StriveTogether®

theory of ACTION™

6th Revision

GETTING
BETTER
RESULTS
FOR EVERY
CHILD,
CRADLE TO
CAREER

theory of ACTION™

GETTING BETTER RESULTS FOR EVERY CHILD, CRADLE TO CAREER

StriveTogether®

CRADLE-TO-CAREER OUTCOMES:
Kindergarten readiness · Early grade reading · Middle grade math · High school graduation · Postsecondary enrollment · Postsecondary completion · Employment

---

Cradle-to-career partnerships are formal groups of partners that consist of cross-sector organizational and system leaders as well as grassroots organizations, neighborhood leaders and community members who come together around a shared community vision to advance equitable cradle-to-career outcomes. With support from a **backbone**, the partnership works together to develop and implement universal and targeted strategies to improve population-level outcomes, and transform the systems accountable for results.

Partnerships implementing the StriveTogether Theory of Action™ effectively demonstrate the following principles as they work to build and strengthen civic infrastructure:

- Racial and economic equity
- Community engagement and local context
- Outcomes-focused systems approach
- Public sector adoption

PILLAR	CORE CONCEPT	EXPLORING	EMERGING	SUSTAINING	SYSTEMS CHANGE	SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION
Shared Community Vision	Vision development and expansion	1.1 A clear vision for equitable cradle-to-career outcomes is co-developed by a cross-sector partnership — including Black, Indigenous, Latine and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty.	2.1 The partnership engages with organizations and residents from across the community to develop awareness of the cradle-to-career vision.	3.1 The vision is championed by organizations across sectors. 3.2 Community members are mobilized to advance equitable outcomes.	4.1 A diverse set of organizations and community members demonstrate commitment to the cradle-to-career vision.	5.1 Multiple organizations, sectors and community members demonstrate commitment and ongoing accountability to the vision and the community.
	Partnership alignment and accountability	1.2 A diverse set of partners — inclusive of youth and family perspectives — are organized around a clear set of roles and responsibilities.	2.2 Partners carry out their roles and responsibilities in support of the cradle-to-career vision.	3.3 The community is regularly updated on the partnership's vision, strategies and progress toward improving cradle-to-career outcomes. 3.4 Youth and families are involved in cradle-to-career vision and strategy refinement.	4.2 Partners take ownership and responsibility for the partnership's successes and challenges. 4.3 Youth and families are collaborators in cradle-to-career vision and strategy refinement.	
Evidence-Based Decision Making	Community-wide culture of data	1.3 The partnership identifies population-level indicators for measuring progress toward equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.	2.3 The partnership collects, analyzes and publicly shares data for cradle-to-career indicators — disaggregated by race, income, gender and other priority demographics. 2.4 The partnership identifies systems indicators to understand ways that organizations can shift practices, policies, resources and power structures.	3.5 The partnership publicly shares cradle-to-career indicators and systems indicators to assess progress, explore disparities and understand factors that affect cradle-to-career outcomes. 3.6 Partners are equipped with capabilities to share and use data, including youth and family perspectives.	4.4 Sharing and use of data — including youth and family perspectives — is institutionalized within and across partners.	5.2 A culture of data use drives action and is sustained and spreads across the community.
	Partnership data and technology infrastructure		2.5 The partnership develops a data strategy with local partners and identifies opportunities for data sharing.	3.7 The partnership's people, processes and technology enable data sharing and use within and across partners.	4.5 The people, processes and technology are sustained to facilitate data sharing and use within and across partners.	
Collaborative Action	Framework for collaborative improvement	1.4 Formal cross-sector workgroups, inclusive of youth and family perspectives, are established to advance equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.	2.6 Workgroup members are clear about their roles and responsibilities in outcomes-focused efforts. 2.7 Workgroups have the collaboration skills necessary to facilitate data-informed aligned action.	3.8 Partners use data and collaborative improvement cycles to test and refine outcomes-focused strategies for adoption and adaptation.	4.6 Collaborative action workgroups are sustained or evolve over time.	5.3 Institutional and public policies, practices and resources that advance equitable outcomes are spread and sustained.
	Scale and spread of institutional policies, practices and resources		2.8 Workgroups use data, including youth and family perspectives, to identify priority populations, underlying systems-focused factors and strategies to advance equitable outcomes.	3.9 Partners take aligned action to shift policies, practices, resources and/or power structures to advance equitable outcomes.	4.7 Partners within and across sectors align resources and scale policies and practices that advance equitable outcomes.	
	Development, advocacy and implementation of public policies and resources		2.9 The partnership engages with local, state and/or federal leaders who influence public policies and resources.	3.10 The partnership has identified strategies for advancing public policy priorities toward equitable outcomes. 3.11 The partnership has the infrastructure necessary to develop and advocate for public policy change to advance equitable outcomes.	4.8 Local, state and/or national policies change to advance equitable outcomes. 4.9. The partnership aligns public resources toward strategies that demonstrate equitable outcomes.	
Investment and Sustainability	Backbone operations and partnership talent strategies	1.5 A backbone is established and capacity to launch a cradle-to-career partnership is in place.	2.10 The backbone capacity exists to support daily management, finances, data needs, facilitation, communication and engagement with the community.	3.12 The backbone is equipped and staffed to support the long-term success of the partnership.	4.10 The partnership demonstrates continued performance and resilience amid changing local contexts.	5.4. The partnership maintains operational sustainability and multiple years of revenue from a variety of sources amid changing local contexts.
	Backbone and partnership fund development and sustainability	1.6 The partnership engages funders to support backbone operations and strategies to build civic infrastructure.	2.11 The partnership has multiple revenue sources to support backbone operations and strategies to build civic infrastructure.	3.13 Multiple years of funding are secured to sustain backbone operations and strategies to build civic infrastructure.	4.11 Multiple years of funding from a variety of sources are secured to sustain the partnership amid changing local contexts.	

A validated framework for place-based change: THEORY OF ACTION™

StriveTogether first released the Theory of Action™ in 2013 to provide communities with a road map for changing systems to improve outcomes for youth and families at scale. This framework for change is rooted in how the work happens in communities across the Cradle to Career Network. The framework evolves as network members learn together, building the civic infrastructure critical to getting better and more equitable outcomes for youth and families.

This latest iteration, the sixth revision to the Theory of Action™ since its launch, was informed by the experiences and perspectives of Cradle to Career Network members. It aims to provide greater clarity on the steps to building and sustaining civic infrastructure. The North Star for this work is putting more young people on a path to economic mobility, measured by population-level improvement across the seven cradle-to-career outcomes. To achieve this, communities must transform systems — making fundamental and institutionalized shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures — so that Black, Indigenous, Latine and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

StriveTogether®

125 East Ninth Street
Second Floor
Cincinnati, OH, 45202
513.929.1150

StriveTogether.org