

StriveTogether[®]

Every child. Cradle to career.

proving it's possible

PLACE BY PLACE

Annual Report

20
19



COVER PHOTO

StriveTogether's Cradle to Career Network impacted the lives of more than 12 million youth last year. This picture features children served by Thrive Chicago's local partners.

at a glance table of contents

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StriveTogether supports community-based partnerships like the Boston Opportunity Agenda to improve outcomes for youth.

defining what's possible



Jennifer Blatz
President & CEO
StriveTogether

The COVID-19 pandemic is a defining moment for everyone as we consider what is really important in our lives. One thing is crystal clear for both of us — the vision and mission of the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network is more important than ever.

This crisis creates an opportunity to dismantle and rebuild systems that were designed to fail children and families of color and those living in poverty. We can help communities create integrated systems that serve every child, every family — regardless of race, ethnicity or zip code.



Danae D. Davis
Board Chair
StriveTogether

We invite you to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network and push for lasting change. Together, we can redefine what's possible for millions of youth across the country.

Changing systems that developed over centuries is not for the faint of heart. True systems transformation

takes time. We have more than a decade of experience in bringing youth, parents, educators, businesses, civic leaders and systems leaders together to close disparity gaps and improve outcomes for children of color and youth living in poverty. While our vision may not be achieved during our lifetime, it truly is our life's work and we're making measurable progress.

Last year, the Network impacted the lives of more than 12 million youth, closing disparity gaps and improving outcomes, cradle to career. Community change did not occur in boardrooms. From Oregon to Texas to Maryland, our network members tapped the experience and expertise within their communities to solve complex problems together. This includes working across sectors like justice and health to address language barriers for Latinx youth in Central Oregon, empowering youth to advocate for their needs in

South Texas, and including youth in the summer grant reviews in Baltimore, Maryland.

You will also see examples of mobilizing the community to advocate for equitable policies in Minnesota and Utah. Our Strategic Initiatives Fund supported this policy work. One of the most notable policy wins was \$6.5 billion in education reforms in Texas. The statewide coalition will fight hard to protect this funding for 2021, despite declining state revenue due to COVID-19. They cannot afford to go back to business as usual because prior cuts to education placed their youth at a drastic disadvantage academically compared with peers across the country.

These are just a handful of stories from a network of nearly 70 communities spanning 29 states and Washington, D.C. More than half of these communities reached new benchmarks of progress across our theory of action.

We learn with our Network as they work to improve racial and ethnic equity in their communities. At StriveTogether, we created an equitable compensation policy for our team and Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion principles for suppliers. We walk the talk within our organization.

The COVID-19 crisis heightens urgency for our work. Our results are made possible by our talented staff, committed board of directors, relentless network members and dedicated investors. Together, we're addressing the current crisis while redefining what's possible for millions of young people across the country.

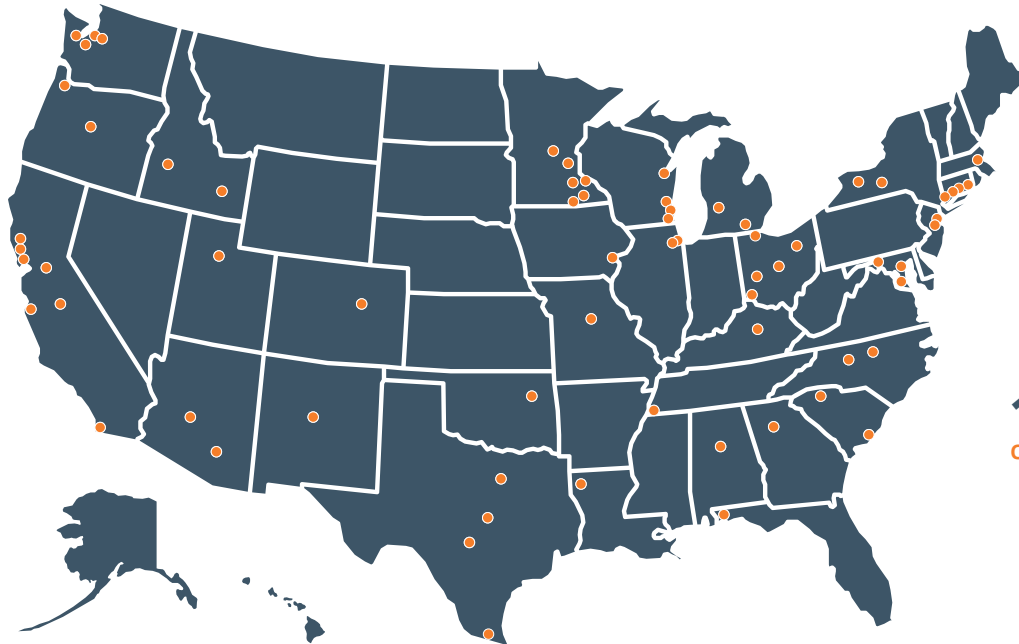
Sincerely,

Jennifer Blatz

Danae Davis

NETWORK IMPACT

network at a glance



The impact of StriveTogether's Cradle to Career Network is assessed annually. Last year, 98% of partnerships provided data in the annual assessment.



12+ million
children impacted

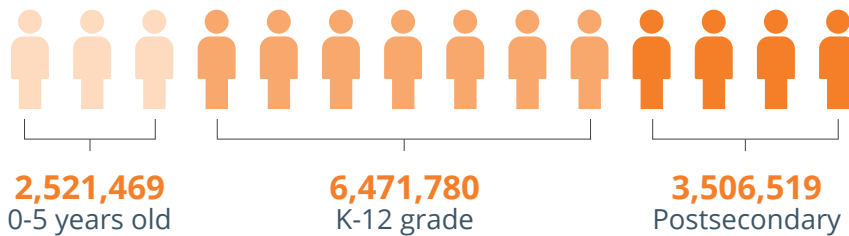


68
Network members
building local
infrastructure to
improve outcomes
for every child

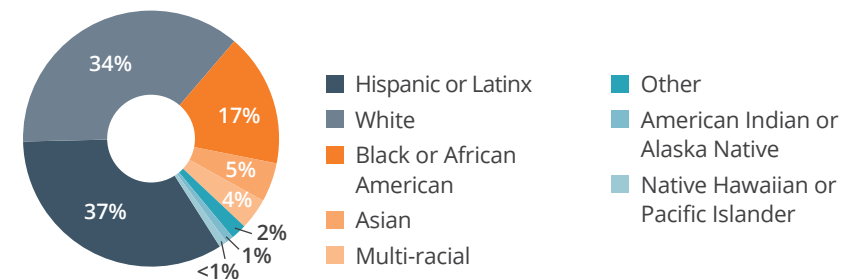


29 STATES +
Washington, DC

TOTAL YOUTH SERVED



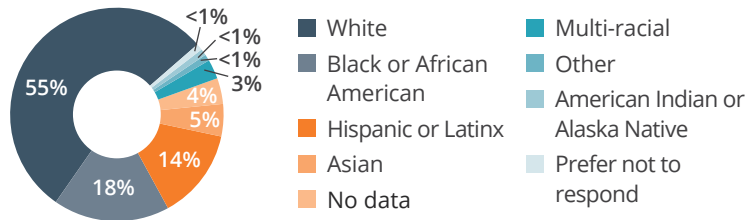
YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS



**All data from the Civic Infrastructure Assessment is self-reported. Not all partnerships submitted data for every data point. Therefore, number of observations for each measure may vary.*

NETWORK CHARACTERISTICS

Staff by race



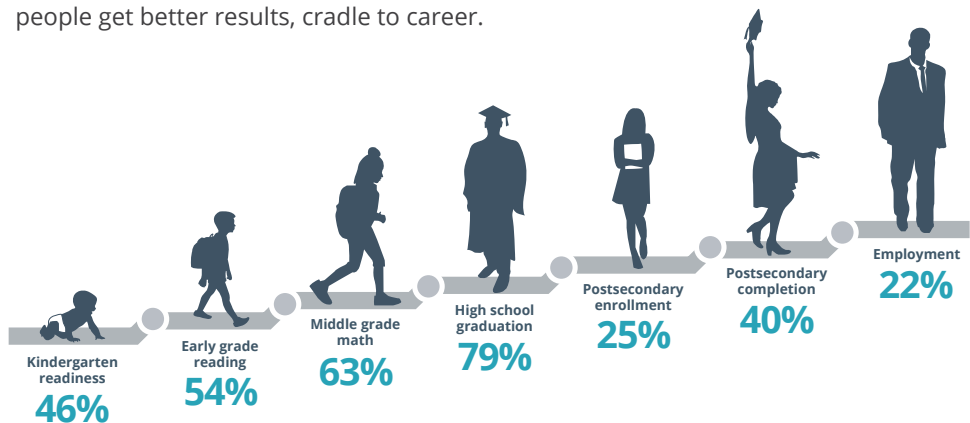
average staff size
9.7

average number of years in operation
8

average operating budget
\$1.5M

% OF NETWORK MEMBERS WITH OUTCOMES IMPROVING

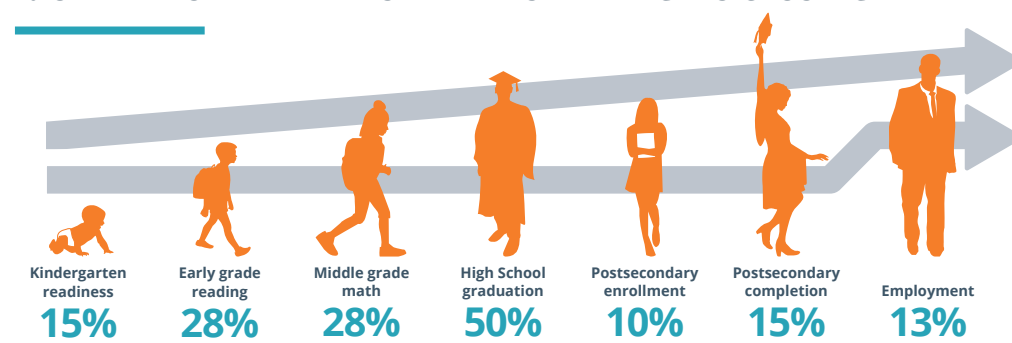
StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network members help young people get better results, cradle to career.



GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF NETWORK MEMBERS



% OF NETWORK MEMBERS WITH DISPARITY GAPS CLOSING



ANCHOR ORGANIZATION

Though some members are stand-alone entities, many of our Cradle to Career Network members identify with an anchor organization that commits to acting as the fiscal agent and ensuring the partnership's long-term sustainability. There are seven common anchor types within the Network.



**All data from the Civic Infrastructure Assessment is self-reported. Not all partnerships submitted data for every data point. Therefore, number of observations for each measure may vary.*

STORY OF IMPACT

creating change with community

Lasting community change doesn't start in a boardroom. It starts where the voices of the community are heard, valued and hold power. StriveTogether helps communities move toward true collaboration with youth and families, coaching teams to strengthen engagement and sharing insights across the Cradle to Career Network.



In Texas, the Youth Voice Summit teaches young people about policy issues and helps them build skills like public speaking and fundraising.

In San Antonio, Texas, a network of young people is building power and policy to shape their futures. UP Partnership's Our Tomorrow network connects youth-serving organizations and youth leadership councils to elevate the voices of young people.

"Youth have to be at the forefront — not just sitting in the room, but actually making change," said Melanie Harrell, a high school senior and the social media intern for Our Tomorrow.

Along with policy work on priorities like mental health, Our Tomorrow hosts an annual Youth Voice Summit. The event teaches young people about policy issues, helps them build skills like public speaking and fundraising, and closes with an intergenerational conversation between youth, local officials and subject matter experts. While Our Tomorrow redesigns this event, postponed because of the coronavirus, they're creating new spaces like a virtual town hall for youth to share how the pandemic has affected them and hear their solutions.

For Leroy Adams, Our Tomorrow network manager at UP Partnership, this work is a way to share an important message with young people: "You matter more than you've been told before." And the best way to show youth

that they matter, he said, is to change policies to shift resources and funding to support what they're advocating for.

Shifting decision-making around resources is at the heart of the Baltimore Summer Funding Collaborative's youth engagement work. The Collaborative is coordinated by Baltimore's Promise, which facilitates a shared review process for summer programming grants. Since 2015, it's awarded \$19.6 million to expand learning, recreation, and college and career readiness opportunities across the city.

Last year, the Collaborative's community review was revamped to fit the specific needs of young people. Baltimore's Promise led a youth review process that connected organizations seeking funding with youth ages 14-24, who received training and stipends for their participation along with meals and transportation.

The process helped Baltimore's Promise build relationships with more than 100 young people, including disconnected youth not involved in school or work. Baltimore's Promise will continue to engage youth in collaborative projects, with plans to create a community advisory board with two seats for young people.



In Oregon, Better Together connects the entire community, engaging not just school partners but also the library, police department, health care and more.

Youth engagement isn't just a box to check off, but a core part of developing solutions, said Larry Simmons, director of community engagement at Baltimore's Promise. "We have to respect and understand the fact that young people are experts in their own success and center them in the decision-making," he said.

A focus on young people's success is key to the Latinx Success Initiative in Redmond, Ore., developed by Better Together Central Oregon. The initiative is a community group focused on solutions targeting Latinx students.

Better Together's work connects the entire community, engaging not just school partners but also the library, police department, health care and more. This cross-sector work builds momentum for shared goals and gets the right people at the table to hear where challenges are arising, like language barriers or other access issues.

Rutila Galvan-Rodriguez, Better Together's director of family and youth partnerships, shared that informal relationships support this work, like when she has conversations with community members at the grocery store or her coworker visits low-income housing communities to connect families with resources.

"Instead of creating what we think the families need, we're creating the space for the families to say what they want," Rutila said. "It's critically important to let this work be led by families."



In Maryland, Baltimore's Promise engaged youth in awarding summer programming grants to expand learning, recreation, and college and career readiness opportunities across the city.



UP PARTNERSHIP san antonio, texas

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

HISPANIC OR LATINX STUDENTS

2012 23%

2017 29%

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

2012 28%

2017 43%

BALTIMORE'S PROMISE

baltimore, maryland

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

2012 67%

2018 74%

BETTER TOGETHER CENTRAL OREGON redmond, oregon

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

HISPANIC OR LATINX STUDENTS

2014 58%

2019 78%

STORY OF IMPACT

mobilizing community advocates

StriveTogether strengthened advocacy, policy and mobilization across the Cradle to Career Network last year through direct investment in communities, focused convenings and technical assistance. Network members worked more directly with youth, parents and community partners to shape equitable policies and influence state funding.

MINNESOTA

Parents are persuasive advocates for change in Minnesota. One parent, Erica Valliant, coaches other parents to tell their stories in ways that get leaders to listen. Valliant draws on her expertise as a mother of three who has experienced homelessness and job loss. Those hardships led her to become the activist and organizer she is today.

“Policy changes should be driven by those most affected by inequity,” Valliant said. “I am committed to making sure other parents see and exercise their power from their position and place.”

This advocacy is made possible through the Education Partnerships Coalition, a statewide group of organizations in Minnesota that includes Generation Next and five other Cradle to Career Network members.

The Education Partnerships Coalition leverages the power of parents like Valliant to improve how systems serve youth and families. With a grant from the Strategic Initiatives Fund, part of StriveTogether’s Cradle to Career Community Challenge, the coalition has strengthened its support for parents engaging in advocacy work, from providing stipends to paying for child care.



POLICY WIN: MINNESOTA

\$1.54 million increase

**FROM THE STATE FOR THIS WORK
OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS**



In Minnesota, Generation Next is part of a statewide coalition helping parents to advocate for change.

In 2019, the coalition pushed to add more rigor and requirements to its existing state statute, plus funding for coalition members and planning grants to expand collective impact in rural and urban communities across Minnesota. After a contentious special legislative session, the coalition won support for both, including a \$1.54 million increase from the state for this work over the next two years.

The coalition attributes this victory to parent advocacy — a win all the more notable given the state began the legislative session with the only divided government in the nation.

“Ensuring children and families can thrive is not a partisan issue,” Generation Next Executive Director Michelle Walker said. “Our success is due to our legislative champions on both sides and the innovative power of parents.”

Throughout the legislative session, the coalition worked with parents to share their experiences and advocate for their families and communities. During the House and Senate committee meetings, legislators heard parents, students and school officials on why the StriveTogether framework is a key solution to ending disparities and helping youth thrive.

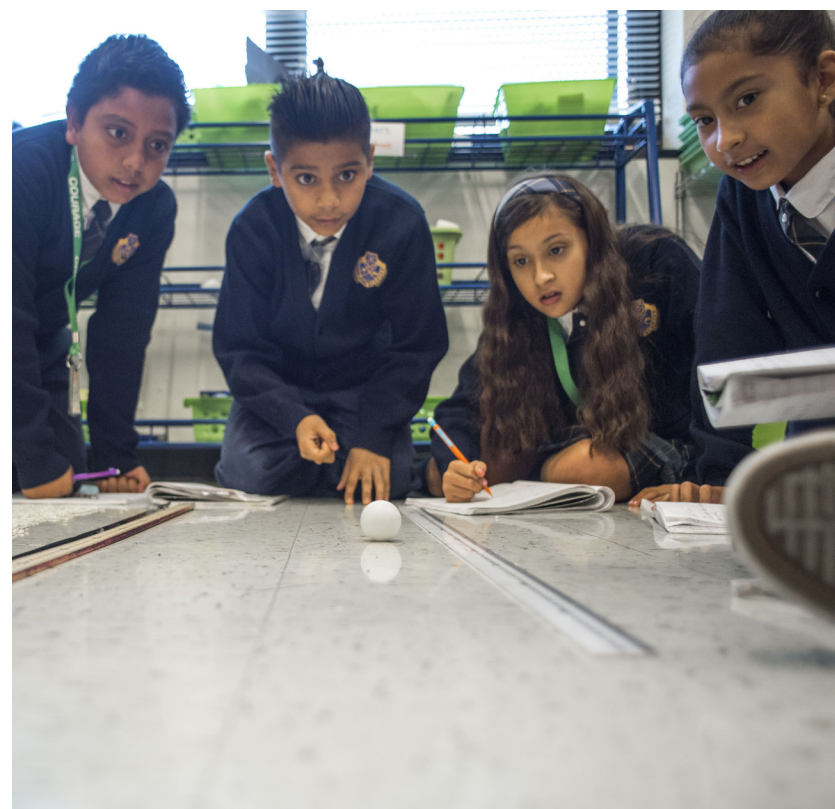
TEXAS

For years in Texas, education and fiscal advocates engaged in a tug of war over public school funding. Advocates for education fought for as much unrestricted funding as possible while fiscal advocates sought disruptive change linked to specific outcomes.

StriveTogether network members used outcome-specific data to mobilize educators, business leaders and policymakers to implement one of the most sweeping pieces of education legislation in the state’s history.

The Commit Partnership took the state goal of 60% postsecondary completion and looked all the way down the pipeline. The data showed that third-grade reading proficiency is crucial to student success: children who are not reading by third grade are three times more likely to drop out of school. And just 40% of third graders met state literacy standards in Texas in 2018.

Commit Partnership CEO Todd Williams was part of the Governor’s Commission on Public School Finance and led a group focused on outcomes. He said, “We hammered home the fact that we ranked second in the number of English Language Learner students and 12th in poverty at the same time we ranked 38th in state spending. The ethos of Texas is that we are Number



In Texas, StriveTogether network members led a statewide coalition to pass equitable education reforms.



POLICY WIN: TEXAS

\$6.5 billion

STATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

One in all, so we chose to appeal to that pride.”

House Bill 3 (HB3) proposed increasing funding for public education and distributing it more equitably to improve early childhood education, reward exceptional teachers, and put more highly effective teachers in the classrooms that need them most.

In Central Texas, E3 Alliance CEO Susan Dawson explained that sharing data helped move legislators to action. “We had had the data for a long time, but the commission did a better job of highlighting it, and advertising it, so the legislature could no longer ignore it. And they produced a substantial report that people actually read, using it as the blueprint for what HB3 would be.”

With the law’s passage, the state’s share of public education funding, among the lowest in the nation, will jump to \$11 billion. The challenge moving forward is to protect this funding as COVID-19 puts added financial pressure on the state.

UTAH

United Way of Salt Lake’s Promise Partnership of Salt Lake, a Cradle to Career Network member, also received a grant through StriveTogether’s Strategic Initiatives Fund for policy work, including community engagement.

Improving outcomes for every child, especially those living in poverty, is a priority for United Way of Salt Lake. Six out of 10 children in low-income households do not meet literacy standards when they start school.

“High-quality preschool is key to kids being ready to learn once they start kindergarten,” said Bill Crim, president and CEO of United Way of Salt Lake. “Research shows it increases their likelihood of upward mobility and is critical for closing the disparity gap.”

Before the 2019 state legislative session, United Way of Salt Lake gathered stakeholders to agree on goals and strategies. The organization also created a campaign to drive public demand for preschool investments and engaged both parents and community leaders to support this work. As a result of these efforts, two bills passed that established common measures around early education and created a commission of multiple agencies to oversee this work.

The commission formed through House Bill 47 will coordinate and improve programs for Utah families with young children up to age 6. Senate Bill 166 brings together three state-funded preschool initiatives to standardize and improve outcomes. It also retains \$12 million in state funding for preschool efforts, with opportunities for future expansion.

To authentically connect with community members facing language and transportation barriers, the agency held early learning events in mosques and hosted similar workshops for Spanish-speaking parents.



In Utah, United Way of Salt Lake’s Promise Partnership leveraged a grant from StriveTogether to advocate for high-quality preschool for every child.



POLICY WIN: UTAH

\$12 million

FUNDING FOR PRESCHOOL EFFORTS, WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE EXPANSION

United Way also offers a paid fellowship program for young people who are native speakers of critical languages in the community, including Arabic, Somali and Spanish. As trusted individuals within their neighborhoods, these fellows have made tangible progress, including increasing by 30% the number of completed developmental screenings in a target zip code.

One of these student leaders, Abdi Iftin, spoke on a panel at StriveTogether’s Cradle to Career Network Convening last year.

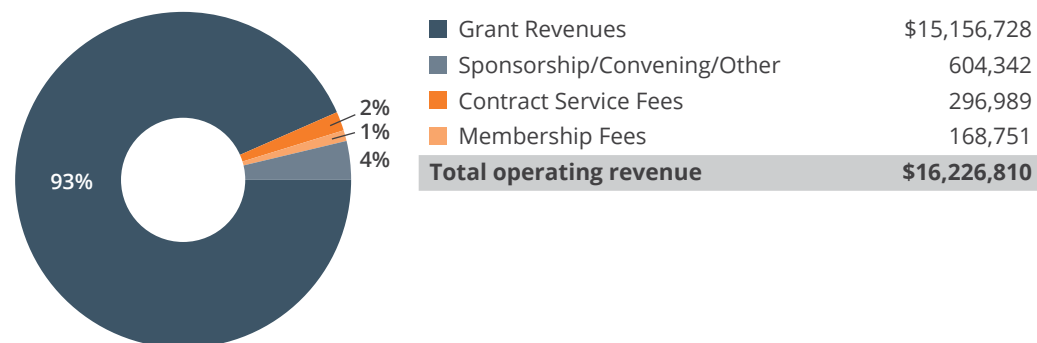
“It’s important to build up the community from within and allow voices to be heard that often are not,” Iftin said. “While at the StriveTogether convening, I truly felt the collective — we are all doing work in community.”

FINANCIALS

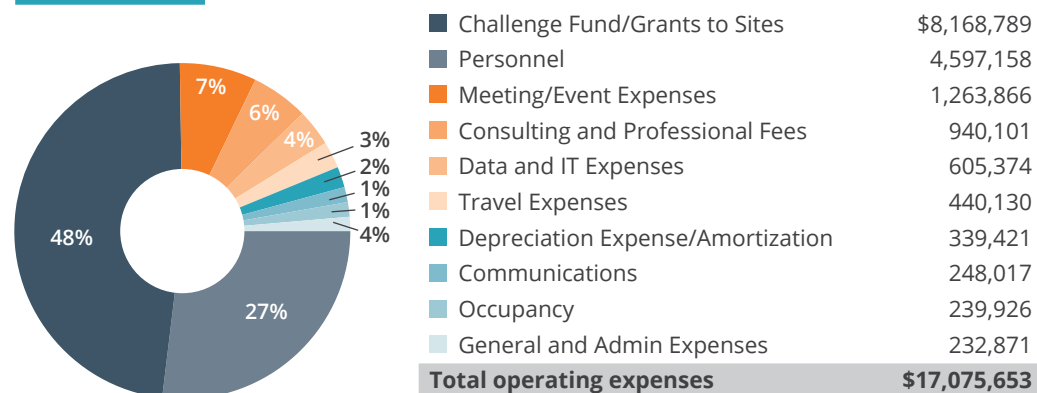
operating highlights

StriveTogether's auditors have expressed an unqualified opinion on our financial statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2019. Those financial statements are available on StriveTogether's website. Our [Cradle to Career Community Challenge](#) invested more than \$8 million last year to support initiatives to improve equity and economic mobility for youth and families. Read more about the [Opportunity Fund here](#) and our [Accelerator Fund here](#).

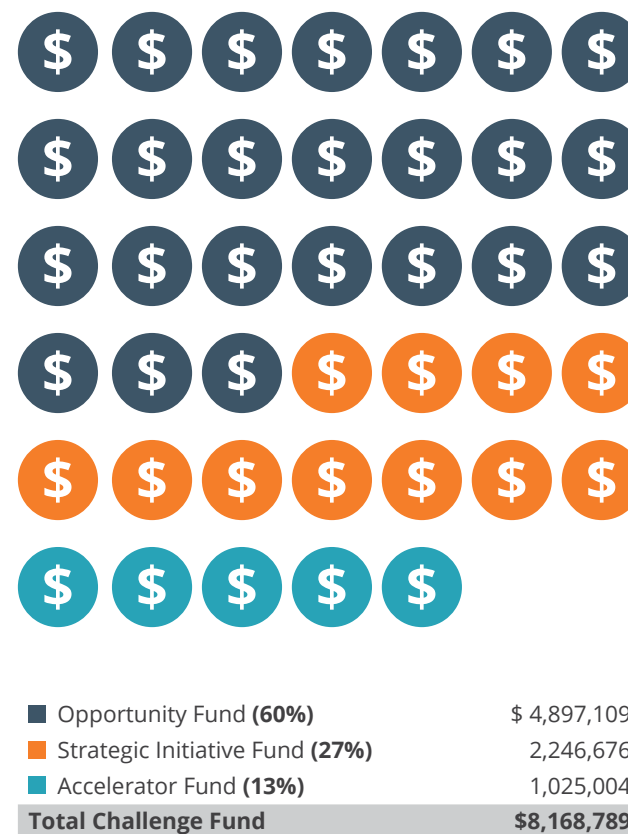
OPERATING REVENUE



EXPENDITURES



COMMUNITY CHALLENGE



BETTER TOGETHER

investors and partners

Our work and results are made possible by the following foundations and partners. We appreciate their support. Together, we're fueling a national movement to ensure the success of every child from cradle to career.

INVESTORS

Annie E. Casey Foundation

AT&T

Ballmer Group

Benson Family Foundation

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Chan Zuckerberg Initiative DAF,
Silicon Valley Community
Foundation

Communities In Schools

Ford Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

Island Foundation

Pritzker Children's Initiative

Tableau Foundation

PARTNERS

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Brookings Institution

Coalition for Community Schools

Communities In Schools

Enterprise Community Partners

Equal Measure

My Brother's Keeper Alliance

National Collaborative for Infants
and Toddlers

National Institute for Children's
Health Quality

PolicyLink

Save the Children

CRADLE TO CAREER CONVENING SPONSORS

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Bainum Family Foundation

Nellie Mae Education Foundation

LEADERSHIP

board of directors

Board members provide strategic oversight and strong leadership to guide StriveTogether in supporting the success of every child, cradle to career.



Danae D. Davis

Milwaukee
Succeeds



James Bell

W. Haywood
Burns Institute



Tom Fry

Philanthropic
Advisor



Sue Lehmann

Student Success
Network



**Roberto
Rodríguez**

Teach Plus



Connie Ballmer

Ballmer Group



**Dr. Russell
Booker**

Spartanburg
County School
District Seven



Lisa Hamilton

The Annie E. Casey
Foundation



Tony Pipa

Brookings
Institution



Jennifer Blatz

StriveTogether

CRADLE TO CAREER NETWORK

the power of the network

The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network impacted the lives of more than 12 million children last year. More than half of those served were youth of color. Together, we are transforming systems to ensure every child has every opportunity to succeed.

More than 500 community members shared insights and peer-to-peer learning at the 2019 Cradle to Career Network Convening in Washington, D.C. Keynote speakers included activist, author and civil rights leader Stacey Abrams. Photos by Imagine Photography



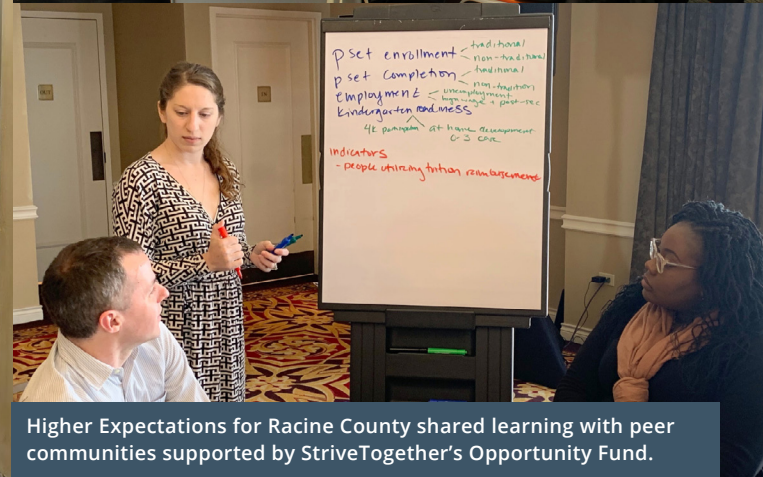
StriveTogether®

Every child. Cradle to career.

StriveTogether staff, network and board members created an equity statement, solidifying our commitment to racial and ethnic equity.



StriveTogether opened a training space at its Cincinnati headquarters last year and hosted a series of learning experiences for network members.



Higher Expectations for Racine County shared learning with peer communities supported by StriveTogether's Opportunity Fund.



Prenatal to Age 3 Impact and Improvement Network brought together communities from across the country to improve kindergarten readiness.

125 East Ninth Street
Second Floor
Cincinnati, OH 45202

513.929.1150
StriveTogether.org

332 South Michigan Avenue
Ninth Floor
Chicago, IL 60604

