The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network is guided by the Theory of Action. Built on lessons from network members, the Theory of Action helps communities build and sustain cradle-to-career civic infrastructure. The Theory of Action consists of six gateways: exploring, emerging, sustaining, systems change, proof point, and systems transformation. Within each of the gateways are a series of quality benchmarks that are key to developing and sustaining a partnership. Meeting the quality benchmarks in the first five gateways puts a community on a path to systems transformation and improved economic mobility.

**The Four Principles**

Partnerships implementing the Theory of Action effectively demonstrate four principles as they move from building a partnership to impacting outcomes:

- **Engage the Community**
  The work of partnerships must be grounded in the context of the community. Partnerships engage a broad array of community voices through building awareness and information sharing; involving and mobilizing the community toward improvement; and co-developing solutions and strategies with community members.

- **Advance Equity**
  Systemic inequities and opportunities are defined by each partnership using local data and context. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data is used to highlight inequities to shift mental models, change power dynamics and establish more equitable policies in the community. Partnerships ultimately work to eliminate disparities in achievement and change systems to advance more equitable opportunities.

- **Develop a Culture of Continuous Improvement**
  Partnerships use local data, community expertise and intentional research to identify areas for improvement in a constant and disciplined manner that ensures that partners invest in practices that work.

- **Leverage Existing Resources**
  Partnerships build on existing resources in the community and align them to maximize impact.

### Theory of Action

**Getting better results for every child, cradle to career**

**The Partnership**

- **Exploring**
  A cross-sector partnership with a defined geographic scope organizes around a cradle-to-career vision

- **Emerging**
  A cross-sector leadership table is convened with a documented accountability structure

- **Sustaining**
  The partnership operates in alignment with the accountability structure

**Shared Community Vision**

- The partnership selects community-level outcomes and core indicators to be held accountable for improving

**Evidence-based Decision Making**

- The partnership collects and disaggregates baseline data by key demographic groups for core indicators and regularly shares data with partners

**Collaborative Action**

- The partnership prioritizes a subset of core indicators for initial focus based on disaggregated data

**Investment & Sustainability**

- Key to developing and sustaining a partnership

**Ongoing**

- The partnership prioritizes a subset of contributing indicators of initial focus

**Systems Change**

- Organizations, institutions and communities align their work to support the cradle-to-career vision

**Proof Point**

- Partners and external partners work to align four benchmarks in the systems change gateway across four pillars

**Systems Transformation**

- Multiple sectors have aligned efforts in service of economic mobility

- Partnerships build on existing resources in the community and align them to maximize impact

- Partners and institutions in multiple sectors adopt practices and policies that advance equitable outcomes

- Public and private funding is aligned to the systems change gateway across four pillars

- Student-level data is accessible and used regularly by relevant partners to inform actions to improve outcomes and reduce disparities

- Collaborative action efforts are sustained to improve outcomes and reduce disparities

- Partners sustain actions to support systems change across sectors

**Four Core Principles**

1. **Partnership**
   - Four core indicators of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are maintained or improved
   - Four disparity gaps of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are reduced or eliminated

2. **Partnership is in the systems change gateway with additional examples of systems change**
   - Four core indicators of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are maintained or improved
   - Two disparity gaps of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are reduced or eliminated

3. **Partners sustain actions to support systems change across sectors**
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4. **Partners and institutions in multiple sectors adopt practices and policies that advance equitable outcomes**
   - Public and private funding is aligned to the systems change gateway across four pillars

5. **Partners sustain actions to support systems change across sectors**
   - Public and private funding is aligned to the systems change gateway across four pillars

**Four Disparity Gaps**

- Student-level data is accessible and used regularly by relevant partners to inform actions to improve outcomes and reduce disparities

- Collaborative action efforts are sustained to improve outcomes and reduce disparities

- Partners sustain actions to support systems change across sectors

- Partners and institutions in multiple sectors adopt practices and policies that advance equitable outcomes

- Public and private funding is aligned to the systems change gateway across four pillars

**Four Core Indicators**

- Four core indicators of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are maintained or improved

- Four disparity gaps of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are reduced or eliminated

**Four Benchmarks**

- Four core indicators of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are maintained or improved

- Two disparity gaps of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are reduced or eliminated

**Four Gateways**

- Four core indicators of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are maintained or improved

- Four disparity gaps of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes are reduced or eliminated

**Four Benchmarks**

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