

CHILDREN'S CABINET TOOLKIT:
A Roadmap for Getting Started
in Your Community

JULY 2019



Created for Mayors and their staff

by
The Local Children's Cabinet Network



Toolkit Components

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WHAT IS A CHILDREN'S CABINET?

Imagine if leaders of all of the agencies and organizations that serve children and youth in your community came together at one table to improve their collective ability to meet the needs of kids. Picture your superintendent talking with your head of libraries, strategizing with your health commissioner, and collaborating with your summer and afterschool providers to create a civic ecosystem that enables all children to thrive. We call this a [children's cabinet](#).

In most municipalities, there is no designated forum for regular collaboration among all the government agencies and external organizations that serve children and youth. A children's cabinet provides a space for government agencies and community stakeholders (such as your children's hospital, United Way, or Boys and Girls Club) to create a shared vision for kids in your community and then work together to make that vision a reality. By seamlessly coordinating the supports and services that your community provides, children's cabinets address young people's holistic needs as they grow and develop.

The long-term goal of all activities undertaken by children's cabinets is to improve outcomes for children and youth, but the immediate goal of convening leaders is to improve their ability



to collaborate. Developing common goals, sharing and comparing data, and addressing gaps or duplications in resources allows leaders in different systems (health care, human services, parks and recreation, schools, etc.) to craft better policies and decisions. These policies and decisions, in turn, allow the programs and services that they govern to have a greater impact on children and youth. The Forum for Youth Investment calls this the “three gears”: small “turns” or changes at the leader level allow for larger impacts at the population level.

What does this toolkit contain and who is it for?

Co-developed by [The Children’s Funding Project](#), the [Forum for Youth Investment](#), and the [Education Redesign Lab](#) (EdRedesign) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, this toolkit is designed to equip mayors and their staff with practical information and resources to launch a children’s cabinet in their local community. In particular, the toolkit is intended to help mayors accomplish the goals outlined in the EdRedesign’s By All Means (BAM) [Measures of Success framework](#) “Committed Leadership” indicator by guiding them through the process of developing a children’s cabinet.

Mayors and their staff are the audience for this toolkit because of their ability to use the executive office’s bully pulpit and convening power to bring child- and youth-serving government departments and external agencies together. Through their leadership, mayors can signal a community’s priorities and foster a system of accountability within local child-serving systems. They also play an important role in cultivating relationships and securing resources. While this toolkit was created specifically for mayors and their staff, the content is relevant for a broad range of municipal leaders, including county executives, city managers, and others in similar roles.

WHY CHILDREN'S CABINETS MATTER: MAKING THE CASE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

What's Included:

- ◇ Elevator pitch
- ◇ Key talking points for different audiences
- ◇ Fast facts
- ◇ Framework for crafting compelling messaging

Purpose: This tool is designed to help mayors use their bully pulpit to obtain buy-in for children's cabinets from government agencies, community stakeholders, and the public. This tool will support the development of compelling messaging that will introduce the concept of a children's cabinet and communicate its value to different audiences.

SAMPLE ELEVATOR PITCH

Schools are working hard every day to help children in our community succeed, but too many are struggling, especially those who are poor. Since kids are only in school for 20% of their waking hours, we need to look beyond schools to make sure all kids have the supports they need to thrive. Children's cabinets are an innovative strategy for doing just that. Through a children's cabinet, the school district and all the government agencies and community organizations that serve kids like recreational centers, enrichment programs, libraries, and health clinics work together to coordinate services and resources—both in and out of school.

FAST FACTS

- Children's cabinets operate at both state and local levels.¹
- Over 30 states have established coordinating bodies such as a children's cabinet, and there is growing momentum in local communities.²
- Children's cabinets are a nonpartisan idea and have been established in both Republican - and Democratic-led administrations.³
- Children spend only 20 percent of their time in school. Children's cabinets help to ensure that kids have access to an array of comprehensive supports, activities, and resources during the 80 percent of the time that they are not in school.⁴

1 http://forumfyi.org/knowledge-center/2017-state-policy-survey/?_sft_knowledge_project=childrens-cabinet-networks

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 <https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/>

KEY TALKING POINTS FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Below are sample talking points that communicate the value of children's cabinets to different audiences such as parents, private health care organizations, and child-serving municipal departments or agencies. These talking points address specific concerns related to each stakeholder group and are intended to be adapted according to the context of your own locality.

01 FOR A PARENT CONCERNED ABOUT EQUITY... All children in our community deserve the opportunity to grow up safe, healthy, happy, and prepared for life, but right now some kids get different opportunities than others. For example, infants and toddlers who don't have access to quality child care or pre-K are much less likely than their peers to be ready for kindergarten and excel later in school, and are much more likely to not achieve educational and developmental benchmarks. Ensuring that all kids have access to opportunities in [Insert name of community] will require all of us to take a hard look at our programs and services and work together to make sure that the right supports are reaching each child. A children's cabinet can help us accomplish this goal. Imagine if the leaders of all the departments, agencies, and organizations that provide opportunities for kids in our community worked together to ensure all kids receive exactly what they need to thrive in [Insert name of community] - that's a children's cabinet. In order to create a children's cabinet here, we're going to need support from parents like you at [Insert name of upcoming public meeting such as a City Council meeting] on [Insert date]. Will you come by to share why we need a children's cabinet to help us better serve kids in our community?

02 FOR A PRIVATE HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATION... We all want to see [Insert name of community] children grow up healthy, and we know that many children don't have access to the care and preventative services that will help them achieve that goal. It's clear that there's no silver bullet solution to the health challenges [Insert name of community] kids face, and I think it's going to take collaboration across both public and private sectors to figure out how to improve health outcomes. One strategy that other communities are using is creating a children's cabinet that convenes the leaders of all child-serving municipal departments and some external community organizations. If we implemented a cabinet here, we could share data on where kids are and how they're doing, coordinate programs between government and external partners, and talk about how policy impacts social determinants of health. Would you be willing to come represent your organization as part of a cabinet?

03 FOR THE HEAD OF A CHILD-SERVING MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY...

Lately our community has been grappling with big challenges like student safety and drug use prevention. As the head of [Insert name of department], your time is in high demand, and I think we both find it frustrating that we create new commissions and task forces after every crisis instead of having a more proactive strategy that addresses children’s holistic needs. What if we had a forum where all the leaders of departments and agencies that serve children and families could work together to identify solutions that cut across all of our systems? Cities and states across the country are creating this kind of coordinating body—usually called a “children’s cabinet.” A children’s cabinet convenes many of the same partners that would be on a school safety task force or opioid prevention response team and gives them time to build relationships and learn about their ability to increase each other’s impact. I’m going to start a children’s cabinet in [Insert name of community], and I need you to prioritize your involvement.

FRAMEWORK FOR CRAFTING COMPELLING MESSAGING:

Building a children’s cabinet requires buy-in from a wide range of audiences. Having a clear message tailored to different audience’s values can make convincing people to join or support the cabinet much easier. Use the components below to devise messaging that will help you communicate with municipal agencies/departments, community stakeholders, and the public.



5

1 IDENTIFY A COMMON VALUE

Identify a value or core concern of your audience and use this as the theme for your talking points. The value you choose to focus on will depend on your audience. Below are examples of values that children's cabinet members have identified as motivators for participation:

- I'm concerned that not all kids in our community have access to opportunities.
- I want to see our community's economy prosper and am concerned about having a prepared workforce.
- I want to see our government function more efficiently and effectively.
- I'm concerned that we're not leveraging enough of the funding available for programs for children and youth in our community.
- I'm concerned about a recent crisis in our community and want to see our government be better prepared to respond in the future.
- I think we need to do more to support children's health.

2 ILLUSTRATE A CHALLENGE FACED BY YOUR COMMUNITY

Use data from KidsCount, recent news, or lived experience to illustrate a problem in your community that is related to the common value or concern identified above. For example:

If your audience is concerned about seeing equitable opportunities for all children: Share an indicator (like pre-K enrollment rate or the number of children experiencing food insecurity) disaggregated by race to illustrate disparity.

If your audience is concerned about government efficiency: Identify an area where coordination could improve, such as duplication of programs or training efforts, disjointed strategic plans, or failure to communicate.

3 DEFINE A 'CHILDREN'S CABINET'

Introduce a children's cabinet by providing a clear and concise definition. Be aware of your audience. Consider their exposure to the way that policy changes and decisions are currently made and how familiar they are with the child- and youth-serving systems in your community. See sample definitions below.

- **Audience: Agency and department leaders**

A children's cabinet is a cross-systems coordinating body brought together to collaborate around improving children-, youth- and family-serving systems. It generally includes many

government stakeholders whose services impact children and youth (department of health and human services, department of parks and recreation, department of community and economic development, school board, etc.) as well as large stakeholder groups outside of government (representing health care, nonprofits, parents, funders, youth, etc.) By meeting regularly around a shared agenda, these stakeholders identify strategies to improve the impact of their systems on the outcomes of children and youth.

- **Audience: Community members**

When people think about how children interact with public services, they usually think of schools first. However, children spend much more time outside of the classroom, interacting with other public services like pools, recreation centers, libraries, health clinics, social workers, afterschool programs, etc. A children's cabinet is made up of the people responsible for running all of the programs and services that support children and youth, from schools to health and human services to parks and recreation. Coming together as a "cabinet" gives these decision makers the opportunity to talk about the way their programs and services impact children and youth, and how they can internally work together more effectively and be better partners with other community leaders.

4

EXPLAIN HOW A CHILDREN'S CABINET COULD BE A SOLUTION

Describe what a children's cabinet does and how you envision those activities helping your community address its specific challenges and achieve its goals. You can also convey that momentum is building across the country as more states and communities are implementing children's cabinets to more effectively coordinate supports and opportunities for young people. Highlight examples that show how children's cabinets have improved opportunities and outcomes relevant to the value you identified.

Examples of children's cabinet activities:

- Develop shared, community-wide goals for children, youth, and families.
- Collaborate on new initiatives to improve opportunity and access.
- Improve coordination of policies and services to break down silos, reduce duplication, and enhance impact within government and with external partners.
- Share and compare data to create a more accurate picture of child, youth, and family wellbeing.
- Examine, align, and leverage resources so that investments have the most powerful impact possible and funding opportunities are maximized.

- Advance equity by cultivating a shared understanding of what equity means and fostering conversation between local government and community voices.
- Increase demand for improved and expanded opportunities for all children and youth.

Examples of children’s cabinets’ progress across the U.S.:



5 MAKE AN ASK

Whether you are talking to the head of the department of parks and recreation, a leader at the local children’s hospital, or a service provider, make sure to finish with an ask such as:

- Will you discuss the idea of a children’s cabinet with your peers?
- Will you join the cabinet?
- Will you share your support for a children’s cabinet with city council?

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: PERSPECTIVES ON HOW CHILDREN’S CABINETS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“ A strong and effective Children’s Cabinet can improve coordination and efficiency across state departments and local levels of government; mobilize resources around the governor’s priorities for children; facilitate a holistic approach to serving children; and strengthen partnerships with the non-profit and private sectors. ”

— National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

“ Thinking about the city budget, priorities, decision-making through the lens of kids ensures good outcomes for everybody...when you think about parks, playgrounds, transportation routes, public safety, education—right off the bat you’re being more inclusive of marginalized populations. And you’re growing a whole generation of people who will have less need of very expensive services down the line, and less unhealthy behavior. ”

— Anna Fox Doherty, Director of SomerPromise (a children’s cabinet in Somerville, MA)
quote courtesy of The Philadelphia Citizen

“ Data sharing helps Florida focus on kids, not on paperwork: Because of the Children and Youth Cabinet Information Sharing System (CYCISS), caseworkers can spend more time with the children and youth they serve and less time on paperwork. The Children and Youth Cabinet put this system in place because caseworkers would often have to drive across the state to obtain a child’s records from former schools and service providers. This wastes time and public resources. CYCISS enables caseworkers to obtain necessary information from multiple agencies with a single point of entry. ”

— Florida Children & Youth Cabinet Brochure

“ My parents are immigrants who came to this country with very little formal education, busted their tails, and it’s the same almost improbable yet impossible yet common immigrant story...I’m here as mayor because by luck and some ingenuity I was able to overcome every odd, but that’s not what we should expect our kids to overcome to be successful. How do we build an infrastructure of support so that success in life is a matter of course rather than beating all of the odds...I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for all of those programs and all of those people that saw some potential in me, put their arms around me, and led me in the right direction. And unfortunately, many kids still don’t have that. ”

—Mayor Jorge Elorza in a panel on Children’s Cabinets at SXSW EDU

BUILDING A CABINET

What's Included:

- ◇ Guide to crafting a vision and mission statement
- ◇ Three key questions for determining the structure of your cabinet

Purpose: While children's cabinets in localities across the country share common features (the common goal of improving cross-system collaboration, for example), they often differ in their structure. The components of these structures (e.g., who is a member, where is the cabinet housed, etc.) impact everything from the activities that cabinets undertake to how often they meet (and therefore how quickly they can get things done). As the adage goes, form follows function, so mayors should be able to clearly articulate the cabinet's vision and mission before identifying the details of its structure. This tool will help you make the decisions necessary to establish a children's cabinet.

CRAFTING A VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Mayors should work with their staff to create vision and mission statements that are general enough to allow significant input from and flexibility for the cabinet as it chooses more specific goals and indicators of progress. In Virginia, a children's cabinet in Fairfax County (the Successful Child and Youth Policy Team, or SCYPT), describes vision as *"our desired future state"* and mission as *"how we'll get there."* You can also think of your vision as what it would look like to have your cabinet's shared goals realized, and your mission as the role your cabinet will play in supporting progress toward that realization.



Crafting your vision statment	Examples
<p>Start by creating a short, one sentence statement that answers these questions in very broad terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your vision as mayor of your municipality? What does that look like specifically for children and youth? • It is years in the future—how has your community changed as a result of your cabinet’s work? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fairfax SCYPT vision (our desired future state): A community where all children and youth thrive and reach their full potential. 2. Oakland Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority vision: Oakland’s children, youth, and families are the healthiest in the nation. Justice and equity have been achieved in physical and mental health, education, wealth, safety, and housing regardless of race, ethnicity, income, gender, sexuality, disability, geography, and other common predictors of disparity. 3. Santa Fe Mayor’s Children, Youth and Families Community Cabinet vision: Improve wellbeing for babies, children, youth and families within our Santa Fe community.

Crafting your mission statement	Examples
<p>Hone your mission statement by narrowing the scope of activities and strategies that your cabinet will undertake in order to realize your vision. You can craft your mission statement by determining which of these strategies and activities your cabinet will focus on to realize its vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating and aligning activities among stakeholders around a common vision and goals • Coordinating and aligning resources around a common purpose • Providing a forum for increased communication between stakeholders • Creating or changing policy to support improved services and systems for children and youth • Advocating for policy changes to support improved services for children and youth • Using data to create a “report card” on progress toward the cabinet’s shared goals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fairfax SCYPT mission (how we’ll get there): “We, the Fairfax community, collectively ensure all children, youth, and their families and communities have equitable access to quality services, supports, and opportunities to further their success and well-being.” 2. Denver Children’s Cabinet (from Executive Order 139, July 2012) mission: “The Denver Children’s Cabinet will improve communication between agencies, coordinate and align programs and services, and develop strategies to address gaps and remove barriers that hinder opportunities for Denver children and youth.” 3. Santa Fe Mayor’s Children, Youth and Families Community Cabinet mission: “The mission of the Children, Youth and Families Community Cabinet is to create a cross-sector collaborative governance that”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is child-centered and family-focused; • aligns education; • aligns appropriate funding and programming; • improves coordination of programs and services; and • develops and implements educational and workforce training initiatives that support economic development.

CREATING A CABINET STRUCTURE

In addition to deciding what your cabinet will do, determining how it is structured involves answering three main questions:

Note that when answering these questions, you will want to consider how the operations of the cabinet and any associated costs will be resourced.

1

WHO WILL THE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET BE?

Options: Municipal departments; coalitions; collaboratives; intermediaries; representatives of major public stakeholder groups; business leaders; unions; civic leaders; for-profit institutions; advocates; parents; youth; philanthropy

2

WHERE WILL THE CABINET BE HOUSED?

Options: The mayor or city manager's office; an office of children's affairs or department of children and youth; a pre-existing municipal department; office; or agency that regularly deals with child and youth policy; a new; independent nonprofit

3

HOW WILL THE CABINET BE ESTABLISHED?

Options: By passing an executive order; by passing establishing legislation; by creating a formal team or organization outside of municipal government; beginning to meet regularly before formal establishment

To help you answer the above questions, we've created the chart on the following pages. Note that these options are guidelines to consider rather than prescribed rules.

1. WHO WILL THE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET BE?

OPTION 1 Governmental cabinet

CABINET MADE UP OF

- Municipal departments and agencies such as the parks and recreation department

OPTION 2 Collaborative cabinet

CABINET MADE UP OF

- Coalitions, collaboratives, intermediaries, or collective impact groups focused on children, youth, and families
- Representatives of major public stakeholder groups (health/medical, early childhood, higher education, local business association, chamber of commerce, providers, etc.)

+ **OPTION 1** Governmental cabinet

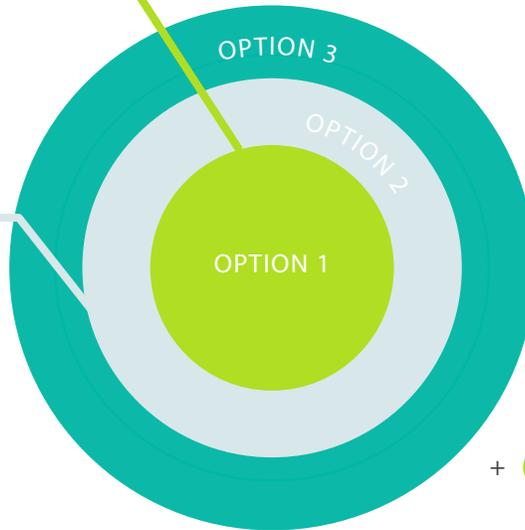
OPTION 3 Public cabinet

CABINET MADE UP OF

- Business leaders
- Unions
- Civic leaders
- For-profit institutions
- Advocates
- Parents
- Youth
- Philanthropy

+ **OPTION 1** Governmental cabinet

+ **OPTION 2** Collaborative cabinet



<p>OPTION 1 ●</p> <p>Try to include all departments or agencies who serve children and youth as part of their mission.</p>	<p>OPTION 2 ●</p> <p>In this option, representatives of stakeholder groups outside of municipal government are included as regular members in the cabinet.</p>
<p>OPTION 3 ●</p> <p>This option allows for the addition of members who represent the perspective of an individual or single organization, rather than the perspective of a whole stakeholder group. If private or for-profit entities are added as members, it is important to be intentional about maintaining neutrality by balancing those perspectives with the addition of parents, youth, and advocates.</p>	

CHOOSE IF:

OPTION 1

Your primary or initial goal is to break down cross-agency silos and better coordinate people, data, and money within your municipal government.

This option will yield the smallest children's cabinet. Benefits of a small cabinet include consistency of participation and accountability, more flexible and nimble speed of progress, and all voices being heard.

Note: In this structure, other stakeholders (providers, intermediaries, business leaders, advocates, parents, etc.) provide input through participation in subcommittees or community forums.

OPTION 2

Your goal is to foster collaboration across both municipal agencies and with non-governmental stakeholder groups.

OPTION 3

You want to take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with civic and business leaders who can leverage the power of people or resources to make change.

You want to provide a forum for community discussion and incorporate a diverse range of voices into your discussions.

Challenges are associated with larger cabinets. Cabinets that include the maximum number of voices are better able to identify a diverse range of perspectives, but also may risk losing participation, speed of progress, accountability, and focus.

EXAMPLES:

Denver Children's Cabinet

As mandated by executive order:

- Director of Children's Affairs;
- Managers of Dept. of Human Services, Parks and Recreation, Safety, Finance, Environmental Health, Community Planning and Development;
- Chief of Police;
- Directors of Corrections and Undersheriff, the Office of Economic Development, Peak Performance, the Office of Strategic Partnerships, Development Services, Denver's Road Home, Career Service Authority, Denver Housing Authority, Community Health Services;
- City Council Member;
- City Librarian;
- Denver Public Schools representative;
- Denver Preschool Program representative;
- and a board member of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District.

Fairfax Successful Children and Youth Policy Team

- Fairfax County Public Schools board and administration members (9),
- Fairfax County Government county board and administration (10),
- Community Members (15) (including voices from early childhood, faith-based organizations, families, health care, business, philanthropy, nonprofits, higher education, advocacy, and out-of-school time)

Louisville Evolve502

Initial cabinet members included at least one high-ranking representative from the pillar lead organizations—Metro United Way, JCPS, 55,000 Degrees, and KentuckianaWorks—in addition to Mayor Greg Fischer, Superintendent Hargens, and representatives from the school board, city government, health care, higher education, and many local nonprofits, businesses, and foundations.

1. Where will the cabinet be housed?				
OPTIONS	The mayor or city manager's office	An office or department specific to children and youth (e.g., an Office of Children's Affairs or Department of Children, Youth, and Families)	A pre-existing municipal department, office, or agency that regularly deals with child and youth policy	A new, independent nonprofit
CHOOSE IF	You need the power of a municipal executive to convene municipal agency and department leaders consistently.	Your cabinet's goals will require full-time staff support. You want to dedicate municipality resources to the work of the cabinet.	Your cabinet's goals will require at least part-time staff support. You are concerned about stability through political transition.	Your community works better together in a neutral setting. You are concerned about stability through political transition.
EXAMPLE	New York City, NY: The New York City Children's Cabinet is housed in the Office of the Mayor.	Denver, CO: The Denver Children's Cabinet is an initiative of the Mayor's Office, but is housed in an Office of Children's Affairs , which provides support and staff time to the cabinet's efforts.	Fairfax, VA: The Fairfax Successful Children and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT) is supported by five full-time staff in the Prevention Unit in the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services.	Louisville, KY: The Education Redesign Lab's By All Means partnership with Louisville, KY resulted in the establishment of a nonprofit called Evolve502 to house its children's cabinet and cradle to career programming.

2. How will the cabinet be established?				
OPTIONS	By passing an executive order	By passing establishing legislation	By creating an MOU, charter document, or new organization	By meeting regularly before formal establishment
CHOOSE IF	You need the power of the mayor as convener to bring agency leaders to the table.	<p>You want to ensure sustainability through political transition.</p> <p>You want to set up a long-term structure with a mandated group of members and mandated participation.</p>	You want to focus on broader community collaboration (e.g., external alignment rather than focusing only on the public sector.	<p>You need time to develop an understanding of vision and mission before formalizing structure.</p> <p>You need time to develop shared goals in order to get buy-in from elected officials.</p> <p>There is no clear leader for the effort (i.e., elected official, organization, department, or agency).</p>
EXAMPLE	Denver, CO: The Denver Children’s Cabinet was established by Mayor Michael B. Hancock via Executive Order 139 in 2012.	Minneapolis, MN: The Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board was established in 1985 via a joint powers agreement ,* which formalized a collaborative relationship among the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Public Schools, and Minneapolis Parks and Recreation.	<p>There is more than one way to formalize a team outside of municipal government.</p> <p>In Fairfax County, VA, formalizing the SCYPT meant creating a charter.</p> <p>In Louisville, KY, formalizing the children’s cabinet meant creating a new nonprofit, Evolve502.</p>	Several of the cabinets listed began to meet regularly before formally establishing themselves as a cabinet.

*Joint powers authority agreements establish a collaborative relationship between two municipalities (a city and a county) around shared goals. This legislation creates a shared governance structure of collaboration between both a city and county.

MANAGING A CABINET

What's Included:

- ◇ Establishing roles for cabinet participants
- ◇ Meeting agenda format tool
- ◇ Guidelines for establishing norms and ground rules

Purpose: Once you have developed a mission, vision, and structure for your cabinet, it's crucial to lay the groundwork for how your cabinet will function. Taking a leaf from the playbooks of other cabinets can help you develop a structure for meetings and participation that fosters more efficient and effective collaboration. Members of the cabinet are more likely to participate constructively if they understand their role in the cabinet's work, have a clear sense of the meeting's agenda, and have a shared understanding of the ground rules for meeting participation.

To keep cabinet work productive and action-oriented, we suggest that the cabinet use this tool to put structures in place within its first several months. It may be helpful to have a staff person prepare drafts of the roles, agenda, ground rules, and guidelines for presentations based on the resources below, and then have the cabinet members react to and provide feedback on these documents before approving them formally.

1. Create clearly established roles for all participants

While different children's cabinets take on different activities, we have found that effective cabinets have members that fill each of the roles listed below. Some members may fill multiple roles or members may trade off filling these roles, but having at least one member held accountable for undertaking these responsibilities each meeting is critical to success. Note that in some states, depending on the composition of your children's cabinet, your meetings may be subject to open meeting laws. If so, you may need to plan for members of the public to attend, but can likely require that they observe rather than participate for the majority of the meeting.

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITIES/REQUIREMENTS
CHAIRPERSON	<p>A cabinet chair (or co-chairs) who can facilitate meetings is critical to keeping cabinet meetings focused and maintaining engagement from members. If a cabinet has dedicated staff, this person might be supplemented by a director (see job description example here) who does more of the daily work like grant writing or agenda creation.</p> <p>In cabinets established by a mayor or municipal executive, the mayor or municipal executive will most likely act as the chair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be the mayor or convener of the cabinet OR be elected by fellow members of the board <p>If not the mayor, then...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be recognizable by director-level personnel as a peer • Has accumulated experience within the child and youth development field • Should run meetings with an eye on staying on time and topic-oriented, and returning group discussion to actionable items
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	<p>In order to foster cross-sector collaboration and include a broad range of perspectives, children's cabinets can often grow to a size that complicates decision making. In this case, it can be helpful to create a small executive committee of decision makers. This group acts as a kind of "core team" within the cabinet and is responsible for setting the cabinet's agenda and making decisions. They may meet more regularly than the whole cabinet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the agenda for the children's cabinet and its meetings • Identify focus areas for the cabinet's work • Make decisions regarding children's cabinet process, structure, and membership • Should be able to attend all regular children's cabinet meetings and executive committee meetings for a commitment of at least one year • Should include the cabinet chair or co-chairs
CABINET STAFF	<p>Ideally, children's cabinets will have dedicated staff who are able to provide logistic support and act as the communications hub for the cabinet. If not, then cabinet members will need to rotate who takes on the essential scheduling and communication functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate meetings (schedule, reserve space, send invitations and reminders, etc.) • Manage communications (both internal and external) • Disseminate meeting agendas and materials • Create and disseminate meeting minutes

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITIES/REQUIREMENTS
NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION LEAD	Turnover and the addition of new members to the coordinating board can slow down the activities of the children's cabinet. To keep the addition of new members from being disruptive and to ensure buy-in and attendance, it's helpful to have a cabinet member responsible for orienting new members. This person keeps a running list of members, monitors turnover, and contacts new members prior to their first meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a welcome email to any new members that include the agenda, bylaws, and an overview of any current initiatives • Offer a meeting to review the information in the email and to answer questions. Keep this meeting short, be willing to go to the member, and don't make this a requirement—set the precedent of respecting member's time) • Pause for introductions at the beginning of the new members' first meeting • Ideally this person would be a member of the executive committee or, if the children's cabinet has staff, a staff person
REGULAR MEMBERS	Regular children's cabinet membership should be dictated by the bylaws of the children's cabinet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance is required. Children's cabinets should establish the norm that members will regularly attend meetings in person (rather than through a proxy) • Willing to participate and collaborate with fellow cabinet members and sign bylaws • Is a stakeholder whose policy decisions regularly impact children and youth, and who is able to take actions between meetings that improve the opportunities available to children and youth
SUPPLEMENTARY ATTENDEES	Children's cabinets can easily grow large and crowded as we strive to include as many voices and perspectives as possible. It is critical for the design of the children's cabinet to clearly delineate between regular children's cabinet members, who are decision makers able to change or influence policy, and supplementary attendees, who provide a valuable perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary attendees might be parents, youth, advocates, private providers, or other external partners who do not create policy or make system-altering decisions. • Should participate in the cabinet by presenting to the full cabinet, participating in subcommittee meetings where they can contribute experience or expertise, or being invitees to cabinet meetings where perspectives are being gathered

SUPPLEMENTARY ATTENDEES (CONT.)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to remember that supplementary members, like parents, represent individual perspectives and do not speak for a whole group (unlike, for example, the Director of Health and Human Services, who represents her or his department). Therefore, it's important to pursue multiple avenues for collecting perspectives from supplementary attendees.
SUBCOMMITTEES	<p>Many cabinets find it helpful to create subcommittees or "impact tables" to delve deeper into specific issues. You may find that broader children's cabinet meetings move more quickly if you delegate discussions that go "in the weeds" to a subcommittee instead. These groups may be time limited while working to solve a particular issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subcommittees or impact tables should meet regularly, in between full children's cabinet meetings. Subcommittees should work to gather additional data or perspectives on a topic through listening sessions or focus groups, surveys, or requests for data from other organizations. Subcommittees should work to identify potential solutions and policy changes before bringing the issue back to the full cabinet for approval or further discussion. Impact tables should include members whose stakeholder groups are deeply impacted by the issue or who could make policy changes that impact the issue.

2. Set a regular agenda

Cabinets should meet on a consistent schedule and meetings should have a regular agenda. This allows cabinets to establish an ongoing workflow and ensures that members know what to expect at each meeting. When surveyed in 2019, 75 percent of local children's cabinets reported meeting either monthly, every other month, or some combination of the two (i.e., the full team meets every other month, but the executive committee or subcommittees meet monthly). The remaining 25 percent reported meeting quarterly.

Setting a regular agenda with time limits or with sections assigned to different members can also keep meetings from being dominated by a single voice or issue. Agendas should be posted online and emailed to members at least one week in advance of the meeting. Creating a meeting agenda that works best for your cabinet might take some experimentation, but should generally follow the format below:

1.

Welcome:

- a. Introduce any new members or supplementary attendees
- b. Quick review of meeting ground rules and presentation guidelines
- c. Brief recap of last meeting

2.

Administrative items:

Any voting, ratifying, approving, etc. or discussion about internal governance structure.

3.

“Meat & potatoes”:

Any presentations or major discussions should go here. These items should be decided in advance, given a time limit, and any presentations or updates should be accompanied by a short description and materials sent out in advance.

4.

Member/subcommittee updates:

Short updates from members or subcommittees on children’s cabinet-specific work. Should be submitted in advance and limited to less than five minutes (this should not be a round-robin of what everyone is up to!).

5.

Action steps:

Review and report action steps assigned at the previous meeting, and create and assign new action steps for this meeting. This should be a regular part of your cabinet accountability process.

6.

Adjourn:

Make sure to mention the next meeting date!

Example:

- [Fairfax Successful Child and Youth Policy Team \(SCYPT\)](#)

3. Establish Norms and Guidelines

Establishing norms and reviewing them regularly can prevent disruptions and improve your cabinet's workflow. Reading your cabinet's guidelines together at a member's first meeting can be a good way to give everyone a refresher, though some teams choose to quickly review them at the beginning of every meeting or include them on each agenda. If possible, your cabinet or executive committee should self-generate these rules, but some problems that you may want to preemptively address include:

- o **How will you keep your meeting from becoming dominated by one voice and ensure that a broad range of stakeholders feel empowered to speak?**

While you should steer clear of rules that require everyone to speak or otherwise intimidate those not comfortable with public speaking, you can set rules that define when in the agenda it is appropriate to speak up, remind members to stick to the topic at hand, and make it clear that interrupting is unacceptable. Depending on how much of an issue this is in your group, you may want to assign facilitation of the meetings to an outside facilitator (who is able to hold people accountable without concern of inside politics), or assign facilitation of different portions of the agenda to cabinet members whose voices are being minimized (with their permission, of course). Also, provide opportunities for feedback that don't involve public speaking: Make sure the email inbox of staff or the "communications hub" is open to emails from members who may not feel comfortable speaking in front of larger groups, and that smaller groups meet regularly to discuss specific issues.

- o **How will you prioritize equity in all discussions?**

In every discussion, make sure that someone raises the questions, "Will this disproportionately impact or burden a particular group? Can those impacts be mitigated? Is this a universal or targeted approach?" Keep track of the answers to those questions and regularly review them every few months. Any patterns that emerge (i.e., the cabinet has only undertaken universal approaches/no targeted work, actions have regularly and disproportionately placed extra burden on children in poverty) should be addressed. It's important to note that centering equity in your cabinet's work will require specific and intentional steps that are not covered in this toolkit.

- o **How will you make sure you're not derailed by sporadic attendance?**

It can be difficult to get regular attendance from all members in the first year of meetings. Executive directors of cabinets all over the country have dealt with this issue in various ways:

- Make attendance a requirement of membership. Some cabinets find that making regular attendance mandatory for all members is enough, while others find this results in lost membership.
- Use the power of the mayor or city manager as a convener. Knowing that the mayor might attend or that his or her staff will attend and report back sometimes provides enough incentive for participation.
- Reach out about what would make meetings most useful. Many children's cabinet directors or staff spend time contacting members about why they aren't participating or what would make meetings more useful for them. Based on this information, they're able to make small tweaks, correct misconceptions, or build relationships that contribute to higher attendance.
- Make your meetings a can't-miss event. The best way to ensure attendance is to make sure that meetings are seen as a place where things get done so that members are incentivized by a desire to participate in the action.
- If someone is a consistent low-attender, ask them to be on the agenda or to host the meeting at their office.

o How will you keep your meetings from becoming a "show-and-tell?"

It's crucial to keep meetings action-oriented and to not let them become a forum for show-and-tell/airing of grievances or a revolving door for groups trying to pitch to a single department. Some children's cabinets find it helpful to institute guidelines for presentations, such as:

- Presentations must lead to an action item that involves at least two different stakeholders from the children's cabinet (an action might be an endorsement, a policy change, etc.) You will want to create guidelines in your bylaws for what issues you will endorse, what an issue means, and what actions the cabinet can take.
- Presentations must adhere to a certain amount of time.
- Presentations should be diverted to subcommittees if possible.
- Presentations should follow a certain format such as: what is the issue, where did it come from (context), who is the target population, what data is available on this issue, what services impact or are impacted by this issue, how is it connected to different stakeholders on this group, what is our ask (our policy or resource needs), and what are next steps?
- Presentations should be centered in the vision, mission, and outcomes of the cabinet.



Here is an example of meeting ground rules from King County, Washington:

1. Commit to continuous attendance (designees must attend all sessions).
2. Do the work inside and outside Task Force meetings.
3. Stay updated and come prepared.
4. Speak to the interests of all (and identify conflicts of interest).
5. Apply your expertise and networks.
6. Listen intently, speak thoughtfully and attend to the interest of the whole.
7. Consider feedback in all forms.
8. Voice your issues and offer proposals.
9. Strike a balance between gathering input and moving forward.
10. Confirm decisions as we go (aim for consensus but use exception of one if needed).

Here is an example of meeting ground rules from Fairfax County, Virginia:

1. Everyone's input is important, including youth.
2. Listen with an open mind and for commonalities.
3. Ask questions to achieve understanding.
4. Work together to seek a balance between obtaining input and moving forward in a timely fashion.
5. Write down issues as they arise and follow up later.
6. When expressing disagreement, offer a proposal to move us forward.
7. Define terms and acronyms.
8. Think broadly about strategies, stakeholders, and accountability.

SETTING GOALS

What's Included:

- ◇ A framing activity to help brainstorm impact statements
- ◇ Guidelines for goal setting
- ◇ Examples of cabinet goals from other localities
- ◇ An activity to align your cabinet's goals with work being done by other child and youth-serving organizations and collaboratives locally

Purpose: This tool is intended to help the mayor determine the major shared goals that will drive the cabinet's work. Based on the needs of your constituents, what goals for children and youth can people rally behind? What goals will make it easier to align with existing initiatives and help your cabinet advance its vision for your community?

Goal: A results statement that sets the intended condition of wellbeing for children, adults, families, or communities.

Examples: Children are born healthy, children succeed in school, children live in safe communities, youth are civically engaged.

Goal Framing Activity

Create "results statements:" Brainstorm a list of "results statements" using the leading sentence below. These statements will help frame the vision for the outcomes you aim to achieve through your goals.

We want our children and youth to be...

- Example: ... equipped to thrive in a modern workforce.



Goal Setting Guidelines:

Below are general guidelines for how to set shared goals for your cabinet that will help move the needle on imperative issues in your community and that help better frame the cabinet's current work.

Goal should...

- Be big picture and broad. The goal itself can be one big picture word such as "healthy" or no more than a short sentence such as "children are mentally and physically healthy." These broad goals will inform the specific indicators and outcomes that are monitored by the cabinet. There is a natural inclination to want to narrow in. It feels more doable. But remember the cabinet is largely organizing existing work to be more effective, and you want all children's cabinet members to see their work reflected in the goals.
- Be informed by the needs of your community. Goals should set a target to improve outcomes and diminish the barriers that your children, youth, and families are currently facing. The needs of your community may be identified by data from focus groups, community outreach, recent reports (e.g., KidsCount), current events, etc.
- Align with the work of the cabinet. Use the big picture goals to better organize and motivate the current work of the cabinet. Goals can be inclusive of the projects, programs and services members want to promote.
- Be used as the basis for a data dashboard and/or a children and families budget. The goals will be the headers for any data collection and/or budget that the cabinet creates. Therefore, the goals will govern what type of data is collected (or give a purpose to data that is already collected), and will govern what priorities are set in the budget.
- Have a clear equity lens. To ensure that their children and youth are being equitably served, some cabinets choose to have both universal and targeted approaches for each goal. For example, if your general goal is to improve health outcomes, your corresponding strategies could be: 1) Developmental delay screenings for all infants and 2) Align programs to connect children in low-income housing to primary care providers.

Goal Setting Activity:

1. Identify the goals of existing child-serving collaborative bodies: Identify and list the strategic plans, goals, and initiatives of the collective bodies that you work with, including child-serving agencies and organizations, city-wide strategic plans, By All Means Measures of Success framework, etc.

Below is an example using some collective bodies in Richmond City:

BODY NAME	Ex. Richmond School Board 5-Yr Strategic Plan - 5 priorities	Ex. Richmond City Council - Richmond City Council is committed to creating a vibrant community that is a great place to...	Ex. Richmond Mayor's Goals
GOALS, INITIATIVES, OR STRATEGIES	Exciting and rigorous teaching and learning	Live	Transforming public education and strengthening Richmond's schools
	Skilled and supported staff	Work	Promoting public safety
	Safe and loving school cultures	Play	Economic development that prioritizes people
	Deep partnership with families and community	Visit	Economic development that prioritizes people
	Modern systems and infrastructure	Raise a family	Economic inclusion
			Wealth building
			Overcoming poverty in Richmond

Fill out the table below for your locality:

BODY NAME			
GOALS, INITIATIVES, OR STRATEGIES			

2. Find commonalities: Analyze the above list and search for commonalities or themes that can unify the work that is being done in your locality. List the common themes below.

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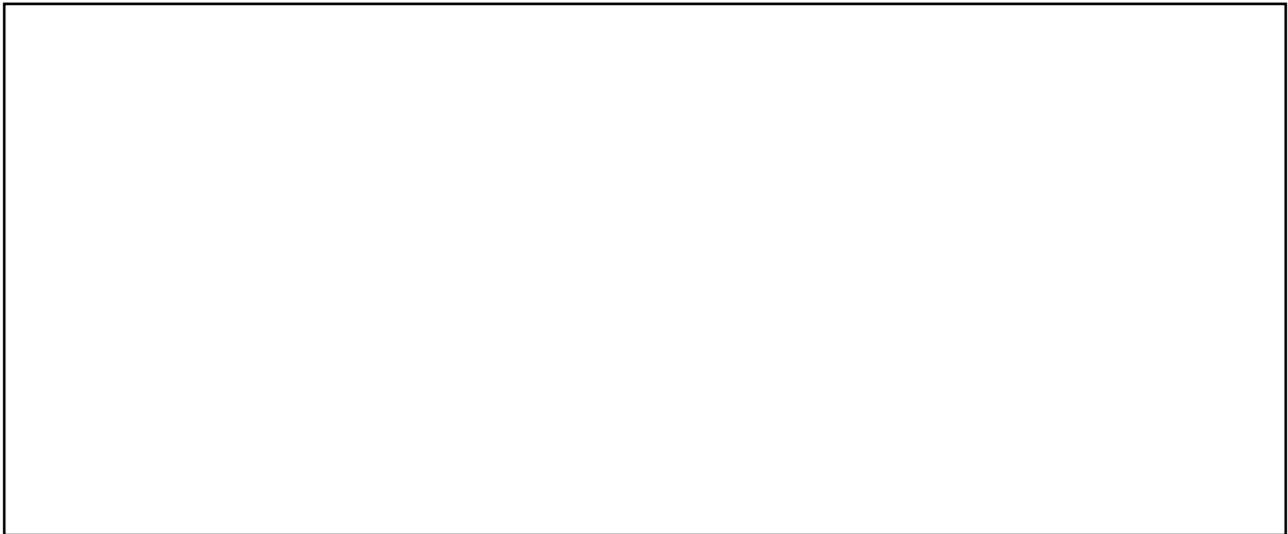
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3. Align themes with your “results statements:” Select the above themes that best align with your “results statements” from the framing activity. List below.



4. Finalize your goals: Use the “Goal Setting Guidelines” to refine the common themes into your finalized cabinet goals. Your goals will now be truly shared across the child-serving bodies and can be a unifying force in the work that is done in your locality.



Examples of Cabinet Goals:

Next are examples of major shared goals of four local children’s cabinets. You should choose the goal areas that are relevant to your community and to your cabinet work. Most goals, however, fall under some variation of the categories in the first column, “General Goal Categories.”

General Goal Categories	King County Children & Youth Advisory Board	San Francisco Our Children Our Families Council	Broward County Children's Services Council	Denver Mayor's Children's Cabinet
Health	Healthy	Physically, emotionally, and mentally healthy	Children are mentally and physically healthy	Increase the percentage of children who are at a healthy weight
Safety	Safe	Live in safe and nurturing environments	Children live in safe and supportive communities	
Social Engagement	Socially engaged			
Civic Engagement	Civically engaged			
Vocation, post-secondary, and career	Vocationally successful	Succeed in post-secondary and/or career paths	Young people successfully transition to adulthood	<p>Decrease the number of disconnected youth, young adults who are not working or in school</p> <p>Increase the number of students who have access to and complete a post-secondary pathway and obtain a job</p>
Academic	Academically successful	Thrive in a 21st century learning environment	Children are ready to succeed in school	<p>Increase the number of children who have access to high-quality early childhood experiences</p> <p>Increase the number of third-grade students who can read at grade level</p>
Basic Needs & Family Wellbeing		Attain economic security and housing stability	Children live in stable and nurturing families	

CHOOSING INDICATORS

Indicator: A population-level, quantifiable measure which helps measure the achievement of a result. An indicator should not be confused with a performance measure of a specific agency, program, or service. Keep indicators at a population level to determine whether or not you are improving outcomes for the entire targeted population.

Examples: Rate of low-birthweight babies; rate of high school graduation; crime rate; airquality index; unemployment rate.

Guidelines for strong indicators:

Below are the characteristics of good indicators to help you choose data metrics that accompany the Mayor's goals and monitor progress in achieving those goals.

Good indicators have...

- **Data Power.** Choose indicators that have quality data measurements that are accessible on a regular basis.
- **Proxy Power.** Indicators should be an accurate data representation of the goal you are trying to achieve. Ask yourself, is this indicator truly helping us monitor our progress in achieving our goals?
- **Communication Power.** Strong indicators are data points that are easy to understand and easy to support. For example, infant mortality is an indicator that widely speaks to and grabs public attention.
- **Balance.** Your indicators should be balanced across:
 - o **Ages and populations:** To ensure all youth are equitably monitored.
 - o **Strengths and deficit-based measurements:** To ensure you are monitoring both positive and negative outcomes that mark progress in achieving your goal. For example, for a "healthy" goal, a strengths-based measurement is "percent of children enrolled in a medical home," while a deficit-based measurement is "percent of children born at a low birth weight".
- **Equity.** Effective indicators reveal disparities when disaggregated by race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

Helpful tips for identifying indicators:

To help you determine what indicators you'd like to use in the dashboard template, here are some helpful hints:

- Use data that is already being tracked. Is your cabinet already collecting data or monitoring certain outcomes?
- Create partnerships with groups that track data that aligns with your goals. Connect with agencies and other local entities that track the data that you are seeking. For example, connect with contacts from the school system (or department of education), hospitals (or local health department), collective impact partnerships, police force, etc.
- Use a 3-part indicator list. There are many indicators that can be used to track the same goal. In order to organize the indicators that you may already be tracking and to make sure they fit the 'strong indicators' criteria above, you can prioritize indicators using the below three categories:
 - Primary indicators: Should be about 2-3 'headline' indicators that have the strongest proxy power.
 - Secondary indicators: Any other indicators that you measure that fit the goal. No data should be wasted!
 - Data development agenda: A list of data that needs repair, or new data that would be helpful to collect in the future.

Resources for Child and Youth Indicators:

Below are a few resources that may help you find, use, and better understand indicators for tracking child and youth outcomes.

[Kids Count](#): Kids Count provides state legislators, public officials, and child advocates with the reliable data, policy recommendations, and tools needed to advance sound policies that benefit children and families. Data is available on a national, statewide, and local level.

[ChildStats](#): Key indicators of wellbeing.

[Child Trends Data Bank](#): The Child Trends Databank is a continuously updated online data resource of about 110 indicators of child and youth wellbeing covering a wide range of topics.

[Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts](#): Allows users to access state-level health facts about demographics, economic well being, and health status.

Dashboard Template:

Use the table below as a template to create a data dashboard to monitor progress toward reaching your cabinet’s shared goals. Select indicators (using the previous guidelines) for each respective goal by age range. Once you have your indicators set and you start collecting the data, you can use this dashboard to track changes in the data and publish results about progress toward your goals.

Goals List your shared goals below	Dashboard of Indicators by Age Group 1st row = Primary Indicators 2nd row = Secondary Indicators 3rd row = Data development				
Cabinet Goals	Early Childhood 0-5	School Age 6-10	Middle School 11-14	High School 15-18	Young Adults

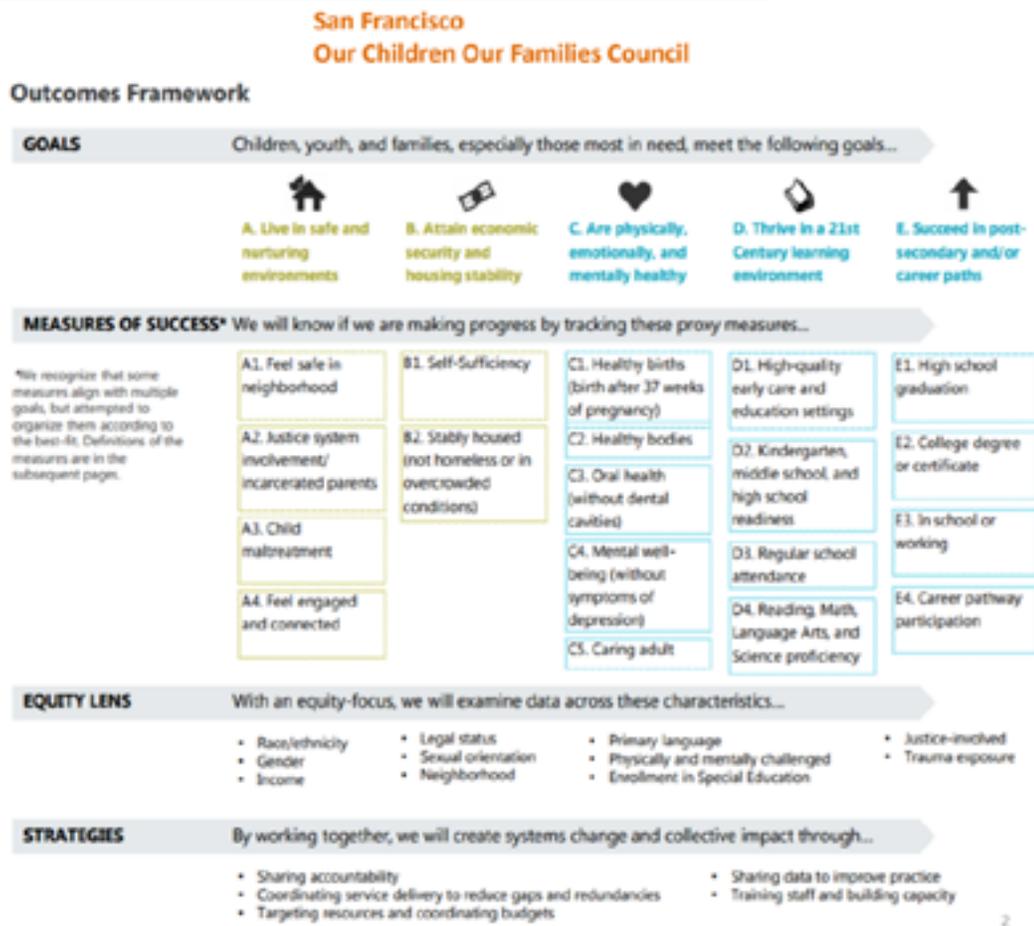
Examples of Indicators and Dashboards:

Below are examples of shared goals with accompanying indicators from other local children’s cabinets.

[Successful Children and Youth Policy Team Data Dashboards - Fairfax Co., Virginia](#)

Collective Impact for Successful Children and Youth in Fairfax										
A community where all children and youth thrive and reach their full potential.										
We, the Fairfax community, collectively ensure all children, youth, and their families and communities have equitable access to quality services, supports, and opportunities to further their success and well-being.										
Vision										
Mission										
Community Level Outcomes	Children and youth are healthy	Children and youth are safe and free from violence and injury	Youth earn a post-secondary degree or credential	Youth enter the workforce ready to succeed	Youth contribute to the betterment of their community	Children and youth succeed academically	Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed	Children get a healthy start in life	Core Indicators	Other Key Indicators
Children and youth are physically healthy	Children and youth are socially, emotionally and behaviorally healthy and resilient	Children and youth are safe and free from violence and injury	Youth earn a career certificate while still enrolled in high school	Education status: unemployment youth not enrolled in school and not in the workforce*	Volunteering for community service Being in a leadership role Engaging in faith-based activities Registering to vote	77% of students meeting or above grade level by the end of the school year	Number of kids for which Fairfax High Health, Growth and Learning Program is serving parents/children meeting Healthy Birthdays benchmark	Infants receiving early prenatal care Babies with low birth weight Preterm births	Students receiving early prenatal care Babies with low birth weight Preterm births	Students with low literacy skills Students with low math skills Students with low science skills Students with low social studies skills Students with low foreign language skills Students with low arts skills Students with low career/civics skills Students with low financial literacy skills Students with low digital literacy skills Students with low media literacy skills Students with low critical thinking skills Students with low problem-solving skills Students with low decision-making skills Students with low self-management skills Students with low self-awareness skills Students with low self-efficacy skills Students with low growth mindset skills Students with low grit skills Students with low perseverance skills Students with low resilience skills Students with low emotional regulation skills Students with low social skills Students with low communication skills Students with low conflict resolution skills Students with low leadership skills Students with low teamwork skills Students with low collaboration skills Students with low problem-solving skills Students with low decision-making skills Students with low self-management skills Students with low self-awareness skills Students with low self-efficacy skills Students with low growth mindset skills Students with low grit skills Students with low perseverance skills Students with low resilience skills Students with low emotional regulation skills Students with low social skills Students with low communication skills Students with low conflict resolution skills Students with low leadership skills Students with low teamwork skills Students with low collaboration skills
Contextual Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children living in poverty • Students eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program • Students with disabilities • Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) • Family primary language other than English • Median learning by educational attainment • Student income rate • Community infrastructure and safety* • Immigration* 									

Our Children Our Families Council Outcomes Framework - San Francisco, CA



Forum for Youth Investment & Child Trends Sample Dashboard

Forum for Youth Investment & Child Trends, 2010	Early childhood 0-5	Elementary age 6-10	Middle school 11-13	High school 14-18	Young adult
LEARNING: children & youth succeed in school	% children read to by a family member 6 or 7 times in the past week	% 3 rd & 4 th graders proficient in reading	% of students with high levels of "school connectedness"	High school graduation rate	% of 18-24-year-olds enrolled in college or completed college
WORKING: youth & young adults are ready for work	% children with at least one employed parent	% children given useful roles in family and community	% of students who participate in career awareness activities	% of students with job internship/apprenticeship experience	% of 18-24-year-olds employed
THRIVING: children & youth make healthy choices	% low birth weight	% children with a medical home	% youth who drank alcohol before age 13	% of youth who drank alcohol in the past 30 days	% of young adults overweight or obese
CONNECTING: children & youth have positive relationships with peers and adults	% children whose parent describes the parent-child relationship as "very warm and close"	% of children who eat a meal with their family 6 or 7 days per week	% of children who "receive support from three or more nonparent adults"	% of students with high levels of "school connectedness"	% of parents where parents are 20 or older, married, have at least 12 years education, and at least one is employed
LEADING: youth contribute to their community	% of children taken by family members on outings in the community 1+ times within the past week	% children 6-17 who participated in sports teams, clubs, organizations or other organized after-school activities in the past 12 months	% of children who participate in school decision-making	% of youth volunteering in their community	% of 18-24-year-olds who voted in the previous general election



CHILDREN'S
FUNDING PROJECT



the
forum
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL
EDREDESIGN
THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB

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