion) and GPRA 14 (parents talking with their children about college and careers).

⁷ One of the second-cohort sites was unable to provide multiple years of data for any indicator, due to a combination of factors, including having changed data collection instruments at the advice technical assistance providers and not yet having completed a data-sharing agreement with the school district.

⁸ These changes over time cannot be considered definitive indications of the impact of the Promise Neighborhoods efforts, because factors unrelated to their efforts also influence these measures.

Table IV.1. Direction of trends on Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) indicators reported in 2014 annual performance reports, by site

	Berea	Buffalo	Chula Vista	Los Angeles	Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ)
GPRA 1: Percentage of children from birth to kindergarten entry who have a place where they usually go, other than an emergency room, when they are sick or in need of advice about their health	NA	-	-	NA	NA
GPRA 2: Percentage of 3-year-olds and children in kindergarten who demonstrate at the beginning of the program or school year age-appropriate functioning across multiple domains of early learning	+	+	NA	NA	+
GPRA 3: Percentage of children from birth to kindergarten entry participating in center-based or formal home-based early learning settings or programs	+	+	+	NA	NA
GPRA 4: Percentage of students at or above grade level according to state mathematics and reading or language arts assessments	+/- ^a	+/- ^a	NA	NA	+/- ^a
GPRA 5: Attendance rate of students in 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grade	NA	+	NA	NA	+
GPRA 6: Graduation rate	+	+	NA	NA	0
GPRA 7: Percentage of Promise Neighborhood students who graduate with a regular high school diploma and obtain postsecondary degrees, vocational certificates, or other industry-recognized certifications or credentials without the need for remediation	NA	0/NA ^a	NA	NA	+/-/NA ^a
GPRA 8: Percentage of children who participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily	-	+	NA	NA	NA
GPRA 9: Percentage of children who consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily	+	-	NA	NA	NA
GPRA 10: Percentage of students who feel safe at school and traveling to and from school	+/-/NA ^a	+	NA	NA	NA
GPRA 11: Student mobility rate	+	+	NA	NA	-
GPRA 12: For children from birth to kindergarten entry, the percentage of parents or family members who report that they read to their child three or more times per week	NA	+	+	NA	NA
GPRA 13: For children in kindergarten through 8th grade, the percentage of parents or family members who report encouraging their child to read books outside of school	NA	-	NA	NA	NA

	Berea	Buffalo	Chula Vista	Los Angeles	Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ)
GPRA 14: For children in 9th through 12th grade, the percentage of parents or family members who report talking with their child about the importance of college and career	NA	0/NA ^a	-/NA ^a	NA	NA
GPRA 15: Percentage of students who have school and home access to broadband Internet and a connected computing device	NA	NA	-	NA	NA

Source: 2014 annual performance reports provided by the sites.

^aSites reported multiple measures for some indicators. For example, GPRA 4 is reported separately by grade and subject. If an aggregate measure was available, it was used in the table. When no aggregate measure was available and different results were reported for different measures within the indicator, more than one symbol appears in that cell.

+ = upward trend; - = downward trend; 0 = no change; NA = not available (because data for multiple years were not reported).

functioning—as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—increased from 90 to 95 percent in the same period. Berea also reported an increase in school readiness (from 16 percent in 2013 to 38 percent in 2014) based on Kentucky’s kindergarten readiness measure, the Brigance K and 1 Screen III. Promise Neighborhoods staff credited a combination of their ESSS home visiting program, professional development provided to early childhood educators, and the addition of early childhood specialists for the increase in kindergarten readiness.

Other outcomes. Beyond the GPRA indicators, the case study sites reported progress using other outcome measures overall or for subpopulations (such as participants in a particular Promise Neighborhood program). For example, NAZ compared the scores of NAZ-enrolled kindergartners on the Beginning Kindergarten Assessment administered in fall 2013 to those of the broader kindergarten population and found that 59 percent of those enrolled in NAZ were ready for kindergarten, compared to 35 percent of all kindergartners in the geographical area. Respondents in both Berea and NAZ pointed to successes of summer programs. For example, NAZ reported that 55 percent of elementary grade students in expanded learning programs achieved at least one year of growth in reading in four months of participation in after-school and summer expanded learning. On average, students’ reading level improved 0.8 of a year in four months. Additional site-specific areas of progress toward outcomes are presented in the site profiles (Appendix C).

Continued assessment of progress is needed. Promise Neighborhoods are in the early implementation stage of a long-term endeavor to improve the educational outcomes of the communities they serve. The efforts that the case study sites have put into establishing baselines and setting targets for improvements along the performance indicators should form a solid groundwork for systematically tracking outcomes over time. The sites’ longitudinal data collection and assessment process will need to continue for decades to capture the college outcomes (GPRA indicator 7, for example) of the children currently involved in the early childhood components of the Promise Neighborhoods pipelines.

In addition to local evaluation efforts, future research could include a national evaluation that examines implementation experiences and outcomes across the 12 implementation grantees. GAO (2014) recommended a national evaluation of Promise Neighborhoods, and PNI and Mathematica are exploring options for designing such an evaluation. However, the complexity of the effort makes it challenging to study, and any impact evaluation will need to take that into account.

What barriers do Promise Neighborhoods face?

Although Promise Neighborhoods have experienced early successes in some areas, sites have also encountered numerous challenges in their early implementation efforts. Identifying and reflecting on these barriers provides an opportunity for the case study sites to continue to refine their systems and processes and for others attempting to build effective Promise Neighborhoods to learn from their experiences. Based on their experiences thus far, sites have identified the following challenges to developing effective partnerships and services and working toward target outcomes:

Lack of experience building a cradle-to-career continuum of solutions. The organizations involved in the Promise Neighborhoods case studies all have experience serving their communities and working with partners, but efforts of this scale and complexity require

new approaches. Even in sites where the lead agencies had the broadest experience in the past, developing the infrastructure and supports necessary for a comprehensive Promise Neighborhoods initiative can be challenging. In a short time, the sites built partnerships across sectors, implemented a wide array of programs and services, developed and rolled out new data systems, and attempted to establish a culture of shared accountability. Respondents in two sites used the analogy of designing an airplane while flying it. One cautioned that creating infrastructure, partnerships, and programming simultaneously led to misunderstandings and lack of clarity. Putting all the pieces in place, with the connections necessary to facilitate seamless transitions, takes time.

Promise Neighborhoods involve collaboration between many different organizations, and building relationships among the various partners can be a slow process. For example, a representative of one lead agency reported that much of its progress in the early childhood area during the first year was in learning the landscape and forging new relationships with potential partners—a key step before developing services in that area. A staff person at another site reported seeing in the second year of implementation a significant shift among some partners from philosophical agreement and commitment to a fuller integration of strategy and resources. Additional effort can be required to fully integrate new partners into ongoing initiatives. For example, one partner, whose organization had been involved in a Promise Neighborhood from the planning stages, suggested that partners who joined more recently might feel less ownership of the strategies than those who developed them.

Even when leaders at different partner organizations are fully enmeshed in a Promise Neighborhood initiative, it can take additional time and deliberate effort for frontline service provider staff to become familiar with all the partners and programs. Although lead agency staff tend to be familiar with the range of Promise Neighborhoods offerings in all five case study sites and all partners know the lead agency, some frontline partner staff were less aware of one another's roles and the various components of the cradle-to-career continuum of solutions. For example, during a case study focus group, one frontline staff person from a partner organization noted that she sees a staff member from another partner organization at her center frequently, but she did not know what he does. Such lack of awareness can hamper effective referrals and limit the extent to which partners learn from each other. Becoming familiar with all the partners in the Promise Neighborhood might be most challenging for sites with large numbers of partners. A lead agency frontline staff person in another site noted that the most challenging aspect of the Promise Neighborhood collaborative is the vast number of partners.

Developing the shared data systems needed to track Promise Neighborhoods participants and outcomes also takes time. In addition to the initial systems development phase, staff reported experiencing a learning period during which the systems were frequently revised. Even after lead agency staff began to use the systems, partner staff often lagged behind. Although some were eager to use the central data systems, others either were reluctant to shift from their own systems or were simply less data savvy. A partner in one site noted that, although staff at her organization use the Promise Neighborhood's central data system, they still also use their own spreadsheets as a backup. This duplication of effort might end after they learn to trust the new system, but she still considers it a work in progress. Another issue a lead agency representative in one site mentioned is that those new to using data can have emotional reactions to seeing levels of low performance in a particular area for the first time.

Varying levels of commitment and flexibility among stakeholders. Each partner organization comes to a Promise Neighborhood with its own expertise, mission, policies, and culture. Although all are drawn by the Promise Neighborhoods goals and commit to working toward the same results, the depth of commitment to the initiative as a whole can vary. In the case study sites, challenges in this area were most often reported among schools.

To successfully improve educational outcomes, lead agencies and other partners must establish effective relationships with their partner schools. However, school districts often have policies and structures that are more unyielding than those of other partners. For example, some schools require an administrator to be on campus during all Promise Neighborhoods activities, and custodial services need to be arranged—not insurmountable obstacles, but issues that required additional effort to negotiate logistics with school administrators.

During the first year of implementation, the lead agencies in two sites encountered resistance from principals at some schools. In both cases, although the district superintendents had signed on during the planning stage and were enthusiastic about involvement in the Promise Neighborhoods, support for the initiative had not permeated down to the principals. Elsewhere, a lead agency respondent noted the importance of support from the district level as well as the school level, particularly in case of principal turnover.

Staff and partner turnover. As these complex efforts evolve, there can be changes in partners or in staff within partners. Turnover at either the organizational or the individual level can hamper effective collaboration as new relationships are built and staff are oriented to the Promise Neighborhoods. Turnover of organizations, regardless of cause, can also result in gaps in services.

Incorporating new partners can complicate efficient implementation. Case study sites have faced the need to integrate new partner organizations—or new staff of existing partners—into an ongoing initiative, with the same level of ownership that the original partners feel for the Promise Neighborhood. For example, a partner in one site noted that, of seven partner organizations in her work group, she is the only person who has been on the team since the beginning, due to a combination of changes in organizations and staff. A partner at another site mentioned that the Promise Neighborhoods liaison from another partner—with whom they had established a great relationship—had left that position and the replacement was getting up to speed.

Adapting to the loss of key partners can be a greater challenge. Some organizations that participated in initial planning efforts did not remain involved through implementation. In other cases, lead agencies had to hold difficult conversations with partners that were not living up to expectations. For example, one site ended a relationship with one of several after-school provider partners due to issues with program quality. The remaining partners were able to absorb the students from that program, so there was no major disruption in service availability. Another site, however, expects its only high school partner to close. This is perhaps the most notable loss of a partner across the case study sites and will require a more serious reassessment of the related pieces of the service continuum. Shortly before the Buffalo site visit, the school district announced a decision to close the high school that is part of the Promise Neighborhood. The Promise Neighborhood ended its partnership with that school at the end of the school year. Rather than choose a new high school to partner with, the Promise Neighborhood had tentatively

identified an alternative pathway—encouraging students completing 8th grade at its other partner schools to continue their education in private or public “criteria” magnet schools with proven track records of preparing high school students for college—and was beginning to plan additional supports. It was not yet clear what related changes would be made to Promise Neighborhoods programs that had taken place in the high school, such as those in the college/career area.

Unrealistic expectations. Some respondents described defining and communicating what the Promise Neighborhood and its staff can and cannot do as a challenge. Unrealistic expectations about how quickly the initiative could achieve target impacts are one aspect of this challenge.

Because Promise Neighborhoods seek to provide so many different types of programs and services, some stakeholders might believe that the initiative should meet all needs of the populations in their neighborhoods. However, given limited resources, this perception is not realistic. In some sites it has led to mistaken expectations among partners and community residents or feelings among some frontline staff of being overburdened. A service provider representing the lead agency in Los Angeles said it is important to be specific when first telling the community about the Promise Neighborhood plans, to avoid miscommunication or overpromising. Respondents in two other sites described having to correct partners’ misperceptions of what the Promise Neighborhood could fund in their locations or do for their clients. Some staff feel “stretched thin”; direct service providers can feel responsible for finding a solution for every problem that a family brings to their attention and frustrated when they cannot. One lead agency staff person in Los Angeles noted the need to balance quantity with quality of service.

Expectations concerning the time frame for impacts can also be challenging. As noted in Chapter I, the HCZ expects that full implementation of a cradle-to-career pipeline and achievement of major outcomes will take at least 10 years. It will take twice as long for the first children born in a new Promise Neighborhood to make their way through the full pipeline and complete college. However, some stakeholders—including funders—are less patient. The federal grants provide funding for five years, which might be adequate to show early progress (such as that discussed earlier in this chapter) in some areas, but could be misinterpreted as indicating that sites should achieve even their long-term goals within that time frame.

What factors facilitate Promise Neighborhoods’ progress? What is needed to create a positive climate for successful partnerships and achievement of Promise Neighborhoods’ goals?

Despite the challenges inherent in such an ambitious undertaking, sites have also learned valuable lessons about factors that facilitate the development of Promise Neighborhoods. Based on their experiences thus far, sites have identified the following factors, some of which might help address the challenges discussed in the previous section:

A robust results framework with shared accountability. Promise Neighborhoods are all working to achieve the same goals specified in the federal grant announcement, with locally defined targets and measurement for each indicator. Focusing collectively on a uniform set of measures contributes to a shared culture of accountability among stakeholders, in which partner

organizations as well as the lead agencies play active roles in ensuring the success of the Promise Neighborhoods effort.

Rigorous use of data supports continuous improvement and shared accountability. Data are central to the Promise Neighborhoods efforts. As discussed earlier, all sites are moving toward use of shared data systems by lead agency and partner staff. Partners are involved in both collecting and analyzing data, which is a regular topic of discussion during partnership meetings. Reviewing data is necessary to assess progress toward targeted outcomes. It also encourages reflective practice and fosters continuous program improvement by helping sites identify which elements of the Promise Neighborhoods are working well and which are not, so they can modify specific processes or pipeline components. Performance-based contracts in some sites ensure that partners know what is expected of them and motivate partners to make progress toward Promise Neighborhoods goals.

Training can facilitate effective use of data. Leaders from the case study sites had all received—or were receiving at the time of the site visits—training on Results-Based Accountability (RBA) through the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Across sites, respondents noted that the RBA framework helped them think about the measures they are using for each GPRA indicator and reset their annual targets based on baseline values of the refined measure and reasonable expectations for improvement. Respondents in four of the five case study sites brought the concepts and tools back to other lead agency staff and partners (the lead agency for the remaining site had experience with RBA before the training). One site invited early childhood partners to a meeting led by Urban Institute technical assistance providers to discuss measuring GPRA indicators 1 through 3.

Strong interpersonal and institutional relationships. Given the centrality of collaboration to the Promise Neighborhoods efforts, it is not surprising that the staff at the lead agency and partner organizations and their relationships with one another were among the most commonly reported facilitators. A leader in Buffalo cited “good people” who are committed to the work as critical to success. Respondents from three sites noted the importance of having staff from the community. Others highlighted flexibility as key characteristics of staff. A manager at one lead agency noted an emphasis on staff development and team building.

Developing and maintaining a seamless pipeline of quality services requires strong relationships among a set of partners with a broad range of expertise. The federal Promise Neighborhoods grant process and planning grants helped to catalyze these collaborations, but ongoing communication at all levels—among leaders, frontline staff, and community members—is necessary to sustain them. Several respondents across sites noted the particular importance of good relationships with administrators at partner schools. One respondent commented that, to facilitate these relationships, it is important to acknowledge the strengths and expertise of each partner.

Creating the on-the-ground linkages necessary to ensure seamless connections between programs and transitions for families requires collaboration among different types of staff than those who participate in designing the initiatives. As described in Chapter II, co-location of staff from different partner organizations is one strategy sites have used to facilitate awareness and cooperation among the staff who provide services to families. However, co-location might not be sufficient for all frontline staff to learn about one another’s roles. Focus group participants

offered other strategies to increase their awareness, including making formal introductions of staff working in the same location and inviting more frontline staff to attend Promise Neighborhoods partner meetings.

Relationships with the community are equally important. Community residents are key partners in Promise Neighborhoods collaborations. They can shape the Promise Neighborhoods initiatives by providing input—informally, in response to surveys, or through serving on leadership bodies—on community needs and potential strategies to address them. Some of the partnership-wide meetings discussed in Chapter II include parents and other community residents. For example, two parent ambassadors represent parents on Chula Vista’s implementation advisory committee, and the collaborative meetings in Los Angeles are open to families. NAZ has a separate parent advisory committee consisting of a dozen NAZ-enrolled families.

All case study sites undertake outreach and engagement efforts to encourage participation in Promise Neighborhoods activities, and staff noted the importance of being open to the input of community residents in designing programs and services. For example, the monthly PAZ Café meetings, which are now the linchpin of Buffalo’s Two-Generation program, began at the suggestion of parents who participated in the first financial education workshop series. In addition to guiding content, community input can also be helpful in identifying the best times and locations to accommodate participants’ schedules. For example, Promise Neighborhood staff in Berea reported substantial increases in participation in a fitness program after staff surveyed students and implemented their suggestions. Besides the practical fact that people are more likely to attend and benefit from programs designed to meet their needs, listening to residents also reinforces that they are partners in the Promise Neighborhoods efforts. Respondents in three sites emphasized the value of hiring local staff and partnering with organizations from within the community to help build relationships with residents.

Flexible, patient, and sustainable capital. One implication of some of the challenges discussed earlier in this chapter is the importance of Promise Neighborhoods and their supporters remaining flexible to address such changes as they arise. Providing funding streams that target a Promise Neighborhoods initiative as a whole, such as the federal grants, support this flexibility by enabling lead agencies to adapt to meet changing needs or to respond to lessons learned and refocus efforts in a more productive direction, rather than tying them to a specific program or partner organization that might not be working as well as expected.

The five-year time line of the federal implementation grants provided a foundation for sites to establish their Promise Neighborhoods initiatives—in addition to helping recipients leverage funding from other sources through matching fund requirements. However, achieving population-level results requires a long-term commitment to support the continued efforts of the Promise Neighborhoods. Funders that recognize this could prove the most reliable for sustaining these initiatives.

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APPENDIX A
METHODOLOGY

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The goal of this study was to gather in-depth information about the five selected Promise Neighborhoods including organizational structure, the components of the pipelines, and the lessons learned during initial implementation efforts. This report summarizes the information we learned about each Promise Neighborhood in site profiles (see Appendix C) and examines cross-cutting themes to provide Promise Neighborhoods grantees and stakeholders with a picture of the early implementation challenges and successes that may guide future efforts. This appendix provides additional detail on our data collection and analysis.

Data collection

For a comprehensive picture of the five Promise Neighborhoods and their implementation experiences, we gathered and analyzed data from three sources: (1) grantee documents, (2) telephone interviews with Promise Neighborhoods directors, and (3) site visits. These activities were conducted sequentially, so that the information gleaned from one activity could be used to inform the next step.

Documents. The first step in our data collection involved requesting and reviewing background documents, to learn about the grantees' contexts, goals, approaches, and key milestones. We collected a wide range of documents, including Promise Neighborhoods grant applications, current organizational charts, theory of change and/or logic models, partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding, budgets, information on the development and use of management information and outcome tracking systems, local evaluation plans, Annual Performance Reports, and Promise Scorecard documents. In addition to collecting documents from Promise Neighborhoods staff, we reviewed materials available on grantees' websites and obtained the grant applications from the U.S. Department of Education's website. We used information obtained from these documents to plan the site visits and develop interview protocols (see Appendix B for the protocols used to guide our interviews and focus groups), as well as to inform the case studies report. Although the initial requests were made before the site visits, additional documents were collected on site, and after the visits in many cases. Ultimately, we collected more than 130 documents across the five sites.

Telephone interviews with grantee directors. For each of the five case study sites, we conducted a 90-minute telephone interview with the Promise Neighborhood director to learn about the initiative's organizational structure, primary components, and unique features. This information helped us tailor site visit plans—including selecting participants for the in-person interviews and focus groups and activities to observe during the site visits—and protocols. Data from the interviews also informed the case study analyses.

Site visits. We conducted three-to-four-day visits to each participating grantee site during spring and summer 2014. During the site visits, we captured information on the primary components and unique features of the Promise Neighborhoods, the settings within which they operate, and the successes and challenges they have experienced in achieving their objectives. To build a nuanced understanding of how programs work together to provide the cradle-to-career pipeline of services and smooth transitions between them, we obtained the perspectives of informants at all levels of service planning, management, and delivery. Below we describe the data collection activities, which included in-person interviews, focus groups, and observations (Table A.1):

- **Interviews.** We conducted semi-structured interviews with small groups of Promise Neighborhoods administrators, including senior managers and program coordinators for each pipeline component, local evaluators, data management leads, and community partner program directors.
- **Focus groups.** We convened two to four focus groups with frontline service providers and community residents at each site. We enlisted the help of Promise Neighborhoods staff to recruit families for the focus groups. We offered a \$25 gift card to each participant and provided a meal or snacks to encourage participation.
- **Observations.** Across sites, we observed 18 program activities including management and partner meetings, parent workshops, family activities, child activities, and tours. These observations helped us to develop a refined picture of selected Promise Neighborhoods activities as well as a contextualized example of the complexity of each initiative.

Table A.1. Site visit activities

Promise Neighborhood site	Date of visit	Number of interviews	Number of interview participants	Number of focus groups	Number of focus group participants	Number of observations
Berea Promise Neighborhood	May 27–30	14	13	8	15	6
Buffalo Promise Neighborhood	June 3–5	9	30	3	23	6
Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood	June 2–5	13	29	4	25	1
Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood	June 30–July 3	9	11	2	3	2
Northside Achievement Zone	May 27–30	12	21	4	29	3
Total		57	104	21	95	18

Analysis

After the site visits, we synthesized the interview, focus group, and observation data. We developed a codebook to capture both unique and cross-cutting themes from the sites and updated it as new themes emerged during coding and analysis. We coded 101 write-ups (96 from the site visits and 5 from the telephone interviews) using Atlas.ti qualitative software. After we coded the documents, we used information from Atlas.ti queries to directly inform the community profiles and case studies report.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

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INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As you may already know, we are conducting these interviews as part of the Promise Neighborhoods Case Studies, on behalf of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute (PNI) at PolicyLink. The purpose of these interviews is to build understanding of how Promise Neighborhoods are being implemented, including systems development and planning, program participation and engagement, service coordination, and the use of data to measure and evaluate progress toward major goals. We are also interested in your perspective on successes and challenges related to your early implementation efforts. The insights you provide will help other practitioners and Promise Neighborhood supporters learn from your work, and ultimately further efforts to build sustainable systems that enable children to reach their potential.

Please note that we will keep your responses confidential. We will not use your name in any reports. We may use direct quotes from this conversation to illustrate a point but you will not be identified by name. As we move through the interview you can decline to answer any particular question. I would like to record the interview to help me fill in my notes later. No one outside of the research team will listen to the recording or read the notes. Do I have your permission to record the interview?

The interview will last approximately 90 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

A. Respondent Background

1. To begin, please tell me about your position and role in [*fill in the Promise Neighborhood name*]. What role does [*respondent's organization*] play? What are the primary responsibilities of your position in the organization?
 - How long have you been with this organization? How long in your current role?

B. System Development and Planning

2. Please tell me a bit about [*the organization that applied for the Promise Neighborhood grant*].
 - What is [*your organization's*] core mission?
 - Why did you decide to apply for a Promise Neighborhood grant?
 - What geographic area does your organization serve? How does that compare to the boundaries of the PN? Roughly what proportion of the population you serve resides within the PN?

3. We'd like to understand the political climate in which the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative operates. Were there existing circumstances or policies in place in the state, county, city, or school district that have had a major influence on the early development of your initiative?
4. Who [which organizations] was involved in designing your Promise Neighborhood initiative? How were key decisions made during the initial planning process?
5. How do you ensure that lead organization staff and all partners know the goal(s) and how you intend to achieve it/them?
6. Do you have a blueprint, work plan, or other guiding document that guides the unfolding of [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] work? If so, has this blueprint/ plan evolved since the initial grant application?
 - Who created/is developing the blueprint/ plan?
7. How do you ensure adherence to the strategies included in the blueprint/plan?
 - Do you have MOUs or contracts with your partners? What are the key provisions of these MOUs/contracts?
8. Is there a process in place for continuous quality improvement?
 - How do you ensure the quality of your programs and services?
 - Do you assess program/service quality on a regular basis? How? Are there observation forms you use?
 - What steps do you take when a quality concern is identified? Do you provide any types of extra support or training?
9. How is the Promise Neighborhood work different from managing a grant?

C. Program Implementation and Engagement

10. Please tell me what the key components of [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative are. Which pieces do you consider to be the most important to achieving your goals? Why?
 - [*Probe about specifics learned from the document review or earlier interviews that are relevant to the respondent's role.*]
 - Are there plans to expand to offer additional components? If so, please tell me a bit about those.
11. How did you choose the components to include in your initiative?
12. Which partner organizations are involved in each of these key components?
13. [*Fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] includes roughly [*fill in # from documents*] families, is that right? [*If not clear from document review, ask: How many students attend the schools in the PN? Roughly what proportion of those students live in the PN?*]
 - About how many families/children participate in [*each key component mentioned*]? [*If too many components to go through them all, ask what the few with the broadest reach are, and then for examples of a few smaller ones.*]

14. How do you target services to the needs of individual children, youth, adults, families, and community groups?
 15. How do program staff make families aware of the [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative and its programs/services?
 - Are outreach efforts targeted to specific types of families?
- D. Collaboration and Service Coordination
16. What makes your/ the Promise Neighborhood initiative a pipeline?
 - What policies does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] have to promote connections among different [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] partners, programs, and families? For example, how does the [example of key program] connect with the [different example]?
 - What do programs do to link parents and children to other [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs?
 - Is there a case management system? If so, does it help keep participants engaged and in the programs that best meet their needs?
 - How are handoffs and referrals handled? What kinds of follow-up do staff provide after making a referral)?
 17. My understanding is that there are [fill in number, based on document review] of different partner organizations involved in [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative; is that accurate? Are there plans to expand to include additional partners?
 18. What does it mean for an organization to be a [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] partner?
 - In what ways are partners involved in [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] (PN leadership positions, direct service provision, etc.)?
 - Are there different levels of involvement? (For example, are some partners simply referral organizations, while others are more closely involved with the PN?)
 - How formal are the partnership structures?
 19. What facilitates collaboration/interaction among the various partners?
 - Do partners meet together regularly? Which partners? How often? What happens at these meetings? Who [what type of staff—decision makers, front-line service providers, both?] attends from each organization?
 - Are any [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] staff located at partner organizations, or vice versa?
 20. What types of support does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] provide to partner organizations?
 - Do you provide funding to your partners, or vice versa? Which ones? How large are these amounts relative to your federal PN grant? [Be aware of what the application says about who provides the local matching funds required under the PN grant.]

- Do you provide staff to your partners, or vice versa? What types of staff? Which partner organizations?
 - Do you provide professional development to your partners, or vice versa? On what topics? Which partner organizations? What types of staff? Do [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] staff attend professional development sessions along with partner staff?
21. Please tell me about factors that make it difficult to maintain connections between different [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] partner organizations. What factors facilitate connections among partners?
 22. What makes it more difficult to keep families connected to multiple [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs in the pipeline? What factors make it easier to maintain connections?
 23. How could the system for connecting [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs to one another and involving families in the linkages be improved?

E. Evaluation and Use of Data

24. Please describe the data systems used by [fill in Promise Neighborhood name].
 - When were these data systems acquired/ developed?
 - Why did you choose these particular data systems?
 - [If ETO not used] We understand that PNI provides ETO at no charge to PN initiatives. Why did [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] choose not to use it?
 - [if school district data system not mentioned, ask:] Does your system interface with the school district's data system? Do [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] staff have access to the school district's data system?
25. Who has access to the data system(s)? Who uses it/them? Which types of staff? At which organizations?
 - For what purposes do each type of staff use the data system? (*Probes*: enter data, retrieve data, for what purposes?)
 - How often?
 - How do staff access the data system? Is there a user dashboard or reporting platform?
26. [LOCAL EVALUATORS ONLY]: Does the PN have a plan that informs analysis and reporting to monitor and evaluate progress? If so, please describe it. Could I have a copy?
 - What is your role in these plans? What roles do other [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] and partner staff play?
 - What kinds of monitoring reports (either compliance related or other monitoring activities) are generated in [fill in Promise Neighborhood name]? For example, annual or quarterly reporting, monthly reporting, or weekly reporting activities?
 - Who produces the reports and how often?

- In general, how are analysis results and reports used by [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] and partner staff?
27. [DATA LEADS AND LOCAL EVALUATORS ONLY]: If a national evaluation of Promise Neighborhoods were funded, what types of data would [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] have available for analysis?
- GPRA measures? [be prepared with a list if need to probe]
 - Other target outcomes? [be prepared with a list if need to probe]
 - What time period do the data cover? When do you consider to be your baseline? Do you have measures of all outcomes as of that time?
 - How complete are the data?
28. [DATA LEADS AND LOCAL EVALUATORS ONLY]: Is there written documentation describing the content of your database? If so, could I have a copy of that documentation?
29. [DATA LEADS ONLY]: Are you [is your state] working toward a universal identifier for a longitudinal data system tracking students from early childhood through school and post-secondary? [May be referred to as P-20, P-16, or K-16 system.]
30. Do partners sit down together to look at individual and collective contributions towards improving GPRA indicators?
- What types of partner staff [decision makers or front-line serve providers]?
 - How often?
31. [If not already addressed:] Please tell me how are you are tracking progress toward GPRA indicators and other targeted outcomes.
32. How do you use data to inform decision-making? What types of data do you use in making what types of decisions (revisions to program operations? to resource allocation? to specific services for individual children/families?)? Can you give an example?
33. What initiatives, if any, does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] have in place to help staff at different levels use data in their work?
- Is there a process in place to ensure the data are of high quality?
 - Is there a process in place to ensure that data are discussed with administrators and/or front-line staff?
 - Have you [or other members of your organization] received any professional development related to data use?
 - Have you seen any reports from [fill in Promise Neighborhood name]'s local evaluation?
34. [DATA LEADS ONLY]: How would you assess the overall capacity of [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] in terms of data use? Consider both the data systems and the individual capacity of the PN and partner staff.
35. Please tell me about the strengths of the data and systems you use.

36. Please tell me about the key challenges you/[fill in Promise Neighborhood name] have encountered related to using data?

- Is the system easy or difficult to use? Do you have time to do so? Is data available useful and timely? Do you know what to do with the information that you have?
- Are there ways that the data systems could be more useful? Are there other types of data or information that you wish you had?

F. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

37. I know it's still early in the development and implementation of your initiative, but: What progress has been made in [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] so far? What successes are you most proud of? What changes have occurred in the community?

- *[if only structural/programmatic changes are mentioned:]* From your perspective, have there been any changes in individuals' lives? If so, could you provide an example?
- Has there been progress toward [fill in Promise Neighborhood name]'s targeted outcomes? *[be aware of the short-term milestones toward GPRA and any non-GPRA goals in the PN's documents.]*
- Can you tell me about a couple of examples where progress was expected and has been made, two where progress was expected and was not made, and a few where progress was not expected and either did or did not happen. *[Have list of GPRA's to refer to.]*

38. What factors help in achieving your targets?

- Do any types of systems—either those that were in place at the start of [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] or new systems that you are working to build—help in achieving your targets? *[These can be things like: a functioning K-12 district, a strong and supportive parent organization, a strong educator professional development system, a child care quality rating and improvement system, a grant focused on getting children into community college, a state lottery that provides \$\$ to children for college, a state child care quality rating and improvement system, etc.]*
- Which aspects of the community context, school systems, or other systems, facilitate your work?

39. What are the barriers to achieving targets?

- Are there barriers related to the community contexts (politics, school board issues, school district leadership changes, etc.)?
- Barriers to measuring effectiveness of the work?
- What are the barriers to doing the work? [e.g., one organization absent an Executive Director for 2 years]

40. How have you attempted to address these systems barriers *[if those are discussed earlier in the interview, add "that we discussed earlier"]*? Where successes have occurred, how have they been achieved?

- Can you give an example of systems and/or partners working together effectively to address an issue?
41. Are you aware of the work with Results-Based Accountability (PNI provision of ETO data system, work with Casey Foundation), etc.? If so, to what extent is the RBA work helping to ensure the effectiveness of your initiative?
 42. Are there particular investments or approaches that you believe increase the likelihood of success with your work?
 43. Please tell me what potential funders could do to provide better support to PNs like yours?
 - What can policymakers or private funders do in crafting future RFPs that would make this work easier for others?
 - What could have been done to make the first year (and subsequent years) more effective?
 - Do you have any suggestions for reconciling funders' needs for a detailed plan with the imperative to make ongoing adjustments to plans based on continuous learning?
 44. What did the funders get right in supporting the development of your PN?
 - What has been the impact of funding infrastructure development? For example, to what extent was it helpful to have funding to bring staff on board and be trained in advance of starting the work? How about the purchase of the ETO database?
 45. What plans do you have for sustaining the work of the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative after the federal Promise Neighborhood grant ends? [*Be aware of when the grant ends in the site; implementation grants last a maximum of five years.*]
 - How central is the federal Promise Neighborhood grant funding to your [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative? Besides your PN grant, what other resources does your initiative currently use? How large are these resources relative to your PN grant? [*if not clear from the application, probe about the local matching funds required under the PN grant*]
 - Are you identifying other funding sources to replace the PN funds? Tell me about that process. How is it going?
 - What contextual factors have affected the likelihood of sustaining the PN program after the current federal grant ends? What do you see as the key challenges to sustainability? What factors have helped your prospects for sustainability?
 - Are current collaborators involved in planning for sustainability or searching for resources to support the program in the future? Why or why not?
 - Are there specific components of your initiative that you consider most important to keep in place after the end of the grant? Which ones? Why? What needs to happen to ensure that they continue?
 - Do you foresee adding any new services, programs, partner organizations, etc. to build on the current [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] structure?
 46. Please tell me what lessons you have learned during these early stages of implementation of [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative? How have these lessons affected your initial intentions?
-

- If you were giving advice to another community embarking upon a PN initiative, what are the two or three things that you would caution them to avoid?
- What are two or three things that you would encourage another community that has decided to undertake this work to do or consider in preparation?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end the discussion?

If I have any follow-up questions once I'm back in my office reviewing my notes from our conversation, would you mind if I contacted you?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY PARTNER

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As you may already know, we are conducting these interviews as part of the Promise Neighborhoods Case Studies, on behalf of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute (PNI) at PolicyLink. The purpose of these interviews is to build understanding of how promise neighborhoods are being implemented, including systems development and planning, program participation and engagement, service coordination, and the use of data to measure and evaluate progress toward major goals. We are also interested in your perspective on successes and challenges related to your early implementation efforts. The insights you provide will help other practitioners and promise neighborhood supporters learn from your work, and ultimately further efforts to build sustainable systems that enable children to reach their potential.

Please note that we will keep your responses confidential. We will not use your name in any reports. We may use direct quotes from this conversation to illustrate a point but you will not be identified by name. As we move through the interview you can decline to answer any particular question. I would like to record the interview to help me fill in my notes later. No one outside of the research team will listen to the recording or read the notes. Do I have your permission to record the interview?

The interview will last approximately 90 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

A. Respondent Background

1. To begin, please tell me about your position and role in *[fill in the Promise Neighborhood name]*. What role does *[respondent's organization]* play? What are the primary responsibilities of your position in the organization?
 - How long have you been with this organization? How long in your current role?

B. System Development and Planning

2. Please tell me a bit about *[the organization that you represent]*.
 - What is your organization's core mission?
 - Why did you decide to partner with/join the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative?
 - *[if not known:]* At what point during the process did your organization become involved?
 - What geographic area does your organization serve? How does that compare to the boundaries of the PN? Roughly what proportion of the population you serve resides within the PN?
3. We'd like to understand the political climate in which the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative operates. Were there existing circumstances or policies in place in the state, county, city, or school district that have had a major influence on the early development of your initiative?

4. Who [which organizations] was involved in designing your Promise Neighborhood initiative?
How were key decisions made during the initial planning process?
 5. Is there a blueprint, work plan, or other guiding document that guides the unfolding of [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] work? If so, has this blueprint/ plan evolved since the initial grant application?
 - Who created/is developing the blueprint/ plan?
 6. Is there a process in place for continuous quality improvement?
 - How do you ensure the quality of your programs and services?
 - Do you assess program/service quality on a regular basis? How? Are there observation forms you use?
 - What steps do you take when a quality concern is identified? Do you provide any types of extra support or training?
Please tell me what you see as the key goal(s) of the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative. [Focusing on broader goals here, not the list of performance targets.]
 - How did you learn about these goals?
 - How do these goals relate to your work? How are you working to achieve them?
- C. Program Implementation and Engagement
7. Please tell me what the key components of [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative are.
 - Which pieces do you consider to be the most important? Why?
 - Which components are most relevant to your organization's role?
 - [*Probe about specifics relevant to the respondents that you've learned from the document review or earlier interviews*]
 8. Are there plans to expand to offer additional components? If so, please tell me a bit about those.
 9. How did you choose the components to include in your initiative?
 - Are the programs that your organization provides different than before you joined the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative? In what ways?
 10. About how many families/children participate in [*each key component operated by respondents' organizations*]?
 11. How do you target services to the needs of individual students, families, and community groups?
 12. What role does your organization play in engaging families in the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative? Have your organizations' outreach efforts changed since joining the PN initiative?
 - Have your organizations' outreach efforts changed since joining the PN initiative?

D. Collaboration and Service Coordination

13. What makes your/ the Promise Neighborhood initiative a pipeline?
 - What policies does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] have to promote connections among different [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs and families? For example, how does the [example of key program] connect with the [different example]?
 - What do programs do to link parents and children to other [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs?
 - Is there a case management system? If so, does it help keep participants engaged and in the programs that best meet their needs?
 - How are handoffs and referrals handled? What kinds of follow-up do staff provide after making a referral?
 14. In your work with the [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative, how many different partner agencies does your organization interact with directly? What kinds of interactions are there between staff of different partner organizations?
 15. What facilitates collaboration/interaction among the various partners?
 - Do partners meet together regularly? Which partners? How often? What happens at these meetings? Who [what type of staff—decision makers, front-line service providers, both?] attends from each organization?
 - Are any [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] staff located at your organizations, or vice versa?
 16. What types of support does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] provide to your organizations?
 - Does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] provide funding to your organization, or vice versa? For what purpose? How large are these amounts relative to your federal PN grant?
 - Does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] provide staff to your organization, or vice versa? What types of staff? What are their roles?
 - Does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] provide professional development to your organization, or vice versa? On what topics? What types of staff attend? Do staff of [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] or other partner organizations attend professional development sessions along with your staff?
 17. Please tell me about factors that make it difficult to maintain connections between different [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] partner organizations. What factors facilitate connections among partners?
 18. What makes it more difficult to keep families connected to multiple [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs in the pipeline? What factors make it easier to maintain connections?
 19. How could the system for connecting [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs to one another and involving families in the linkages be improved?
-

E. Evaluation and Use of Data

20. Please tell me what data systems your organization uses. [*If systems related to client service management, GPRA tracking, etc. are not mentioned, re-focus on those.*]
 - [*If system used by the PN isn't mentioned:*] Do you also use [*PN's system*] in any way?
 - How do your staff use the/each data system?
 - Who at your organization uses the/each data system? Which types of staff?
 - For what purposes do each type of staff use the data system? (*probes: enter data, retrieve data to help clients, retrieve data to assess program?*) How often?
 - [*If multiple systems used:*] Why? What are the advantages of using multiple data systems? What are the disadvantages?
 21. Do partners sit down together to look at individual and collective contributions towards improving GPRA indicators?
 - What types of partner staff [decision makers or front-line serve providers]?
 - How often?
 22. [*if not already addressed:*] Please tell me how are you are tracking progress toward GPRA indicators and other targeted outcomes.
 23. How do you use data to inform decision-making? What types of data do you use in making what types of decisions (revisions to program operations? to resource allocation? to specific services for individual children/families?)? Can you give an example?
 24. What initiatives, if any, does [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] have in place to help partners use data in their work?
 - Is there a process in place to ensure the data are of high quality?
 - Is there a process in place to ensure that data are discussed with administrators and/or front-line staff at partner organizations?
 - Have you [or other members of your organization] received any professional development related to data use?
 - Have you seen any reports from [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*]'s local evaluation?
 25. Please tell me about the strengths of the data and systems you use.
 26. Please tell me about the key challenges you/[*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] have encountered related to using data?
 - (Probes: Is the system easy or difficult to use? Do you have time to do so? Is data available useful and timely? Do you know what to do with the information that you have?)
 - Are there ways that the data systems could be more useful? Are there other types of data or information that you wish you had?
-

F. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

27. I know it's still early in the development and implementation of your initiative, but: What progress has been made in *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* so far? What successes are you most proud of? What changes have occurred in the community?
- *[if only structural/programmatic changes are mentioned:]* From your perspective, have there been any changes in individuals' lives? If so, could you provide an example?
 - Has there been progress toward *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]*'s targeted outcomes? *[be aware of the short-term milestones toward GPRA and any non-GPRA goals in the PN's documents.]*
 - Can you tell me about a couple of examples where progress was expected and has been made, two where progress was expected and was not made, and a few where progress was not expected and either did or did not happen. *[Have list of GPRAs to refer to.]*
28. What factors help in achieving your targets?
- Do any types of systems—either those that were in place at the start of *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* or new systems that you are working to build—help in achieving your targets? *[These can be things like: a functioning K-12 district, a strong and supportive parent organization, a strong educator professional development system, a child care quality rating and improvement system, a grant focused on getting children into community college, a state lottery that provides \$\$ to children for college, a state child care quality rating and improvement system, etc.]*
 - Which aspects of the community context, school systems, or other systems, facilitate your work?
29. What are the barriers to achieving targets?
- Are there barriers related to the community contexts (politics, school board issues, school district leadership changes, etc.)?
 - Barriers to measuring effectiveness of the work?
 - What are the barriers to doing the work? [e.g., one organization absent an Executive Director for 2 years]
30. How have you attempted to address these systems barriers? *[if those are discussed earlier in the interview, add “that we discussed earlier”]*
- Can you give an example of systems and/or partners working together effectively to address an issue?
31. Are you aware of the work with Results-Based Accountability (PNI provision of ETO data system, work with Casey Foundation), etc.? If so, to what extent is the RBA work helping to ensure the effectiveness of your initiative?
32. Are there particular investments or approaches that you believe increase the likelihood of success with your work?

33. Is your organization involved in planning for sustainability or searching for resources to support the program in the future? If so, how?
- What plans do you have for sustaining the work of the [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative after the federal Promise Neighborhood grant ends? [Be aware of when the grant ends in the site; implementation grants last a maximum of five years.]
 - How central is the federal Promise Neighborhood grant funding to your [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative? Besides your PN grant, what other resources does your initiative currently use? How large are these resources relative to your PN grant? [if not clear from the application, probe about the local matching funds required under the PN grant]
 - Are you identifying other funding sources to replace the PN funds? Tell me about that process. How is it going?
 - What contextual factors have affected the likelihood of sustaining the PN program after the current federal grant ends? What do you see as the key challenges to sustainability? What factors have helped your prospects for sustainability?
 -
 - Are there specific components of your initiative that you consider most important to keep in place after the end of the grant? Which ones? Why? What needs to happen to ensure that they continue?
 - Do you foresee adding any new services, programs, partner organizations, etc. to build on the current [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] structure?
34. Please tell me what lessons you have learned during these early stages of implementation of [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative? How have these lessons affected your initial intentions?
- If you were giving advice to another community organization embarking upon a PN initiative, what are the two or three things that you would caution them to avoid?
 - What are two or three things that you would encourage another community organization that has decided to undertake this work to do or consider in preparation?
35. How satisfied are you with your organization's participation in the [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative?
- What aspects of the initiative do you think work best?
 - What aspects have been the most challenging?
 - Are there changes you would suggest?
 - Does your organization plan to continue participating in the [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end the discussion?

If I have any follow-up questions once I'm back in my office reviewing my notes from our conversation, would you mind if I contacted you?

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL: PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD FRONTLINE SERVICE PROVIDERS

Introduction

Thank you very much for coming to this discussion group today. My name is *[fill in name]*, and I work for Mathematica Policy Research. Mathematica is a nonpartisan, objective social policy research firm that has extensive experience in conducting early childhood and education research.

As part of the Promise Neighborhoods Case Studies, we are conducting focus groups with staff who serve families in your Promise Neighborhood. The focus groups will help us learn more about the areas of planning, program engagement, collaboration and service coordination, and initial successes and challenges. We will use the information we collect during the focus groups to describe the experiences of staff in each of these areas. We are not here to judge the performance of any individual program or staff member.

Everything you say here is confidential. No individual will be quoted by name. Our final report will describe the views expressed by staff in general, but specific comments will not be attributed to specific individuals.

I am recording our discussion so that I can listen to it later when I write up my notes. No one outside of our research team will have access to the recording. It will be helpful if you speak up, speak clearly, and speak one at a time.

The discussion will last approximately one hour and 15 minutes. We have a number of topics to discuss. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything.

There are no right or wrong answers. People may disagree, and that's okay. Please feel free to offer your opinions, whether positive or negative.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

A. Respondent Background (5 min.)

1. To begin, please each briefly introduce yourself, including your first name, job title, the program/organization you represent, the primary responsibilities of your position, and how long have you've worked [at organization/in position].

B. System Development and Planning (10 min.)

2. Please tell me what you see as the key goal(s) of the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative. *[If respondents list performance targets, ask about broader goals].*
 - How did you learn about these goals?
 - How do these goals relate to your work? How are you working to achieve them?

3. How much guidance and implementation support do you receive from [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] in your work? What types of supports has [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] provided to you?
 - Have you participated in any professional development activities offered by [fill in Promise Neighborhood name]? [If so:] please tell me about them.
 - [if data are mentioned , could skip to Data Use section and circle back]
 4. How is your work monitored or assessed to ensure quality? How often are staff at your level assessed?
 - What kind of follow-up occurs after an assessment? Do staff receive any types of extra support or training?
- C. Program Implementation and Engagement (10 min.)
5. Please tell me what the key components of [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] initiative are.
 - Which pieces do you consider to be the most important? Why?
 - Which components are most relevant to your organization's role?
 6. Are there plans to expand to offer additional components? If so, please tell me a bit about those.
 7. About how many families/children participate in the program(s) or activity(ies) you provide?
 8. What role do you play in engaging families? Please describe your efforts to enroll and/or keep them in the program(s).
- D. Collaboration and Service Coordination (15 min.)
9. Before this meeting, were you aware of all of the [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs and services that we've talked about so far today?
 - How did you learn about these programs? How do families learn about them?
 - What connections are you aware of between different programs in the [fill in Promise Neighborhood name]?
 10. What do you do – formally or informally – to help make these connections? What about other staff roles?
 - Have you provided referrals for the families you work with to other programs or services? If so, how does that work?
 - Do you provide information to the families or contact staff of the program/service, or both?
 - Have you done any sort of follow-up with the staff or families after making the referral?

- Have you received referrals from other [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] staff or programs? If so, how does that work?
11. Please tell me about factors that make it difficult to maintain connections between different [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] partner organizations.
 - What factors facilitate connections among partners?
 12. What makes it more difficult to keep families connected to multiple [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs in the pipeline?
 - What factors make it easier to maintain these connections?
 13. How could the system for connecting [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] programs to one another and involving families in the linkages be improved?

E. Evaluation and Use of Data (15 min.)

14. Please tell me what types of information and data are available to support you in your work. [For each information source mentioned:]
 - How do you get this information?
 - Please describe how you use [this information]
15. What types of information do you collect from the families you work with? What other types of information do you track about your work with specific families?
 - Do you share this information with others at your organization? With other organizations in [fill in Promise Neighborhood name]? How?
16. [if not already addressed] Have you ever used [fill in name of data system the PN uses; if more than one ask about each] data in your work? How? Do you enter information into the system, retrieve information from the system, or both? What types of information?
 - Have you ever used the “Promise Scorecard” data dashboard? If so, how? If not, why not?
17. What, if anything, does [fill in Promise Neighborhood name] do to help you use data in your work?
 - Is there a process in place to ensure the data are of high quality?
 - Do administrators or supervisors discuss data with you?
 - Have you received any professional development related to data use?
 - Have you seen any reports from [fill in Promise Neighborhood name]’s local evaluation?
18. Please tell me about both the strengths of the data and systems you use, and the key challenges you have encountered related to using data? Is the system easy or difficult to use? Do you have time to do so? Is data available useful and timely? Do you know what to do with the information you have?.

- Are there ways that the data systems could be more useful? Are there other types of data or information that you wish you had?

F. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned (15 min.)

19. I know it's still early in the development and implementation of your initiative, but what progress has been made in [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] so far? What successes are you most proud of? What changes have occurred in the community?
- [*if only structural/programmatic changes are mentioned:*] From your perspective, have there been any changes in individuals' lives? If so, could you provide an example?
20. What factors help in achieving your goals?
21. What challenges have you encountered in your work?
- How have you attempted to address these challenges? [*if those are discussed earlier in the interview, add "that we discussed earlier"*]
 - Can you give an example of systems and/or partners working together effectively to address an issue?
22. Please tell me what lessons you have learned during these early stages of implementation of [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative? How have these lessons affected your work?
- What are two or three things that you would advise others engaged in similar initiatives to do or consider?
 - What are the two or three things that you would advise others to avoid?
23. How satisfied are you with your participation in the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative?
- What aspects of the initiative do you think work best?
 - What aspects have been the most challenging?
 - Are there changes you would suggest?
 - Do you plan to continue your role in the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end the discussion?

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL: PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILIES

Introduction

Thank you very much for coming to this discussion group today. My name is *[fill in name]*, and I work for Mathematica Policy Research. Mathematica is a nonpartisan, objective, social policy research firm that has extensive experience in conducting early childhood and education research.

As part of the Promise Neighborhoods Case Studies, we are conducting focus groups with families in your Promise Neighborhood. The focus groups will help us learn more about the areas of program implementation, engagement, coordination, and initial successes and challenges.

Everything you say here is confidential. No one will be quoted by name. Our final report will describe the views expressed by participants in general, but specific comments will not be attributed to specific individuals.

I am recording our discussion so that I can listen to it later when I write up my notes. No one outside of our research team will have access to the recording. It will be helpful if you speak up, speak clearly, and speak one at a time.

The discussion will last approximately one hour. We have a number of topics to discuss. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything.

There are no right or wrong answers. People may disagree, and that's okay. Please feel free to offer your opinions, whether positive or negative.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

- A. Respondent Background (10 min.)
1. To begin, please each briefly introduce yourself, including your first name, the ages of your children, and briefly, the key ways you've been involved with *[fill in the Promise Neighborhood name]*.
- B. System Development and Planning (10 min.)
2. Please tell me what you see as the key goal(s) of the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative.
 - How did you learn about these goals?
- C. Program Implementation and Engagement (15 min.)
3. Do your children attend schools within the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]*? Why or why not?

- Has *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative influenced your decision or your views related to the schools your children could attend? Why or why not?
4. Please tell me what *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* programs or services you and your family have participated in or received.
 - What other *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* programs/services have you heard about?
 5. Have you played any leadership or guidance role(s) in the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative? *[fill in probes of specific opportunities in the PN, based on document review]* If so, please tell me about that.
 - Are there [other] opportunities for parents and family members to serve in leadership roles? If so, please provide examples.
 6. Do you feel that you are a part of the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* community? If so, why? If not, why not?
 7. Please tell me how you learned about the programs and activities we've talked about.
 - How did you first hear of the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative?
 - Are your neighbors generally aware of the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative? Is it primarily known among parents with children, or more widely known?
 - What kinds of outreach do *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* staff engage in to inform the community of the available programs and services?
 - In what ways have you been invited to participate in the PN?

D. Collaboration and Service Coordination (10 min.)

My next few questions are about connections between different parts of the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative.

8. Please tell me about any connections you are aware of between different programs in *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]*?
9. Have staff from one program provided information to you about other programs or services? If so, how did that work?
 - Do you have a *[fill in name of case manager position at the PN (e.g. NAZ Connectors)]*? If so, what does he/she do for your family?
10. What does *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* do to make sure your family receives services that meet your specific needs?
11. How could the system for connecting *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* programs to one another and involving families in the linkages be improved?

E. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned (15 min.)

My last set of questions ask for your opinions about the neighborhood and the *[fill in Promise Neighborhood name]* initiative.

12. Have you seen any changes in your community since the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative began? If so, tell me about them.
 - What factors contributed to these changes?
 - Do you expect any [other] changes in your community due to the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative began? What kinds of changes? Why?
13. How satisfied are you with the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] programs or services you've participated in?
 - Which parts are the most helpful?
 - Which parts could be improved?
 - Are there changes you would suggest?
14. Do you plan to continue participating [in the activities mentioned earlier]? To become involved in other [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] activities?
 - Are there other services or programs not offered that you wish were provided by [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*]?
15. Do you intend to continue to live in this neighborhood?
 - Why/why not?
 - Has the [*fill in Promise Neighborhood name*] initiative had an influence on your plans?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end the discussion?

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APPENDIX C
SITE PROFILES

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APPENDIX C
SITE PROFILES

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Promise Neighborhood **Site PROFILE**

Berea College Promise Neighborhood

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

Partners for Education,
Berea College

LOCATION:

Clay, Jackson, and
Owsley Counties, KY

FEDERAL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT:

Date of grant award:
December 2011

Date grant agreement with U.S. Department of Education executed:
December 2011

Total investment:
\$45 million (\$30 million federal grant and \$15 million in matching funds) over five years

COMMUNITY CONTEXT/ TARGET POPULATION

Berea College Promise Neighborhood serves Clay, Jackson, and Owsley Counties—cumulatively comprising 961 square miles of rural Appalachian Kentucky. Per capita income in these counties is significantly lower than the state and national average, and Clay, Jackson, and Owsley are some of the most economically distressed counties in the country.¹ In 2010, 81 percent of students qualified for free or reduced-price school meals. All of the middle and high schools included in the Promise Neighborhood are persistently low-achieving. Altogether, 6,300 students—prekindergarten through grade 12—reside within these three counties, and the initiative aims to reach all of them in some way.

KEY PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

Due to the limited resources within their rural neighborhood, Partners for Education, the branch of Berea College that leads the Berea initiative, implements many of the initiative's services, but it recruited several partners to participate in the planning process and play major roles in advising and implementing the Berea College Promise Neighborhood initiative (see sidebar, page 2). The lead agency had to enlist some of their partners from outside of the community because there were no local providers.

All schools in the three school districts within the Berea College Promise Neighborhood geographic boundaries—a total of 16 schools—are key partners in the initiative. Other major partners include Save the Children and the Eastern Kentucky Child Care Coalition, which provide early childhood expertise and programming such as home visiting, and professional development, respectively; partners that provide academic support, such as the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, which provides teacher professional development; and family and community

well-being partners such as Grow Appalachia, which facilitates a community gardening project. REACH Evaluation developed the Berea College Promise Neighborhood longitudinal data system and will evaluate the initiative.

THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

The lead agency of the Berea College Promise Neighborhood, Partners for Education at Berea College, has worked with local schools throughout Appalachia to enhance college readiness through Department of Education grant programs such as GEAR UP and Investing in Innovation (i3) and has supported families through financial education and family empowerment programs. The Promise Neighborhoods grant enabled Partners for Education to expand their reach beyond middle and high school college readiness to include early childhood and elementary programming, as well as health and arts programs across grade levels, resulting in a holistic cradle-to-career pipeline. Major pipeline components and activities of the Berea College Promise Neighborhood are outlined in Figure 1.

- **Programs.** A primary component of Berea's early childhood intervention, serving 500 children annually, is Early Steps to School Success (ESSS), which consists of a home visiting program to promote early literacy for children birth to age 3 years and a book exchange program for children up to age 5. Early Childhood Specialists work with children transitioning out of the home visiting program. They monitor and support the development of children in various early childhood programs, primarily Head Start–public preschool partnerships, as well as those remaining in parental care. Berea's support for preschool-age children also includes professional development for early childhood educators to help programs meet state standards. To facilitate children's transition to kindergarten, Berea College Promise Neighborhood hosts

Berea College Promise Neighborhood Key Partners



Early Childhood Services

Save the Children
Eastern Kentucky Child Care Coalition



Academic Services

Clay County Public Schools
Jackson County Public Schools
Owsley County Public Schools
Collaborative for Teaching and Learning
Kentucky Arts Council



Health, Wellness, and Safety

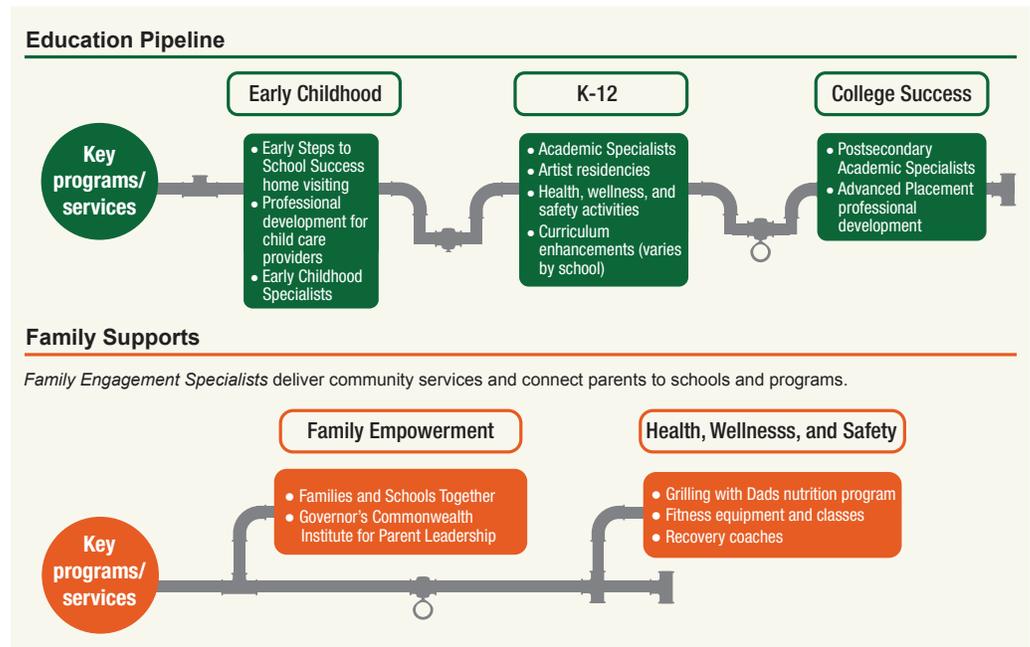
Local health departments
Local police departments
Grow Appalachia
University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service
Jackson County Family Court



Data System and Evaluation

REACH Evaluation

Figure 1. Berea College Promise Neighborhood Pipeline Components



Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This figure highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhood offers.

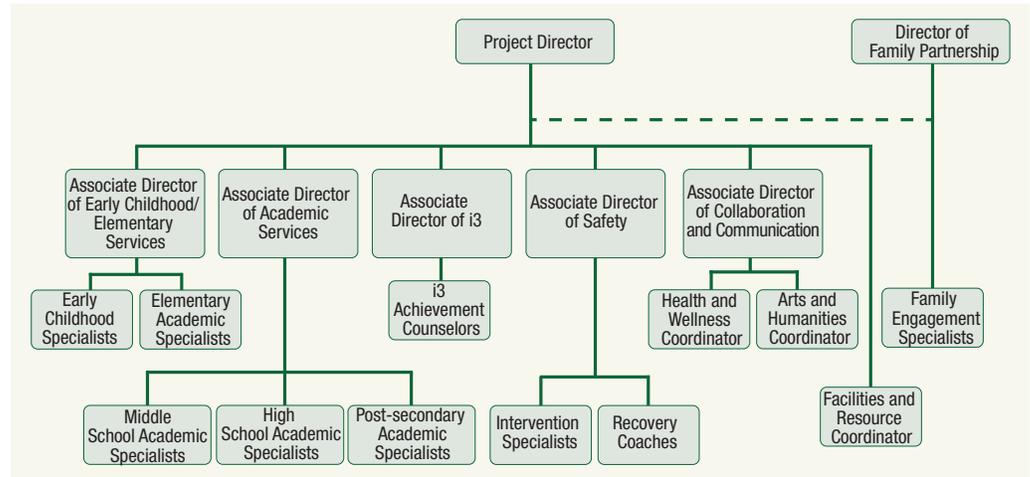
picnics at each elementary school where elementary school Academic Specialists discuss the importance of attending kindergarten, and parents pledge to send their children. Early Childhood Specialists also attend to inform parents of steps they can take at home to prepare their children for kindergarten.

Berea College Promise Neighborhood's school reform efforts include the provision of academic supports as well as programs focused on physical and social-emotional well-being. Academic Specialists located in every elementary, middle, and high school in the three counties provide individual and small-group tutoring in mathematics and reading to low-performing and at-risk youth, as identified through the early warning system, which is based on grades, test scores, and attendance. Berea College Promise Neighborhood also supports the schools by providing professional development; purchasing new curricula and technology; and offering arts, health, wellness, and safety programs. For example, Berea College Promise Neighborhood staff trained teachers to facilitate Jump Start, a physical fitness program offered before the school day. The initiative purchased new Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids equipment and training for schools, and promotes nutrition

through several school gardens and an increased emphasis on farm-to-cafeteria food. Through artist residencies, students receive instruction in a variety of art forms including music, drama, and dance. The artists and classroom teachers work together to incorporate academic content into the art instruction. To promote healthy relationships and behaviors, the initiative introduced the Green Dot program, which focuses on reducing dating violence, and a program that encourages children to intervene in situations that might include bullying and violence.

To enhance the community's existing college access and success efforts, the Berea College Promise Neighborhood hired a Postsecondary Academic Specialist for each high school to provide academic case management to increase graduation, college enrollment, and college completion. The responsibilities of the Postsecondary Academic Specialists include helping high school seniors apply to college and facilitating the enrollment process for Promise Neighborhood students accepted to the local community college. The Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program provides training to both teachers and students to increase Advanced Placement course offerings and exam pass rates.

Figure 2. Berea College Promise Neighborhood Organizational Structure



Source: Background documents from Berea College Promise Neighborhood, revised with feedback from interviews.

- Families.** Berea College Promise Neighborhood empowers parents and families through multiple parenting and wellness programs. Berea’s health and wellness services extend beyond schools into the community and include Grilling with Dads, a structured four-week nutrition program for families; family fitness events open to the community; and recovery coaches who work with the family court in one county to support parents with substance use disorders and their families.

Family engagement staff facilitate Families and Schools Together (FAST), a family empowerment program led by parents. Parents choose topics of interest, such as bullying, and the family engagement staff, in partnership with schools and other community organizations, bring in related speakers. The family engagement staff also support a Parent Involvement Taskforce (PIT Crew) in each school district. The PIT Crew comprises parents committed to improving the overall health, well-being, and academic achievement of students in their district. The taskforce identifies local needs and works to meet these needs through activities such as family math nights and extracurricular opportunities for families of students with special needs.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STAFF ROLES

Partners for Education administers a number of education and family empowerment programs that support the Berea College Promise Neighborhood.

A management board comprising Partners for Education leadership, including directors of these programs, key partners, and community representatives, helped design the initiative and facilitated initial implementation of the Promise Neighborhood. The leadership team is responsible for ongoing implementation of the initiative and includes the Project Director and Associate Directors of Early Childhood/Elementary Services; Academic Services; i3; Safety; and Collaboration and Communication (Figure 2) in conjunction with Partners for Education’s Family Partnership program. Each of the associate directors oversees the implementation and programming for their target areas. There were few existing community-based organizations within the Berea College Promise Neighborhood, thus Partners for Education hired numerous staff to provide the planned programs and services, including Early Childhood Specialists, Academic Specialists, i3 Achievement Counselors, Intervention Specialists, and Recovery Coaches.

PROGRESS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- More than 6,000 students touched by services.** In addition to the teacher professional development that benefits all students in the neighborhood, staff estimated that 5,000 students have been served by Berea College Promise Neighborhood arts programs. Attendance in the Jump Start physical fitness program has been steadily increasing with 600–700 students currently participating. Jump Start was originally

introduced at a single school within one district, but expanded in the 2013–2014 school year to six additional schools across two districts, per school request. The Eastern Kentucky Child Care Coalition has provided professional development and coaching to 45 teachers and administrators in 21 of the 25 publicly funded preschool and Head Start classrooms in the neighborhood.

- **Initiative embraced by families and schools.** A parent who has participated in a number of programs commented, “There are so few services and activities [in our area]. The Promise Neighborhood gives me great opportunities that aren’t available otherwise.” One Family Engagement Specialist reported that 65 percent of middle and high school parents attended her back-to-school event. She noted that parents of middle and high school students are typically challenging to engage.

In the beginning, some principals were uninterested in partnering with the initiative. Berea College Promise Neighborhood staff made a concerted effort to build relationships and engage them in the decision making process regarding the programs and services that would be offered in their schools. As a result of these efforts, the principals now value the initiative. A Health Content Specialist reported that a principal who was not initially interested in offering a Jump Start program is now fully supportive of the program and has cited its positive effect on student school attendance.

- **Promising early outcomes related to school readiness.** Based on data compiled and analyzed by Results Leadership Group,² Berea has seen an increase in the percentage of kindergartners who demonstrate at the beginning of the program or school year age-appropriate functioning across multiple domains of early learning (Government Performance and Results Act indicator 2). School readiness increased from 16 percent in 2013 to 38 percent in 2014 based on Kentucky’s kindergarten readiness measure, the Brigance K and 1 Screen III. Promise Neighborhood staff credited a combination of their ESSS home visiting program, professional development provided to early childhood educators, and the addition of Early Childhood Specialists for the increase in kindergarten readiness.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Lack of transportation.** In rural areas, transportation can be an obstacle for out-of-school activities. There are no interstate highways in Berea, and children often spend up to two hours per day traveling to and from school. This limits how many children can attend activities held outside regular school hours, and the Promise Neighborhood found it was too expensive to offer transportation directly. The initiative has attempted to partially address this issue by organizing some programs before school, for which children can rely on the bus. In other instances, they have been able to find support from community partners—for instance, local churches agreed to provide transportation for a summer program.
- **Limited initial school engagement.** During the Promise Neighborhood planning process, Partners for Education garnered district support for the initiative, but some principals expressed little interest as implementation began. The Promise Neighborhood leaders discovered that district support did not necessarily translate to principal support and realized in hindsight that they should have sought the buy-in from school principals as well during the planning stage. They have taken steps to gain the support of principals, including changing the annual budgeting process to involve principals in decisions about the specific programs and services provided in their schools.
- **Unclear federal data requirements.** The federal government did not provide enough clear, consistent, and timely information and support about data requirements and how to access different types of data. The limited early support resulted in a lengthy measurement framework development process, delaying their ability to report performance indicators. Despite the setbacks, Berea College Promise Neighborhood has begun using data to refine and enhance the initiative. For example, through the process of analyzing their data, they discovered a gap in their early learning services that they rectified by adding Early Childhood Specialists to work with individual children and their families in early childhood programs.
- **Fragmented planning process.** Some Promise Neighborhood leaders believed that the two-stage process of competing for a planning grant and an implementation grant

ABOUT PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS CASE STUDIES

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at Policy Link (PNI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods, including Berea. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and three-to-four-day site visits to each selected Promise Neighborhood at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

was disjointed. The leadership team had to begin drafting their implementation grant halfway through their planning year. The local community also expressed frustration with the lengthy planning process, as they were eager to begin implementing programs. In response, the leadership team began piloting some programs during the planning year.

LOOKING FORWARD

- **Streamlining current services.** With no plans to add components to their initiative, Berea College Promise Neighborhood staff are focusing on refining and streamlining the services they offer. They plan to examine the data to identify the most effective components of their initiative to inform sustainability plans.
- **Sustaining and expanding programs.** Promise Neighborhood leaders commented that they do not yet have the data to identify the most promising programs and services on which they should focus their sustainability efforts, but they are looking to partners to provide future support for some programs and working to identify new funds to support others. They expect that continued work and collaboration with districts, schools, and other partners will facilitate sustainability. They are working with schools to build their capacity to maintain programs the Promise Neighborhood put in place, which should enable a degree of sustainability, even if there is a loss of the Promise Neighborhood staff placed in schools when the grant period ends. Berea College Promise Neighborhood is providing assistance to partners in securing ongoing funding. For example, they worked with schools to draft successful applications for Teaching Arts Together grants; the process not only obtained those immediate funds but also trained school personnel to continue applying for grants. In December 2014, the initiative convened a meeting of partners, potential partners, parents, and community members to discuss broad sustainability efforts. The Promise Neighborhood will follow up with two community meetings in each county and a sustainability summit in 2015.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Berea College Promise Neighborhood implementation grant application, 2011.

² Queen, J., Epps, Z., Whiting, D., & Stone, M. (2014, August). *Berea Promise Neighborhood annual grant performance report*. Rockville, MD: Results Leadership Group.

Suggested Citation

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Promise Neighborhood **Site PROFILE**

Buffalo Promise Neighborhood

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

Westminster Foundation

LOCATION:

Buffalo, NY

FEDERAL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT:

Date of grant award:
December 2011

Date grant agreement with U.S. Department of Education executed:
First quarter of 2012

Total investment:
\$32 million (\$6 million federal grant and \$26 million in matching funds)

COMMUNITY CONTEXT/ TARGET POPULATION

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood serves one of Buffalo's poorest communities. The population is 76 percent minority, including 69 percent African American. More than a third of Buffalo Promise Neighborhood residents (38 percent) live in households with incomes below the federal poverty level, and 88 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.¹

A one-square-mile area constituting 97 blocks, the Promise Neighborhood is home to 12,000 residents, including 3,000 children age 18 and younger. Approximately 1,600 of these students attend public schools, but due to school choice policies, the majority attend schools outside the neighborhood, and a similar number of students from other locations commute to Promise Neighborhood partner schools.

KEY PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

The lead agency for the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is the Westminster Foundation, which was established by M&T Bank to support one of the lowest-performing schools in the city, an elementary school serving students in kindergarten through 8th grade. This school was converted to a charter school and renamed Westminster Community Charter School in 2004 and is now one of the two schools in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood. The other partner school, Highgate Heights Elementary School, is a regular public school serving students in prekindergarten through 8th grade. Until the 2014–2015 school year, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood also included Bennett High School.

Other key partners provide services for children and families (see sidebar, page 2). For example, in the early childhood area (called Early Education Foundations in Buffalo), Every Person Influences Children (EPIC) provides

parenting classes and referrals for new parents; the Community Health Center of Buffalo (CHCB) provides a medical home for their children; and Community Action Organization (CAO) operates the Children's Academy early childhood education center. Read to Succeed Buffalo provides early literacy intervention with embedded coaching in home-based child care facilities, the Children's Academy, and kindergarten through 2nd-grade classrooms at Westminster and prekindergarten through 1st grade at Highgate Heights. AmeriCorps staff members work with students in partner schools, provide child care for parents attending other Buffalo Promise Neighborhood activities, and help with special events. Belmont Housing is another partner with multiple roles, providing financial education to parents and rehabilitating houses near the partner schools.

M&T Bank provides oversight and financial support for the Promise Neighborhood. Other funding partners, including the John R. Oishei Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and U.S. Departments of Education and Justice support specific components of the initiative. Niagara IT Solutions helped develop the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood data system.

THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Major pipeline components and activities of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood are displayed in Figure 1.

- **Programs.** As the first step in the Promise Neighborhood's Early Education Foundations' services, partner EPIC reaches out to parents in maternity wards after a child's birth, conducts newborn classes, and makes referrals to other services, including CHCB and the Children's Academy early childhood education center. The Children's Academy, which was built from the ground up by the Promise Neighborhood and is operated by partner

Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Key Partners



Early Education Foundations

- Community Action Organization (CAO)
- Community Health Center of Buffalo
- Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)
- Read to Succeed Buffalo



School Transformation

- Buffalo Public Schools
- Highgate Heights Elementary School
- Westminster Community Charter School
- AmeriCorps
- Closing the Gap
- Council for Unity
- Say Yes to Education
- Service Collaborative of Western New York



College and Career Connections^a

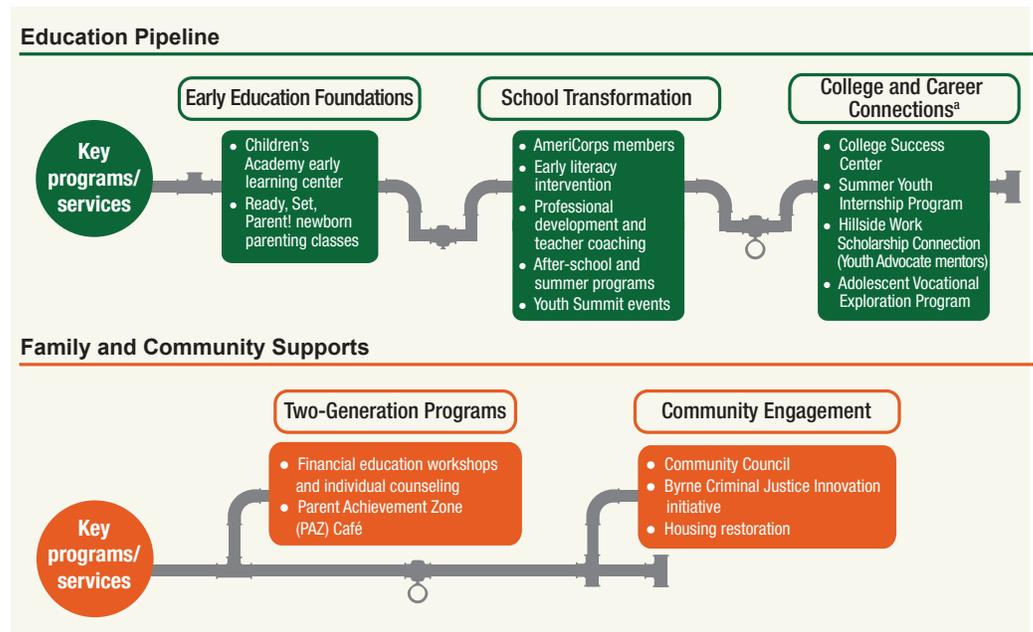
- Buffalo Urban League
- Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection
- Mayor's Summer Youth Internship program
- University of Buffalo



Two-Generation/Parent Achievement Zone

- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Belmont Housing Resources

Figure 1. Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Pipeline Components



Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This figure highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhood offers.

^a Most College and Career Connections programs ended with the 2013–2014 school year.

CAO, served 80 children ages 3 and 4 years in the 2013–2014 school year and expanded to add 40 infants and toddlers the next year.

The Promise Neighborhood plays a different role in each of the partner schools due to distinct relationships with the two elementary schools. The lead agency has operated one as a charter elementary school for a decade and continues to exercise broad authority over the reforms there. In the other partner elementary school, the Promise Neighborhood's lead agency serves as the managing Educational Partnership Organization under a School Improvement Grant (SIG) from the U.S. Department of Education. In addition to the influence in the school this arrangement gives the Promise Neighborhood, the SIG also provides funding used in part to provide teacher coaching and professional development to build the capacity of school staff.

To prepare students for college and careers, the Promise Neighborhood had offered several programs at Bennett High School, before its partnership with that school ended. At the College Success Center, students could get assistance from University of Buffalo graduate students to complete applications,

write essays, and fill out financial aid forms. The Promise Neighborhood promoted career readiness by connecting students to the Buffalo Urban League's Adolescent Vocational Exploration Program, which helped students define career goals and develop skills; the Hillside Work Scholarship Connection career-readiness dropout prevention program, which paired students with Youth Advocate mentors; and the City of Buffalo Mayor's Summer Youth Internship Program. However, all but the internship program concluded at the end of the 2013–2014 school year.

One Promise Neighborhood activity that is consistent across the partner schools is the placement of AmeriCorps staff, who provide classroom support for teachers, homework help, mentoring, after-school clubs, summer school activities, and other support for students in and out of class. The Service Collaborative of Western New York provides 23 AmeriCorps staff, who are distributed across the partner schools, through its AmeriCorps Builds Lives through Education program.

- **Families.** In the second year of the federal Promise Neighborhoods grant, Buffalo secured additional funding and implemented

(continued on next page)

Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Key Partners (continued)

Erie Community College
Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology



Community and Family Engagement/Services

Belmont Housing Resources
Buffalo Police Department
Buffalo Urban League
City of Buffalo
Erie County
Local Initiative Support Corp (LISC)
Peacekeepers
University of Buffalo Regional Institute



Funding Partners

M&T Bank
Annie E. Casey Foundation
John R. Oishei Foundation
U.S. Departments of Education and Justice
NYS Department of Education
Margaret L. Wendt Foundation
City of Buffalo
The Service Collaborative of Western New York

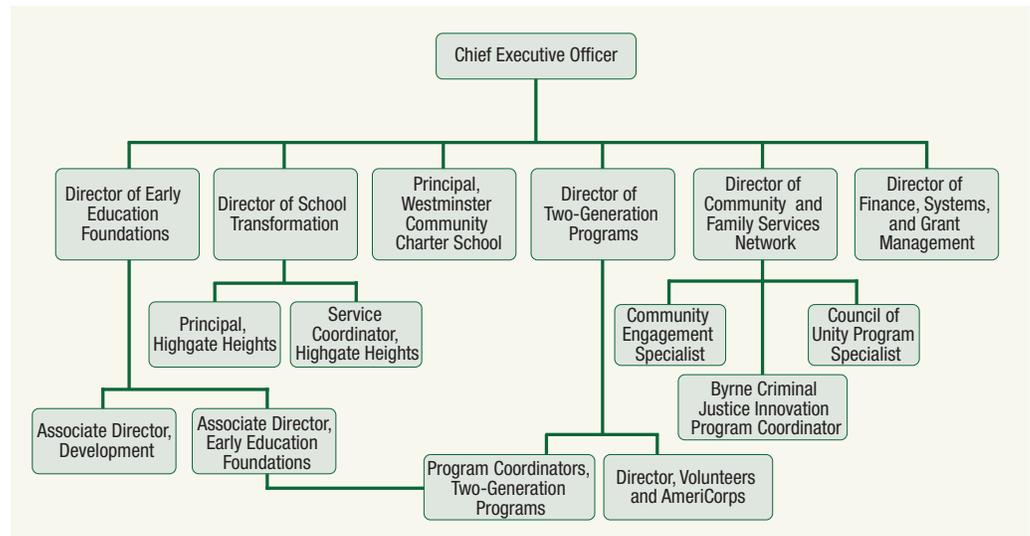


Data System Developer

Niagara IT Solutions

^a Most College and Career Connections programs ended with the 2013–2014 school year.

Figure 2. Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Organizational Structure



Source: Background documents from Buffalo Promise Neighborhood.

components focusing on parents and the community. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Two-Generation Program provides financial education, workforce development, and parenting skill building and support to parents and caregivers of children attending the Children’s Academy or prekindergarten at a partner school. Participants in the first financial education workshop requested ongoing group meetings, and the initiative responded by adding monthly Parent Achievement Zone (PAZ) Cafés, with a different topic each session.

With support from the U.S. Department of Justice through a Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) grant, the Promise Neighborhood partners with the Buffalo Police Department, other law enforcement agencies, and community members to prevent crime and increase safety.

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood also organized a Community Council, which works to improve the neighborhood. Staff reported that crime and safety is a key focus because it affects all aspects of life in the neighborhood; subcommittees of the council focus on different topics. For example, members of the council were involved in planning and running a youth leadership event with Promise Neighborhood staff and partners. Membership in the council and committees is open, and monthly meetings typically draw between 20 and 25 attendees.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STAFF ROLES

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is operated by approximately 25 direct staff members, including directors for each of the key content areas: Early Education Foundations, School Transformation, Two-Generation Programs, and Community and Family Services (Figure 2). Lead agency staff work closely with their counterparts at schools and other partners to implement programs and services. The Promise Neighborhood is overseen by a six-member board of directors that includes senior staff and representatives of key partners, led by the chairman of M&T Bank.

PROGRESS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Organizational/structural expansion.** To administer Buffalo’s Promise Neighborhood initiative, the lead agency developed from a foundation with a few staff that focused on a single charter school into a staff of approximately 25 people who work with schools and numerous other partners to serve community residents of all ages.
- **Establishment of a new child care center.** The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood demolished a dilapidated building in a central neighborhood location and replaced it with a newly-constructed 12,000-square-foot Children’s Academy designed to provide a high quality

learning environment for children in infancy through age 5 years. The lead agency drew on an experienced partner (initially Bethel Head Start; now CAO), to operate the Children's Academy. As of the 2014–2015 school year, the Children's Academy was at capacity, serving 120 children.

- **Visible community changes.** In addition to converting the Children's Academy location, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood has made other visible improvements. Partner Belmont Housing is rehabilitating 10 houses near the partner schools, increasing property values, and the Promise Neighborhood built a new playground at one of the schools and a community garden near another. Several respondents also attributed the breaking up of a burglary ring to the efforts of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood through the BCJI-supported safety efforts.
- **Promising early outcomes related to early learning.** After construction of the Children's Academy in 2013, Buffalo noted improvements in Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) indicators 2 and 3.² The percentage of children ages 5 and younger who attended an early learning setting (GPRA 3) increased from 62 percent in 2013 to 73 percent in 2014. The percentage of 3-year-olds and kindergartners who exhibited age-appropriate functioning (GPRA 2)—as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—increased from 90 to 95 percent in the same period.
- **Environmental improvements within partner school.** Leaders at one partner school described changes in the environment within the building while cautioning that they did not expect those changes to immediately be reflected in test scores. Both leaders and teaching staff noted a higher degree of support for staff and students, collaboration between teachers, a greater focus on academics, and reduction in behavioral issues. For example, the number of formal office referrals decreased from 832 in the 2012–2013 school year to 330 in 2013–2014, and the number of suspensions decreased from more than 300 to just 51 during the same period. Leaders consider these environmental changes a necessary first step toward improvements in academic performance.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Local barriers can impede school reform.** Promise Neighborhood leaders reported that district politics and instability at the leadership level make it challenging to work within the Buffalo Public Schools. They also cited difficulty removing ineffective teachers—even at the charter school—due to the strong teachers' union in the district. The Promise Neighborhood attempts to set clear expectations for teachers at the charter school and hopes they will self-select out of the school if they do not buy in to the reforms. In some cases, the lead agency has fired teachers, despite the lengthy appeals process.
- **Communication among staff at all levels is crucial.** It can take time and effort for frontline partner staff to become familiar with all the other Promise Neighborhood partners and programs. For example, during a case study focus group, one frontline staff person from a partner organization reported seeing a staff member from another partner organization at her location but not knowing what she does. Such lack of awareness can hamper effective referrals and limit the extent to which partners learn from each other. Participants in the focus group suggested making formal introductions of staff working in the same location or inviting frontline staff to attend Promise Neighborhood partner meetings.
- **Data system development takes time.** To develop a central data system to meet the complex needs of the initiative, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood contracted with the same information technology vendor that operates the local public school district's data system. The new data system was expected to be in place by January 2015. During development, partners have submitted data in different ways, such as via Excel spreadsheets, and the Promise Neighborhood was able to access student data through the school district's data system.
- **Loss of a key partner can require reassessment of related activities.** The Promise Neighborhood's relationship with its partner Bennett High School ended after the 2013–2014 school year, as the district had slated the school to be closed. Rather than choose a new high school to partner with, the Promise Neighborhood had tentatively identified an alternative pathway—encouraging

ABOUT PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS CASE STUDIES

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at Policy Link (PNI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods, including Buffalo. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and three-to-four-day site visits to each selected Promise Neighborhood at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

students completing 8th grade at its other partner schools to continue their education in private or public “criteria” magnet schools with proven track records of preparing high school students for college—and was beginning to plan additional supports.

LOOKING FORWARD

- **Redefining supports for high school students.** With the expected loss of its partner high school, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is identifying alternative pathways and supports for students progressing through high school and into college and careers. The Promise Neighborhood AmeriCorps staff formerly stationed at the high school will be reallocated to the remaining partner schools. It is not yet clear what other related changes the Promise Neighborhood might make to programs that have taken place in the high school, such as those in the college and career area.
- **Uncertainty regarding sustainability of full initiative.** Although Buffalo leveraged the \$6 million federal Promise Neighborhood grant into \$32 million, continuation beyond that period is in question. One leader expressed concern that without the U.S. Department of Education funds, the matching funding would end as well, and the Promise Neighborhood initiative would have to be scaled back.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ENDNOTES

¹ Buffalo Promise Neighborhood implementation grant application, September 2011.

² Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, *U.S. Department of Education Grant Performance Report*, 2014.

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Hulse, Lara, and Kimberly Boller. “Promise Neighborhood Site Profile: Buffalo Promise Neighborhood.” Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.

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Promise Neighborhood **Site PROFILE**

Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

South Bay Community Services

LOCATION:

Chula Vista, CA

FEDERAL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT:

Date of grant award:
December 2012

Date grant agreement with U.S. Department of Education executed:
January 2013

Total investment:
\$61 million (\$27.8 million federal grant and \$33 million in matching funds) over five years

COMMUNITY CONTEXT/TARGET POPULATION

Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood (CVPromise) serves the neighborhood of Castle Park, a 33-census block area in the city of Chula Vista. In collaboration with the Chula Vista Elementary School District leadership, the border of the CVPromise catchment area was drawn along the lines of the attendance zone for Castle Park Elementary, one of the lowest-performing schools in the area and in program improvement status under No Child Left Behind for several years.

The rates of poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, and food stamp use in the Castle Park community are significantly higher than in San Diego County or the state of California.¹ Only one-third of adults in the community graduated high school, and fewer than 40 percent of children attend prekindergarten. About 70 percent of the residents are Latino, and nearly 50 percent of students are English language learners (ELL).

There are 6,700 residents in the neighborhood, including more than 1,800 children. By the fifth year of the grant, CVPromise plans to serve all children residing in the neighborhood and all students who attend one of the partner schools, for a total of more than 2,800 children.

KEY PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

South Bay Community Services (SBCS), the lead CVPromise agency, has a long history of providing a comprehensive spectrum of services—from housing assistance to child abuse prevention and intervention to school reform—for children and families in South San Diego County. The initiative partners with Castle Park Elementary and the two middle and two high schools it feeds into. These schools are in Chula Vista's two school districts, one for the elementary schools and the other for the middle and high schools.

During the planning stage, SBCS brought together more than 25 partners in addition to the schools, including city and county departments, nonprofit service providers, hospitals, institutions of higher education, businesses, and parent and resident groups, to build their continuum of cradle-to-college solutions (see sidebar, page 2). CVPromise partners signed on to provide a 100 percent financial or in-kind match for a total investment of more than \$60 million to support CVPromise.

CVPromise partners provide services in all areas of the initiative including early childhood, student enrichment, college and career readiness, workforce development, family support, and neighborhood revitalization. For example, CVPromise's early development services are enhanced through partnerships with Family Health Centers of San Diego and Scripps Medical Center, which offer newborn home visiting. Additional partners provide family support services, including the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, which provides benefit eligibility screenings and application assistance for CVPromise families, and two social workers to assist neighborhood children and families involved in the child welfare system. The initiative's data partner is San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), which collects and analyzes the data required for grant reporting.

THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Since receiving the Promise Neighborhoods grant, SBCS has added nearly 100 staff to intensify and enrich the existing services available to the neighborhood and to implement the Turnaround Model (formerly the Granger Turnaround Model) in their partner schools.² Major components of CVPromise are represented in Figure 1.

Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Key Partners



Early Childhood

Family Health Centers of San Diego
 First 5 Commission of San Diego
 Scripps Medical Center, Chula Vista
 YMCA Childcare Resource Service
 American Academy of Pediatrics



Schools

Chula Vista Elementary School District
 Castle Park Elementary School
 Sweetwater Union High School District
 Castle Park Middle School
 Castle Park High School
 Hilltop Middle School
 Hilltop High School



Enrichment

A Reason to Survive (ARTS)
 San Diego Youth Symphony
 South Bay YMCA
 The Living Coast

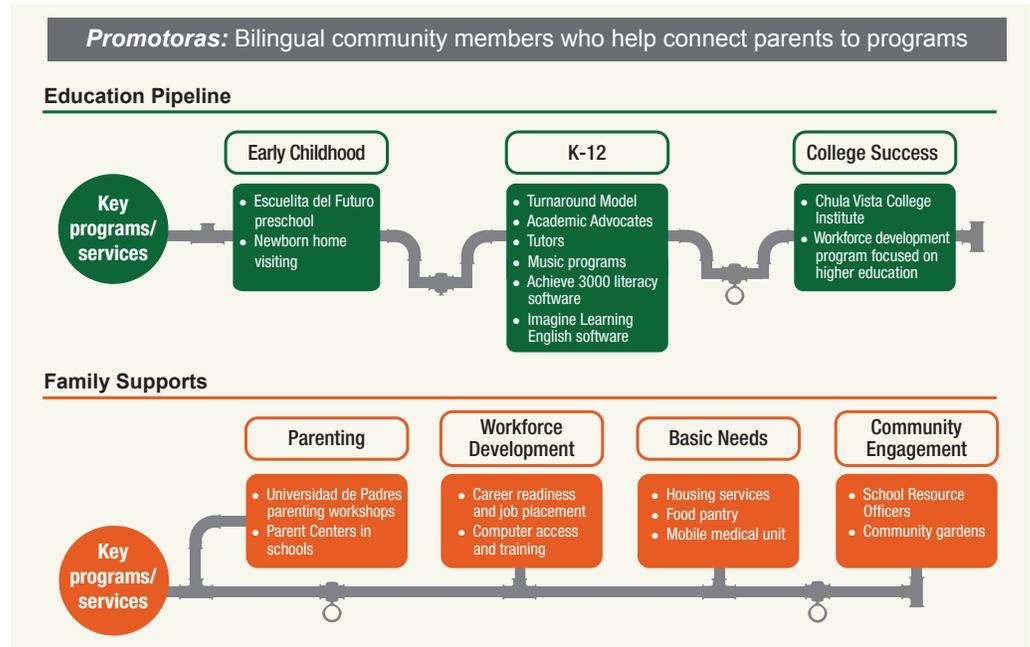


College and Career Readiness

Barrio Logan College Institute (BLCI)
 University of California, San Diego (UCSD)
 Southwestern College

(continued on next page)

Figure 1. Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Pipeline Components



Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This figure highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhood offers.

- Programs.** CVPromise leadership stated that the Early Learning Network (ELN), which serves families and children from birth through elementary school, is the most important component of the initiative because early learning serves as the foundation for all future growth and development. The ELN provides programs such as newborn home visiting and Escuelita del Futuro, a preschool for children ages 3–5.

One of the most emphasized educational programs offered through CVPromise is the Turnaround Model, which is implemented in all partner elementary and middle schools. The Turnaround Model involves frequent assessments, with re-teaching and re-testing for students who score below 70 percent, and mandatory after-school and weekend sessions for students who miss homework assignments or are frequently absent. In addition to the Turnaround Model, the CVPromise initiative also provides computer-based literacy programs including Achieve 3000, a differentiated instruction instrument that assigns students nonfiction articles to read and analyze; and Imagine Learning, a literacy curriculum geared toward ELL students. Additional K–12 supports include tutoring, bullying prevention programs, arts, music, and wellness programs.

CVPromise initiates the college preparation process early through its Chula Vista College Institute, which begins fostering a college-going culture for future first-generation college students in the third grade through college preparatory workshops, academic counseling for students and parents, tutoring and homework support, and field trips. This program will eventually expand to the middle and high schools. Academic Advocates stationed on the middle and high school campuses provide mentoring and college advising. One of the initiative’s partners, Manpower, provides a three-week workforce development after-school program for students in grades 11 and 12 that emphasizes higher education and career exploration.

- Families.** CVPromise implements many services to support families and integrate them into students’ academic careers. Universidad de Padres is a 12-session workshop for parents and caregivers of children from birth to age 3 years. In addition to the parenting support provided in children’s first years, families receive financial literacy, workforce, and nutritional training. For example, CVPromise partner Manpower offers a three-week workforce development program for adults at a partner middle school that focuses on career readiness and job placement. Another partner,

Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Key Partners
(continued)

Workforce Development

Manpower
San Diego Futures Foundation

Family Support

Chula Vista Community Collaborative
County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency
San Diego Food Bank
Feeding America

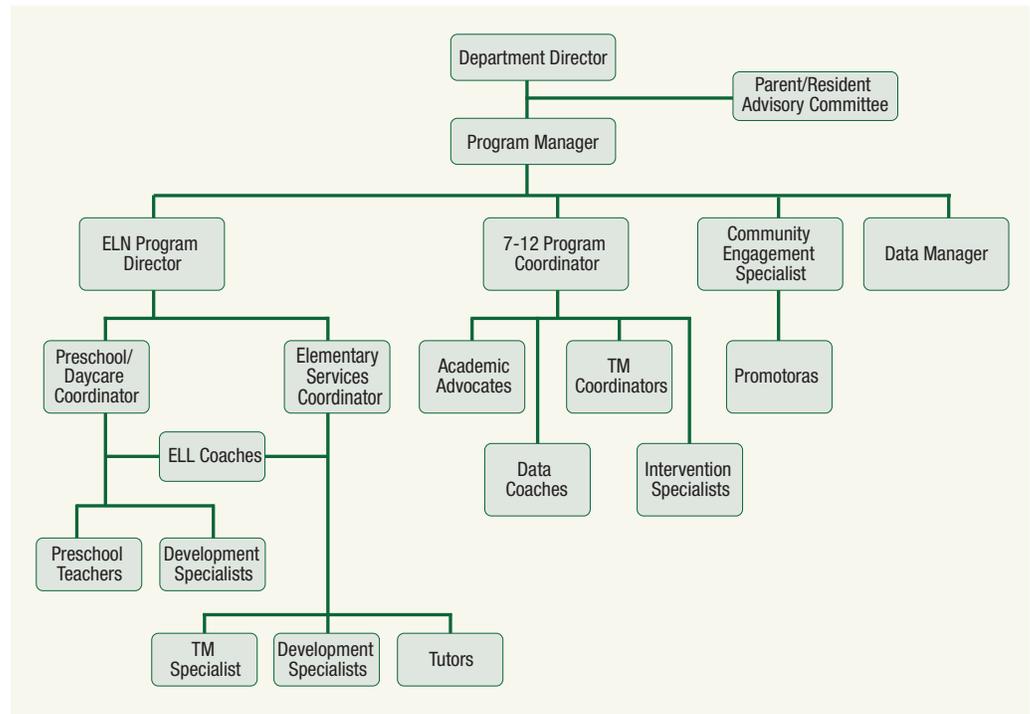
Neighborhood Revitalization

City of Chula Vista
San Diego Organizing Project
Chula Vista Police Department
United Way of San Diego
Wells Fargo
Lowell Blankfort
STAR News
Sea World Aquatica
The Parker Foundation
San Diego Padres
La Prensa

Data System and Evaluation

SANDAG

Figure 2. Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Organizational Structure



Source: Background Documents from Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood.
ELL=English language learner; ELN=Early Learning Network; TM=Turnaround Model.

the San Diego Futures Foundation, provides technology support to help participants learn basic computer skills and complete online job applications. Families can also take advantage of affordable housing support, tax preparation assistance, and the mobile medical unit, which offers free primary health care services to Castle Park children.

CVPromise has also initiated specific neighborhood revitalization efforts. For example, the initiative partnered with KaBOOM (a nonprofit that encourages active play for children) to design a dream playground for a local park, which was constructed by more than 200 volunteers. Additionally, the Ojos en la Calle (Eyes on the Street) program works with community volunteers to provide a safe environment for students to walk to and from school, a concern that parents raised at the start of the initiative.

The Parent/Resident Advisory Committee, comprising parents and community members, meets monthly to discuss implementation and advise CVPromise leadership on the community’s needs. It discusses various issues impacting the community such as those related to education and health, and offers suggestions to address the community’s needs.

Chula Vista employs more than a dozen dedicated outreach and engagement staff, called Promotoras, to assess families’ needs and make referrals to other lead agency or partner staff. Chula Vista recruits these bilingual staff from within the community, to the extent possible, so that their backgrounds are similar to those of the population. Promotoras are stationed at each school’s parent center.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STAFF ROLES

The SBCS Director of Youth and Family Development manages all SBCS youth programming, including CVPromise. The Program Manager oversees the directors of the initiative’s pipeline component areas: early learning, middle and high school services, and community engagement (Figure 2). SBCS expanded its staff by almost 100 people, and these staff provide a large portion of the Promise Neighborhood programming. CVPromise frontline staff include preschool teachers, ELN Development Specialists, Turnaround Model Specialists, ELL Coaches, tutors, Academic Advocates, Instructional Specialists, and Promotoras.

The community also plays a key role in the initiative, providing guidance, staff, and volunteers. Ninety percent of CVPromise staff have been recruited from the community, and the initiative has enlisted almost 700 community and parent volunteers to support their efforts.

PROGRESS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Community engagement.** Several interviewees commented on increased parent and community participation and engagement. In 2013, more than 1,500 residents were enrolled in CVPromise programs.³ The elementary school has a Parent Teacher Association for the first time in five years. The Parent/Resident Advisory Committee meets monthly to strategize ways to meet the community's needs. The number of community volunteers increased from 19 to 682 between January and December 2013. Volunteers have been involved in activities such as helping build a community garden and playground. One community resident commented, "Now I do [feel part of the community], but before I didn't feel that way. The information wasn't there and I didn't feel like a part of the community. [Now] we go to meetings and classes together, so we socialize more."
- **Promising early outcomes of some programs** (based on data from a neighborhood survey reported in CVPromise 2013 and 2014 annual progress reports).
 - › The percentage of children birth to age 5 attending center-based and home-based care (Government Performance and Results Act [GPRA] indicator 3) increased from 43 percent in 2012 to 59 percent in 2013. The opening of CVPromise's Escuelita del Futuro contributed to this outcome. The center was fully enrolled upon opening with a waiting list of 50 children. A second classroom was added to help accommodate the community's interest.
 - › The percentage of parents of children birth to kindergarten who reported that they read to their children three or more times per week (GPRA indicator 12) increased from 53 percent in 2012 to 68 percent in 2013. CVPromise leadership attributes this improvement to its ELN programming such as the Universidad de Padres, which devotes one of its workshop sessions to family literacy, and the book clubs ELL Coaches initiated in Escuelita del Futuro classrooms.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Engaging parents in the continuum of services.** Engaging parents and children in multiple programs within the pipeline has been challenging because work, busy schedules, and competing priorities prevent families from accessing the full complement of CVPromise services. Families are too overwhelmed to manage the logistics of juggling multiple programs. To help families connect to various components of the pipeline, CVPromise started designating a point person for each family to help respond to their needs and make it easier for families to access services.
- **Collaborating with partners.** Staff, leadership, and partners reported that establishing effective partnerships is challenging. Successful collaboration requires aligning priorities and combining resources, which can be a difficult task for independent organizations. One lead agency representative commented that appealing to the need to work together for the benefit of the community helped facilitate the CVPromise collaboration.
- **Supporting staff and partners.** Lead agency frontline staff and partners noted the need for more clearly defined staff and partner roles and responsibilities and for better communication about CVPromise activities. The first year of implementation was a learning process as all the players learned to negotiate their new roles. One lead agency respondent noted, "They knew what they wanted to accomplish, but not how to do it. There were no handbooks or job descriptions. There was a lot to figure out." A partner representative reported that it has been challenging to maintain connections between CVPromise programs due to the large number of organizations involved. The respondent commented that additional communication from the lead agency regarding CVPromise activities would facilitate connections between partners. One Promotora suggested slowing the pace of implementation in the beginning to allow time to build the necessary infrastructure before initiating programs and services.

ABOUT PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS CASE STUDIES

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at Policy Link (PNI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods, including Chula Vista. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and three-to-four-day site visits to each selected Promise Neighborhood at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

LOOKING FORWARD

- **Initiative enhancements.** CVPromise leadership regularly assesses service needs and adds programs and services as opportunities arise. For example, CVPromise recently added mammogram screening and a new summer camp to the initiative's offerings.
- **Sustainability planning.** Staff, leadership, and partners all expressed interest in continuing their efforts, with or without federal funding. The monetary and in-kind matches SBCS solicited from all its partners will facilitate continued operation of CVPromise services, particularly because start-up costs are higher than the costs associated with ongoing operations. CVPromise is working with partners to institutionalize their initiative offerings within their organizations. Many partners have already committed to continuing their programs. The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency, for instance, plans to maintain staff on the Castle Park Middle School campus after the grant funding ends. At the same time, CVPromise is working with PNI to secure diverse sources of funding to help ensure the sustainability of all components of the initiative.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ENDNOTES

¹ Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood implementation grant application, July 2012.

² SBCS and Sweetwater Union High School District developed the model to turn around two persistently low-performing schools. Since implementing the model, both schools have exited program improvement status, and their Academic Performance Index scores and attendance rates have increased.

³ Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood, *Results Report 2013*, available at <http://www.cvpromise.org/images/Resultsreport2013web.pdf>.

Suggested Citation

Mraz Esposito, Andrea, Sarah Osborne, Lara Hulsey, Kimberly Boller, and Celina Kamler. "Promise Neighborhood Site Profile: Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood." Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.

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Promise Neighborhood **Site PROFILE**

Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

Youth Policy Institute

LOCATION:

Los Angeles, CA

FEDERAL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT:

Date of grant award:
December 2012

Date grant agreement with U.S. Department of Education executed:
December 2012

Total investment:
\$60 million (\$30 million federal grant and \$30 million in matching funds) over five years

COMMUNITY CONTEXT/ TARGET POPULATION

The Los Angeles (LA) Promise Neighborhood includes two separate communities, Pacoima and Hollywood, which are about 17 miles from each other. The lead agency drew the boundaries for one of the two communities based, in part, on the location of existing partnerships on which it could draw. They chose to expand their service model to a second community with few nonprofits, despite the need for services.

- **Pacoima.** According to the 2010 census, 40,734 residents, including 13,168 children, live within the Pacoima community.¹ The population is 90 percent Latino, and about half of the residents are immigrants. In Pacoima, the majority of students perform below state standards and more than half of adults have less than a high school diploma. Within the boundaries of the neighborhood, 55 to 75 percent of families with children live in poverty and face serious public safety threats.
- **Hollywood.** The Hollywood community is home to 57,044 residents, including 10,236 children. Nearly half of the residents are Latino (48 percent), 34 percent are white, 12 percent are Asian, and 4 percent are African American. More than half of the population is foreign born. In 2010, only 50 percent of neighborhood high school students graduated, and the unemployment rate was 19 percent, substantially higher than the national rate. In some of the most distressed areas of the neighborhood, up to 85 percent of children live in poverty.

When it reaches full scale in 2017, LA Promise Neighborhood plans to serve 65 percent of children within the two communities, including all 12,820 students attending LA Promise Neighborhood target schools. Neighborhood students not attending a target school can access the initiative's services through neighborhood community resource centers.

KEY PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

The lead agency for the LA Promise Neighborhood, the Youth Policy Institute (YPI), has provided a range of education, training, and technology services for low-income families and communities in Los Angeles, beginning in community centers and expanding into Full-Service Community Schools. YPI works with more than 60 partners to implement the initiative, including nearly 30 Promise Neighborhood subcontracted partners who provide direct services, as well as partners who provide in-kind services (see the sidebar on page 2 for a list of key service-provider partners). In addition, the Promise Neighborhood has "symbolic" partners such as public officials who provide non-monetary support for the initiative.

The Los Angeles Unified School District and the neighborhood's 18 target schools, three of which YPI operates, are key partners in the initiative. Partner schools include traditional public schools, charter schools, pilot schools, and small learning community schools. Other major partners include organizations providing tutoring services, namely the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); partners that provide enrichment activities, such as the Unusual Suspects Theatre Company; and case management partners such as the Thai Community Development Center.

THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

YPI's main goal in applying for a Promise Neighborhoods grant was to create a program model that would help alleviate poverty in its target communities by providing educational and wraparound services to whole families. Both communities offer services in each of the Promise Neighborhoods pipeline components, although the specific activities offered

Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Key Partners



Early Childhood

First Five LA
Los Angeles Education Partnership
MEND-Meet Each Need with Dignity Para Los Niños



Academic Support

AmeriCorps
Communities in Schools
LA Youth Network
Los Angeles Unified School District
Spark
UCLA Community Based Learning Program



Family Support

Citi Community Development
El Nido Family Centers
Friends of the Family
Phoenix House
Public Counsel
Thai Community Development Center

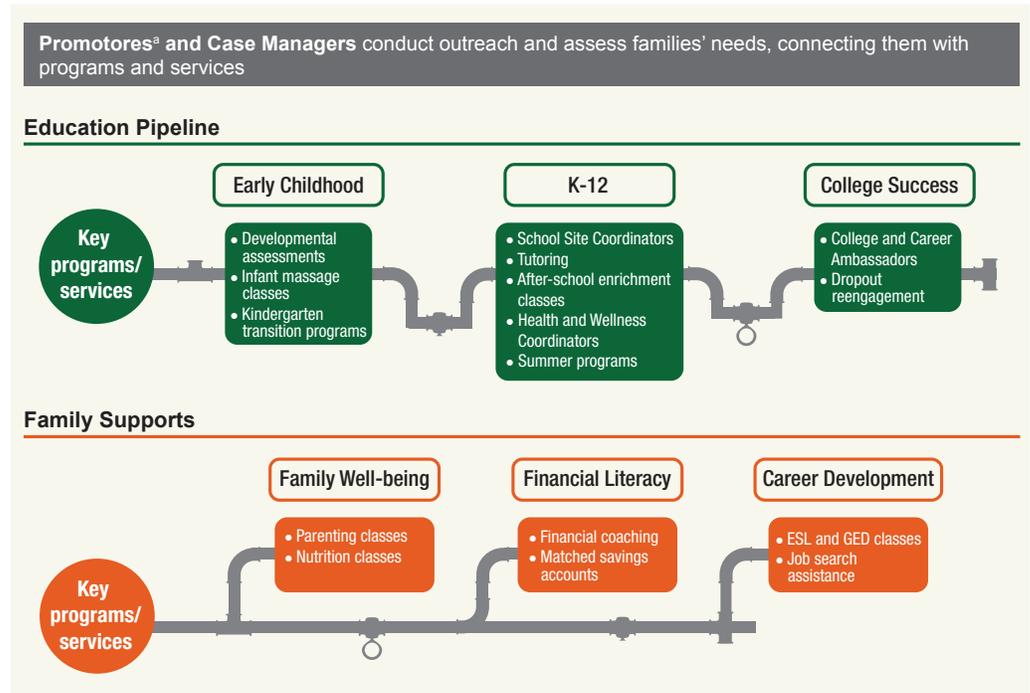


College and Career Readiness

College Summit
Los Angeles Mission College
Salvadoran-American Leadership & Educational Fund

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Figure 1. Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Pipeline Components



Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This figure highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhood offers.

^a Promotores build relationships with the neighborhood residents and help publicize the initiative through presentations throughout the community.

ESL = English as a Second Language; GED = General Educational Development.

vary depending on the community's need and the local partners. The central elements of the pipeline are laid out in Figure 1.

The target schools and community resource centers are the focal points for all Promise Neighborhood activities. In addition to serving as the primary location for Promise Neighborhood K-12 programs, family support activities are also offered at the schools. The LA Promise Neighborhood community resource centers function as one-stop shops, offering a range of activities across the initiative's continuum of services for both children and their families.

- **Programs.** In the early childhood area, LA Promise Neighborhood provides developmental assessments, baby massage classes, and summer kindergarten transition programs, and its partner the Los Angeles Education Partnership offers playgroups for children up to age 3.

Each partner school has a School Site Coordinator who conducts outreach to students and families and connects them with Promise Neighborhood services. The initiative's K-12

services include academic supports such as tutoring; health and wellness activities such as fitness classes and self-esteem workshops; and student mental health services. Summer programming includes camp activities such as science projects, nutrition instruction, and gardening clubs, as well as summer youth employment and middle-to-high school transition programs.

College and Career Ambassadors answer high school students' questions about college and careers and help them fill out financial aid forms and college applications, explore their career interests and options, and draft cover letters and resumes. Some education pipeline programming occurs at school sites whereas other services are available at the community resource centers. For example, tutoring services are provided at the schools and the community centers, and dropout reengagement activities are held at community resource centers.

- **Families.** LA Promise Neighborhood supports families through parenting classes, adult education and career classes, and family health

Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Key Partners
(continued)



Enrichment/Out of School Time

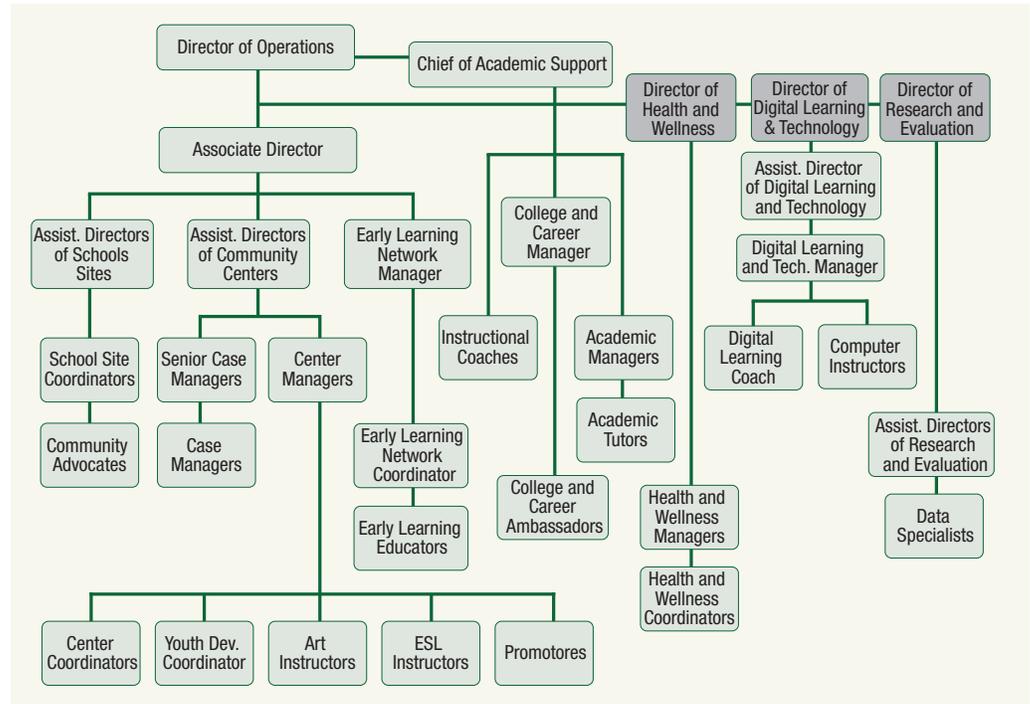
- Artworx
- Boys & Girls Club of Hollywood
- Create Now
- Harmony Project
- L.A.C.E.R. Afterschool Programs
- The Actors' Gang
- The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company



Health/Mental Health

- Focus Fish
- Hollygrove
- Northeast Valley Health Corporation
- SOSMentor

Figure 2. Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood Organizational Structure



Source: Background documents from Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood.

Note: The staff positions listed in light green boxes are funded by the LA Promise Neighborhood. The gray boxes represent other YPI positions.

ESL = English as a Second Language.

services. The initiative offers My Parent and Me classes, which teach parents communication skills and how to promote their children’s health and literacy. Free childcare services enable parents to participate in General Educational Development (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, or workforce development services. Family health supports include nutrition classes, Zumba, and drug awareness workshops. As with the education pipeline programs, these services are provided at schools or the community resource centers, depending on the activity.

LA Promise Neighborhood staff host monthly community collaborative meetings in both communities. These meetings give community-based organizations and community members a space to share information on resources within the community.

Promotores housed within the community resource centers build relationships with the neighborhood residents and publicize the initiative through presentations throughout the community. The community resource centers also provide case management services to link families to needed services.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STAFF ROLES

YPI manages a number of community initiatives in addition to the LA Promise Neighborhood, and the directors of many of these initiatives are members of the LA Promise Neighborhood leadership team. This overlap facilitates communication, coordination, and the leveraging of resources among the various initiatives YPI manages. The Promise Neighborhood initiative also draws on existing YPI support structures, including staff from the finance, human resources, development, and research departments.

The Director of Promise Neighborhood Operations manages the coordination and provision of the initiative’s services, overseeing the associate directors of the school sites and community resource centers and the Early Learning Network Manager, and collaborating with the Chief of Academic Support to provide instructional services (Figure 2). Additional Promise Neighborhood staff supervised by YPI’s directors of Health and Wellness, Digital Learning and Technology, and Research and Evaluation divisions support the initiative. There are separate

administrative structures for school site and community resource center staff in each of the two communities: There is an Assistant Director of School Sites for Pacoima and one for Hollywood; likewise, each community has its own Assistant Director of Community Resource Centers. The assistant directors of the other areas oversee services across the two communities. LA Promise Neighborhood also employs a variety of part-time staff, such as academic tutors; Promotores; instructional coaches; ESL, art, and computer instructors; and early learning educators.

PROGRESS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Population reached.** LA Promise Neighborhood served more than 11,000 children during its first year of implementation, reaching nearly half of the children in the two communities.² The initiative also served more than 4,000 family and community members.
- **Enhanced services and new community served.** YPI has provided academic and community services to the Pacoima community for more than 10 years. Through the Promise Neighborhoods grant, YPI enhanced the services provided within Pacoima without duplicating efforts. The grant also enabled YPI to replicate their program model in Hollywood, a community with previously unfilled needs, and add an early learning component in each community to complete a cradle-to-career pipeline. LA Promise Neighborhood leadership commented that establishing a presence in Hollywood was one of the initiative's major accomplishments in the first year, as the community had few existing resources from which to build the infrastructure to launch the Promise Neighborhood.
- **Collaboration enhanced.** LA Promise Neighborhood leadership highlighted the strong partnerships the initiative has fostered, for example, facilitating collaborative and coordinated work toward mutual goals between neighborhood schools. The LA Promise Neighborhood partner schools include traditional public schools, charters, small learning community schools, and pilot schools. In the past, little coordination took place between the schools with different forms of governance, but now they are communicating with one another and working toward

the same measurable goals. For example, they are engaging in coordinated curriculum planning and working together to help students transition between schools.

- **Promising early outcomes related to student academic achievement.** Promise Neighborhood leaders reported that the Academic Performance Index³ (API) of the 18 LA Promise Neighborhood target schools increased an average of 18 points from the 2011–2012 to the 2012–2013 school year, with eight schools increasing by more than 30 points. During the same period, the overall statewide average API decreased by 2 points. The initiative's leaders attribute these increases to programs initiated in the target schools during their planning grant year in 2010.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Building new relationships.** Although the foundation of the Promise Neighborhood model has been established in Hollywood, the lead agency has not developed solid relationships with all partners yet. Some partnerships were hindered by the initial implementation pressure. LA Promise Neighborhood staff are trying to strike a better balance between the need to quickly initiate Promise Neighborhood programs and services while building relationships and supporting new partners.
- **Brief time window for long-term change.** LA Promise Neighborhood leadership reported feeling a sense of urgency to implement the pipeline components. Although achievement of the ultimate goal of neighborhood transformation is beyond the scope of the five-year Promise Neighborhoods grant, LA leaders feel pressured to demonstrate within those first five years that they are positively affecting the community. One respondent commented that with core services now in place, the initiative will need to focus on systems-level and policy changes to effect greater change.
- **Lack of comparable data.** Based on recommendations from their grant technical assistance provider, LA Promise Neighborhood submitted a revised data plan in April 2014. They have identified new sources of data for the performance indicators they are required to submit to the U.S. Department of Education. They will

ABOUT PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS CASE STUDIES

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at Policy Link (PNI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods, including Los Angeles. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and three-to-four-day site visits to each selected Promise Neighborhood at the end of the 2013–2014 school year.

be unable to compare the data they collected previously with the data they are now collecting. Thus, they have not established baseline values or targets for their early learning and family support performance indicators, but they anticipate having the data to do so by March 2015. Similarly, they do not have baselines or targets for their academic indicators because the Common Core-aligned Smarter Balanced Assessment will replace the California Standards Tests in the 2014–2015 school year. The new assessment was piloted in 2013–2014, but the results will not be publicly released. Thus, LA Promise Neighborhood does not have comparable data from which to set academic indicator benchmarks and targets, and they are exploring other sources of data to provide context for the new scores. Leadership also highlighted that assessment tools for kindergarten preparedness are inconsistent across schools—an issue YPI will address this year, pushing all of the schools to identify and define kindergarten readiness using the same assessment, then making a proposal to the district.

LOOKING FORWARD

- **Early development services enhancement.** Before the Promise Neighborhoods grant, YPI had limited experience in the area of early childhood development. During year one, LA Promise Neighborhood established partnerships with a number of organizations that provide services to neighborhood children ages birth to 5. In fall 2014, they intend to convene work groups to plan additional early development services and are working to build relationships with early childhood providers.
- **Use of outcomes data.** In recognition of their partners' varying levels of experience with performance measurement, in year one LA Promise Neighborhood only required partners to submit attendance data. In year two, partners will be asked to track additional outcomes. The Promise Neighborhood leadership plans to use outcome data, as the information becomes available, to guide their programming, including convening work groups to discuss outcomes.

- **Plans for sustainability.** YPI is working toward matching the \$30 million they received from the U.S. Department of Education to reach \$60 million total in the fifth year of the Promise Neighborhoods grant. By developing and strengthening coordination among partners and schools, they hope to also continue work after the grant period ends. When partners identify funding opportunities, YPI shares its development staff with partners to build their capacity and enhance the overall quality and success of the LA Promise Neighborhood. YPI, in collaboration with other organizations, is working on a statewide ballot initiative for 2016 and related legislation that would create a \$700–800 million annual allocation for child poverty in California. Promise Neighborhoods would be one of the featured strategies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ENDNOTES

¹ Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood implementation grant application, 2012.

² Queen, J., Epps, Z., Whiting, D., & Stone, M. (2014, August). Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood annual grants performance report. Rockville, MD: Results Leadership Group.

³ California uses the API to measure schools' academic performance and improvement based on students' performance on statewide assessments.

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Promise Neighborhood **Site PROFILE**

Northside Achievement Zone

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

Northside Achievement Zone

LOCATION:

Minneapolis, MN

FEDERAL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT:

Date of grant award:
December 2011

Date grant agreement with U.S. Department of Education executed:
December 2011

Total projected investment:
\$55 million (\$27.5 million federal grant with a 1:1 nonfederal match) over five years

COMMUNITY CONTEXT/ TARGET POPULATION

The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) serves a contiguous 13-by-18-block area in North Minneapolis, selected because it encompasses a region with the highest concentration of negative indicators related to poverty, violence, and low educational achievement in the area. More than a third of NAZ residents (36 percent) live in households with incomes below the federal poverty level.¹ Public schools in the Zone identified 25 percent of students as homeless or highly mobile during the 2008–2009 year. In 2010, just 29 percent of children entering kindergarten living in and near the Zone met literacy benchmarks on tests of kindergarten readiness.

According to the 2010 census, almost 15,000 people live in this geographical area, including more than 5,600 children. NAZ plans to enroll 1,000 households, including 2,500 of these children, when the Promise Neighborhood reaches scale. Nearly half of the neighborhood residents are African American, 20 percent white, 18 percent Asian, 8 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent multiracial or other ethnicities, based on 2010 census data.

KEY PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

NAZ partners with nine schools and approximately 30 anchor partner organizations (see sidebar, page 2). Partner schools include four in the Minneapolis Public Schools district, three charter schools, an alternative school, and a parochial school. Due to school choice policies, students who live within NAZ's geographical boundaries can attend schools throughout the district or even in other districts nearby. The majority of the partner schools are located near to but outside NAZ boundaries, and staff report that about 25 percent of NAZ-enrolled students attend nonpartner schools.

Action teams of partner organizations with expertise in a content area work together with NAZ leaders and staff to create evidence-based solution plans—blueprints that guide the services provided in each major area of NAZ's continuum of support. Solution plans are developed and refined as part of a continuous improvement process known as the NAZ Seal of Effectiveness. The process begins with developing goals and forming the action team, which reviews literature on best practices in addition to drawing on members' own expertise. The research-based solution plans undergo peer review from independent experts before being adopted. Implementation of the plans is monitored to ensure fidelity and assess progress toward outcomes, and the plans will be revised over time to improve services. Each action team meets with NAZ leaders annually as part of the site's Results-Based Accountability process.

Anchor partners lead and participate in these action teams, implement the resulting plans in providing services to NAZ enrollees, and have access to the NAZ Connect data system. Referral partners also provide services to NAZ families and use the solution plans to inform their work, but have not signed a formal agreement with NAZ and do not use NAZ Connect.

Importantly, NAZ considers enrolled families to be full and equal partners. NAZ provides support, resources, and opportunities, but families are ultimately responsible for their own progress. In this way, NAZ supports families in coming to see themselves as powerful agents of change in their own lives and in their community, rather than as perennial recipients of social services. NAZ also refers to all children it serves as "scholars" to reinforce the expectation that all children will achieve academic success.

Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) Anchor Partners



Early Childhood

- Bright Water Montessori School
- Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery
- LaCreche Early Childhood Centers, Inc.
- Minneapolis Public Schools Early Childhood Education
- Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency
- New Horizon Academy
- Northside Child Development Center
- Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
- The Family Partnership
- Think Small Way to Grow
- YWCA of Minneapolis

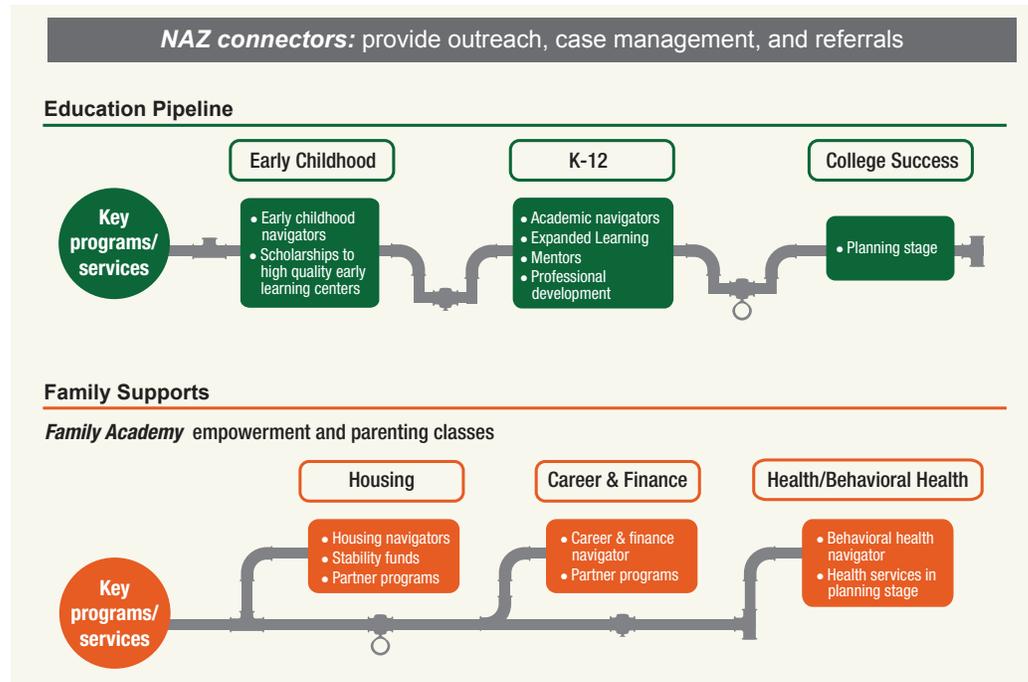


K-12 Schools

- Ascension Catholic School
- Elizabeth Hall International Elementary School
- Harvest Preparatory School and Seed Academy
- KIPP North Star Academy
- Nellie Stone Johnson Elementary School
- North Senior Academy
- Patrick Henry High School
- PYC Arts & Technology High School
- Sojourner Truth Academy Elementary School

(continued on next page)

Figure 1. Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) Pipeline Components



Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This figure highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhood offers.

THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Major pipeline components and activities in the NAZ “ecosystem” are displayed in Figure 1. Each family that expresses interest or is referred to NAZ is assigned to a connector, who builds a relationship with the family beginning with the recruitment and enrollment process and remains their main point of contact with NAZ. Connectors assist families in developing achievement plans, identify their needs and resources to address them, and follow up with enrolled families on a regular basis to check in on family needs and overall well-being. Navigators specialize in a content area—such as early childhood or housing—and are called in by connectors as needed to provide advice and referrals in a specific area. NAZ connectors and navigators are located on site at all nine partner schools and at other key partner locations, to facilitate information flow and maintain strong partnerships.

- **Programs.** In the early childhood area, NAZ distributes scholarships (using Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge and state funds) for children to attend high quality early learning centers administered primarily by NAZ partners. Early childhood navigators

help families identify providers, assess eligibility for scholarships or other resources to defray the costs, and determine related needs, such as transportation for the child to attend.

For school-age children, NAZ offers supports within partner schools and during out-of-school time. Academic navigators located in the nine partner schools build relationships with students and work individually with them to support progress toward their goals. Six partners provide academically focused expanded learning opportunities after school and during the summer, including one program that primarily serves NAZ-enrolled students who do not attend partner schools during the day.

College solutions are still in the planning stage. An action team including representatives of postsecondary institutions, such as the University of Minnesota and Minneapolis Community College, completed in late 2014 a solution plan to support students’ transition to and graduation from college.

- **Families.** Additional services are offered in the areas of housing, career and finance, and health/behavioral health to support academic achievement by bolstering enrolled families’

Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) Anchor Partners
(continued)



Expanded Learning & Mentoring

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities
Bolder Options
Cookie Cart
Juxtaposition Arts
Kwanzaa 21st Century Academy
Plymouth Christian Youth Center (PCYC)
YMCA Nellie Stone
Johnson Beacons



College

Minneapolis Community and Technical College
University of Minnesota



Health/Behavioral Health

The Family Partnership
Northpoint Health & Wellness Center
Washburn Center for Children



Career & Finance

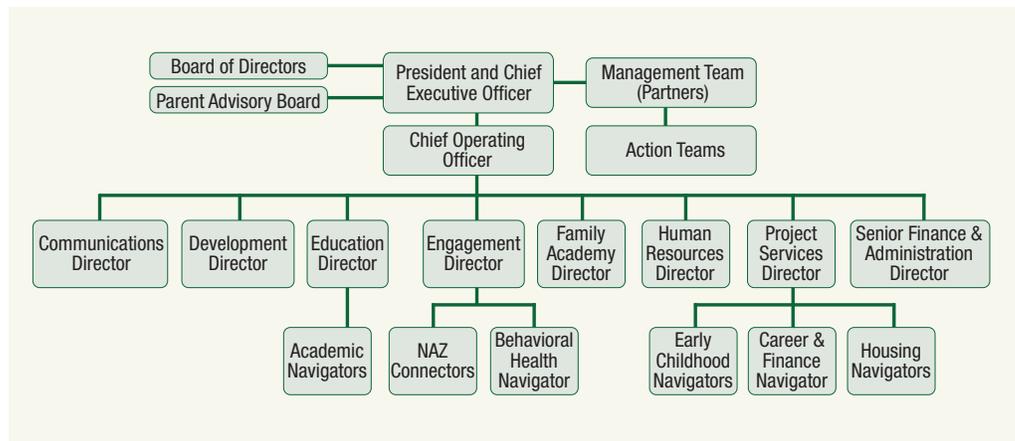
Emerge
Twin Cities RISE!



Housing

Project for Pride in Living
Public Housing Authority
Urban Homeworks

Figure 2. Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) Organizational Structure



Source: Background documents from Northside Achievement Zone.

stability. Navigators in each of these areas work with NAZ-enrolled families to identify supports to meet their needs in that content area. These supports range from providing short-term financial resources through two housing stabilization funds to connecting families to services provided by partners such as Emerge and Twin Cities RISE, which offer career development and job training programs.

NAZ’s Family Academy offers several series of classes, including a 13-week College Bound Babies series for parents of children age birth to 3 years, which was completed by 30 parents in 2013 and 48 parents in 2014. Other Family Academy series include Ready to Succeed, for parents of children ages 4 and 5, and Foundations empowerment training for parents of all ages. A fourth series, College Bound Scholars, for parents of school-age children, was piloted in late 2014. NAZ provides meals, child care, and transportation to facilitate participation in Family Academy.

The NAZ Connect data system enables families to share their goals and other information across all partners, instead of having to fill out another form or start over in sharing their story each time they interact with a new partner. It also enables staff members of various partners to communicate with each other. Combined with NAZ’s co-located staff, this shared data system facilitates a consistent and seamless support for families, regardless of which partner organization they are working with at any particular moment.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STAFF ROLES

The initiative is overseen by multiple levels of leadership, including a board of directors consisting of representatives from foundations, local government, and partners; a management team of NAZ staff and lead partners; and an 11-member parent advisory board (PAB). PAB participants are members of enrolled families and are nominated for the PAB by their connector. The PAB provides feedback and guidance to the management team and board of directors, which keeps all of NAZ’s work grounded in the experience of enrolled families. Figure 2 provides an organizational chart for the initiative.

NAZ directly operates Family Academy, and the NAZ connectors and navigators are NAZ staff. Partners plan and deliver all other programs and services, consistent with the relevant solution plans. More than half of NAZ connectors and navigators are located at partner organizations, including schools, early childhood centers, and workforce development and housing agencies. NAZ connectors and other staff are hired from within the community to the extent possible.

PROGRESS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Enrollment of families in NAZ.** As of early 2015, NAZ serves 739 enrolled families with 1,735 children. This is more than halfway to NAZ’s overall target of enrolling 1,000 households and 2,500 children, approximately 45 percent of all children living within the Promise Neighborhood boundaries.

- **Solution plans developed to guide work.** Action teams developed solution plans in eight content areas: family engagement, early childhood, academic navigation, mentoring, expanded learning, family academy, career and finance, and housing.
- **Promising early outcomes of some programs** (based on data compiled and analyzed by NAZ evaluation partner, Wilder Research):²
 - › The Beginning Kindergarten Assessment administered in fall 2013 indicated that 59 percent of NAZ-enrolled kindergartners were ready for kindergarten, compared to 35 percent of kindergartners in the geographical area.
 - › Fifty-five percent of elementary grade students in expanded learning programs achieved at least one year of growth in reading in four months of participation after school and during the summer. On average, students' reading level improved 0.8 of a year in four months.
 - › Based on a test of parenting knowledge and behaviors, 77 percent of active participants in NAZ Family Academy were proficient at the end of the session, compared with 24 percent of control group members.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Turnover impedes relationship building.** Staffing has been a challenge as NAZ expands “from a tiny office with six staff” to more than 10 times that number. One partner reported that staff transitions to new positions within NAZ can be disruptive.

Although many anchor partner organizations have been involved since “before the beginning,” some have joined more recently. In addition, there are been staffing changes within partners. One action team leader noted that she is the only individual who has been on the team since its inception. She voiced concern that newer members might feel less ownership of solution plans developed earlier. Turnover among frontline staff implementing the solutions means that NAZ and its partners must offer staff training continuously.

- **Limited use of data system by partners.** All NAZ staff—including those co-located at

partner sites—use the NAZ Connect data system to track participants and outcomes. They appreciate that “everything is there,” and noted that it helps link NAZ staff and partners. However, some noted its user-friendliness could be improved, and one called it “a work in progress.” Staff noted that the system has evolved since it was first introduced, and that user feedback is “taken and used.”

As of spring 2014, partners were only beginning to explore NAZ Connect. For example, in the early childhood area, NAZ staff (either those co-located at partner sites or central office staff) entered the data from the first round of progress monitoring into NAZ Connect, but partner providers will enter the data after the second round. Early childhood partners track participation data in spreadsheets and upload the information into NAZ Connect monthly. Additional trainings for partners were planned, but most already have their own data systems. Staff also noted that partners that are new to working with data can be discouraged when the first data they look at show low levels of performance.

- **Connecting the disconnected.** Many NAZ families face multiple challenges that no single agency can solve. One partner noted that the depth of need—in all areas—of the families that NAZ has brought to programs makes them more challenging to work with than the populations some organizations are accustomed to serving. However, this is seen as an indication of the success of NAZ's outreach in recruiting formerly disconnected families.
- **Complex collaborations take time.** NAZ is a complex initiative involving collaboration between many different organizations. As one NAZ staff person said, “The biggest piece of learning for me has been that things take time.” In the past year, she has seen a significant shift from philosophical agreement and commitment to fuller integration of resources and staff.

LOOKING FORWARD

- **Additional solution plans in development.** Action teams for college success and behavioral health recently completed solution plans in those areas and will begin implementing them in 2015. The action team for anchor schools expects to complete its solution plan in 2015.

ABOUT PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS CASE STUDIES

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at Policy Link (PNI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods, including NAZ. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and three-to-four-day site visits to each selected Promise Neighborhood at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

- **Sustainability planning underway.** NAZ launched a task force of members from the board of directors and the community, including representatives of local government (city, county, and school district) and funders (including the United Way and the General Mills Foundation), to focus on sustainability planning. They also hired three staff people dedicated to development. Key to their strategy is diversifying funding sources by working with state and local government, private foundations, and individual donors to secure ongoing funding for the initiative. As an example of a success in this area, the Minnesota state legislature provided \$350,000 to support NAZ's family engagement efforts in 2014 and committed an additional \$400,000 for NAZ over the next two years. Hundreds of individual donors have provided smaller amounts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ENDNOTES

¹ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2006–2010 (5-year estimate), Table C17002: U.S. Census Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey. Aggregation of 18 census block groups, five of which are only partially within NAZ.

² Northside Achievement Zone, "Northside Achievement Zone 2013 Annual Report," available at http://northsideachievement.org/wp-content/uploads/2013-NAZ-annual-report_Web.pdf; and Wilder Research, "2013 NAZ Dashboard Data Summary," available at <http://northsideachievement.org/i/2013-NAZ-Outcomes-Dashboard.pdf>.

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