

Working Cities Challenge



MIDTERM ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS
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Content



- Introduction
- Midterm Progress by City
- Cross-Site Findings
- Considerations for Round 2

Midterm Evaluation Introduction



- Initiative Background
 - The Working Cities Challenge: An Initiative for Massachusetts Smaller Cities (WCC), led by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (Boston Fed), is an effort to encourage and support the collaborative efforts of cross-sector tables within smaller cities working on innovative strategies that have the potential to produce large-scale results for low-income residents in their communities.
 - This report looks at the progress to date among the six cities awarded grants in early 2014. The competitive grants include four implementation grants awarded to Chelsea, Fitchburg, Holyoke, and Lawrence, and two seed grants awarded to Salem and Somerville. The one-year seed grants were completed as of early 2016, but this evaluation represents the midpoint of implementation for Chelsea, Fitchburg, Holyoke, and Lawrence.
 - A baseline evaluation report on the six cities and the initiative overall was completed in mid-2014. A final narrative report will be produced following the completion of the three-year implementation period. This evaluative brief highlights progress to date and places a spotlight on areas of particular importance to the WCC approach.

Midterm Evaluation Introduction



- Evaluation Purpose and Focus
 - Highlight progress for the four cities at the midpoint of implementation and final results of the two cities that completed their one-year seed grants.
 - Spotlight areas for WCC where the cities are likely to need additional support and technical assistance in order to realize the visions.
 - Provide feedback on the cities' interaction with the WCC as formative input to WCC so the initiative can shape the form of future assistance to best meet cities' needs
- Methods
 - Document review.
 - Observation at Learning Communities.
 - Observation of select governance meetings in each implementation city.
 - Interviews with nine key stakeholders in each implementation city (six in seed cities).

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Holyoke: Implementation Progress



- The first half of 2015 was devoted to further defining and moving to implement initial set of SPARK's activities:
 - Held event on March 2015 to launch the Spark Program/Initiative with 100 people attending.
 - Implemented SPARK.Live
 - ✦ Events designed to attract the widest audience and help build a community, culture, and network around entrepreneurship.
 - ✦ Held "Live" education and networking event in April on crowd source funding with about 40 people in attendance.
 - Implemented SPARK.Learn
 - ✦ Range of educational seminars/programs on business-related topics, offered by partners.
 - ✦ Held several "Learn" events in partnership with Chamber.
 - Implemented SPARK.Launch
 - ✦ 9-week accelerator program for entrepreneurs seeking to start a business, based on Co.Starters model.
 - ✦ Began first "Launch" training class with 16 ventures and 18 participants, with 60% Latino and 60% women and over half Holyoke residents. New Launch cohort started in September.
 - Established an ESOL class for entrepreneurs delivered by Holyoke Works around English terms and use for entrepreneurship and business, held in summer 2015 with 12 participants.
 - Received \$75,000 in CDBG funds to establish a microenterprise loan fund. Little work to operationalize to date.

Holyoke: Progress on Key WCC Elements



Governance and Cross-Sector Engagement

- The SPARK governance group, a 14-member board referred to as the Advisory Board (AB), has met regularly and frequently throughout late 2014 and 2015.
- Most original partners in SPARK's design still represented with new partners added in workforce and education agencies and businesses.
- The AB has evolved to a structured process for meetings, decision making, and assigning responsibility.
- Chamber Foundation and City Planning and Economic Development Office emerged as the most active partners.

Use of Data

- Informants, for the most part, did not report that SPARK had established how it will track and measure progress toward its large-scale result.

Community Engagement

- Most of the outreach and community engagement work has been to market SPARK, its events, and SPARK.Launch.

System Change

- New Latino business leadership has emerged.
- Holyoke Chamber of Commerce is placing more emphasis on entrepreneurship and inclusion of the Latino business community.
- Stronger relationships among AB prompted discussion and exploration of new initiatives/partnerships.
- Changes to city business registration system eliminate review and sign-off by multiple departments.

Fitchburg: Implementation Progress



- **Building Initiative Capacity:**
 - Used 2014 and much of 2015 in a planning mode leading to more focused approach.
 - Applied for and received a \$350,000 grant from the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts to support the work.
- **Footsteps to Brilliance:** Re-engineered original school system request for funding for reading readiness software to include special pilot in North of Main where parents are linked to Head Start. Will test value of coaching.
- **Problem Properties:**
 - Working with city to computerize records in housing to support code enforcement.
 - Provided city with grant to inventory and evaluate commercial property in downtown.
- **Neighborhood Cleanup:**
 - Partnered with church that runs an annual neighborhood cleanup.
 - This year, effort expanded from parishioners and involved 525 volunteers.
 - Event, branded with t-shirts, was highly visible and generated positive momentum.
- **Community Convening:** Successful community engagement with large number of neighborhood residents attending.
- **Small Grant Initiative for Quality of Life Improvements:** \$50,000 distributed among 8 projects.
- **Communication Strategy:** Columns in *Fitchburg Sentinel*, website, and newsletters.

Fitchburg: Progress on Key WCC Elements



Governance and Cross-Sector Engagement

- Structure involves Executive Team of 4 key staff, 3 workgroups (Communications, Footsteps to Brilliance, Housing), and an advisory group of 30 organizations in city and neighborhood.

Use of Data

- Substantial effort into development of baseline data on neighborhood and indicators to track results, but faced data limitations.
- Only site to involve a local evaluator, which stakeholders have found to be valuable.

Community Engagement

- Visioning sessions that engaged over 300 residents with survey to prioritize issues of concern.
- Major community event with 225 in attendance designed to move work from planning to action.

System Change

- New relationships between Head Start and School System developed through Footsteps to Brilliance.
- Stronger relationships leading to unanticipated outcomes:
 - Montachusett Opportunity Council (MOC) and Fitchburg State University (FSU) are conducting feasibility study of MOC-owned property in the North of Main neighborhood for use as a daycare center.
 - FSU is considering potential for development further up Main Street to have impact on downtown.
- Increased focus by the City on problem properties and more data-driven approach to working on these issues.

Chelsea: Implementation Progress



- **Refocusing the Work:**
 - Chelsea refined its focus and model.
 - Following extensive work, reframed and narrowed Chelsea Thrives around public safety result.
- **Opportunity to Thrive:**
 - Tested prototype for referrals and integrated case management.
 - Financial coach hired. Worked with 44 families in Shurtleff-Bellingham neighborhood.
- **Better Physical Conditions:**
 - City hired 2 bilingual building inspectors.
 - New code enforcement policies passed and rolled out.
 - Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) is tracking patient outcomes to understand what community-based education approaches have greatest impact on asthma.
- **Quality of Life:**
 - Launched Chelsea Shines focused on making neighborhoods more attractive and inviting through engaging the community. Cleanliness Campaign has strong city commitment and strong community participation.
 - New 10-point plan for community safety approved by City Council.
 - Adopt-A-Park-safety initiative. Park improvements completed and park celebration attended by 400.
- **Hub and COR: Chelsea Thrives has co-led program development for Hub and COR:**
 - Uses a collective impact approach and predictive methods to avert critical incidents, prioritizing Shurtleff-Bellingham. Piloted with 15 families.
 - New community engagement officer in police department.

Chelsea: Progress on Key WCC Elements



Governance and Cross-Sector Engagement

- Created a 9-partner Executive Council that meets monthly. Core leadership group, originally convened as part of Chelsea Thrives, still meets, though the focus is now more general. Leadership team composed of the broad partnership meets infrequently. Steering committees for each focus area.

Use of Data

- Initiative is using data in a number of ways:
 - Resident survey to establish baseline measures.
 - Compared efficacy of outreach methods for asthma education.
 - Reviewed code enforcement data.
 - Hub and COR is focused pilot addressing challenge of data sharing.

Community Engagement

- Chelsea Thrives has a number of community engagement activities including NeighborCircles and special gatherings for parents of young children.
- Planned Neighborhood Summit to communicate Chelsea Thrives, gain community input, connect residents to governance.

System Change

- Stakeholders see WCC as helping to build relationships they didn't have before, including closer relationship between MGH and The Neighborhood Developers (TND) as well as between Chamber of Commerce and Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC).
- City has new capacity and more data-driven approach related to building inspections.
- New community engagement officer in police department leading to practice change.
- MGH increased funding for community activity; exploring use of NeighborCircles in public health work.

Lawrence: Implementation Progress



- Family Resource Center (FRC) operational in Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) administrative offices:
 - Family Coach and Executive Director share office space with other LPS staff.
 - Extensive outreach to parents and employers.
 - Parent Ambassadors: Hired 4 parents to engage parents at FRC and school events, conduct mini-assessments.
- Coordinated Service Provision:
 - Partner organization offering childcare provider training to 15 LPS parents.
 - Another community partner offering 20 slots in its Certified Nurse's Assistant training to LPS parents.
 - Career Center offers on-site intake/career counseling during centralized school registration.
 - Health center is conducting insurance enrollment on-site.
 - Lead organization, Lawrence Community Works (LCW), is dedicating Individual Development Account program slots to LPS parents.
 - Lawrence Working Families Initiative (LWFI) is underwriting basic ESOL class on site at the FRC for LPS parents based on demand noted during assessment process.
 - Potential partnership with JVS.
- Industry-Specific Employer Panels:
 - Financial Institution Panel included 5 banks and was attended by 80 parents.
 - Health Care Panel well attended and led to job placements at Greater Lawrence Family Health Center (GLFHC).
- Participant Progress: 192 intake assessments, 153 referrals, 32 job placements.

Lawrence: Progress on Key WCC Elements



Governance and Cross-Sector Engagement

- Regular, close coordination between LCW and LPS. Steering committee, the broad group of stakeholders, a few times a year. Subcommittees (Employer Cultivation, Data and Evaluation, FRC Operations) meet more frequently.

Use of Data

- Collecting/tracking data in several ways:
 - Parent surveys to assess service needs.
 - One-on-one employer meetings to assess needs.
 - Fed research studies focused on Community Education Circles (CEC) participation and FRC involvement.
 - Tracking individual participants through Excel. Setting up system with providers to track participants post-referral, but capacity concerns. MOUs in place with five core partners to share data.

Community Engagement

- Parent Ambassadors vehicles to engage parents in FRC activities.
- CECs have engaged hundreds of families in select schools.
- Testing new approach, Parent Cafes, to engage parents on specific topics of interest.

System Change

- Stronger relationships between LPS and community organizations; accelerated collaboration of community organizations focused on workforce development; deeper engagement of career center.
- School system embracing WCC-modeled approach for parent engagement.

Somerville: Seed Implementation



- Key Outputs/Outcomes:
 - Served 53 youth, placing 20 youth in 25 total jobs.
 - 115 hours of 1-1 career sessions, 19 youth in soft skill workshops, 3 youth in 3 micro-level jobs, 3 youth in CDL training (1 obtained license), 3 completed financial literacy, 4 completed nanny training.
- Work changed significantly due to reduced funding and poor results related to initial program design:
 - Eliminated micro-level jobs, mobile app.
 - Reduced soft-skill training.
 - Enhanced range of occupational skill training.
 - Shifted away from targeted two-industry focus.
- Sustainability:
 - Integrating Pocket Change into broader (all ages) workforce development effort — led by Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) in partnership with The Career Place (TCP).

Somerville: Progress on Key WCC Elements



Governance and Cross-Sector Engagement

- Governance was composed of three core partners who met as needed.

Use of Data

- Worked with Census data, but it was difficult to focus analysis on specific target population with available data.
- Intake and case management data informed program design changes.
- TCP and SCC pursued lengthy effort to develop a joint database for tracking participants.

Community Engagement

- Community engagement focused on recruitment for workforce programs and individual feedback from participants.

System Change

- City now has dedicated staff person for workforce activities.
- SCC and TCP report new case management approach with more intensive career coaching. Considering integrating mentorship. Changes based on learning through WCC initiative.

Salem: Seed Implementation—Outputs



- Revitalization:
 - Report on commercial corridor and retail market analysis complete:
 - ✦ City submitted application to Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to create a smart growth district overlay for redevelopment of underutilized properties and housing.
- Workforce:
 - Citywide monthly industry roundtable discussion instituted with employers and now includes WCC partners.
 - Diversity consultant report completed with significant engagement of business community. Working on implementation, including development of a universal hard copy application of jobs.
 - Completed 16-week healthcare training program for non-native speaking Point residents. 19 enrolled in initial basic training and 15 enrolled in occupational training. Placement data not yet available.
- Small Business Development:
 - Conducted 4 small business programs in Spanish in Point, attended by 23 participants.
- Civic Participation and Leadership:
 - City created Latino Affairs Coordinator position.
 - Strategic plan created for Latino Leadership Coalition.
 - Training curriculum created to support residents' increased civic engagement and leadership skills.
 - Developing voter outreach materials; conducted 17 voter registration drives.

Salem: Implementation Outcomes



Outcomes

- Revitalization:
 - Multicultural pop-up market in October 2015 included showcase of 8 local businesses, a resident-led interactive art project, display communicating planning process and promoting Point services and activities.
 - New splash pad, pocket park on North Shore Community Development Coalition (CDC) property, trees planted funded by outside grants and the city's infrastructure spending.
 - Key parcel purchased by local developer to develop denser mixed-use building for market rate and affordable residential units.
 - North Shore CDC is expanding affordable housing in Point.
- Civic Participation and Leadership:
 - Point voter participation up 6% in recent election.
 - Point resident appointed to City's Public Art Commission.

Salem: Progress on Key WCC Elements



Governance and Cross-Sector Engagement

- Model evolved with continued leadership from City, but incorporating stronger role of CDC. North Shore CDC hosts and organizes monthly meetings of Point Vision and Action Plan implementation. City of Salem Department of Planning and Community Development responsible for WCC meetings and Industry Leaders Roundtable.
- Employers actively engaged in partnership.

Use of Data

- Salem had foundation of data from previous planning effort.
- Career Center used to tracking participant data.

Community Engagement

- Point Neighborhood Association and North Shore CDC increased role of engaging the community on behalf of other partners.
- North Shore CDC and Enterprise Center Director went door-to-door to businesses and residents for small business training outreach.
- City's new Latino Affairs Coordinator increased City's capacity for engagement of Latino community.

System Change

- City Latino Affairs Coordinator position will be sustained.
- North Shore Medical Center named one of its workforce recruiters as liaison to Point neighborhood.
- North Shore Workforce Investment Board wants to continue holding workforce programs in Point.

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Cross-Site Summary of Midterm Implementation Progress



Cross-sector tables are strengthening and producing benefits to communities

- While varied in size and structure, most WCC sites have made progress in developing cross-sector tables to govern their initiatives.
- The cross-sector tables, in many sites, have brought new actors together to collaborate on efforts toward the sites' goals.
- In some cases, the new relationships have spawned positive outcomes for the community beyond those directly tied to the WCC desired result.
 - For instance, the stronger relationships built at the table in Fitchburg contributed to two WCC partners conducting a feasibility study for a daycare center in the focus neighborhood.

WCC sites are generating programmatic progress related to their large-scale result

- Each site's implementation looks different based on its particular goal. Examples include:
 - Events, workshops, and more in-depth training for entrepreneurs in Holyoke.
 - Community clean up, small grants program, work with city on problem properties, and work with schools on school readiness in Fitchburg.
 - Financial coaching, increased building inspections/code enforcement, neighborhood clean up, preventative public safety initiatives in Chelsea.
 - Workforce development/human services center providing coaching, referral services, and employer panels for parents in Lawrence.

Cross-Site Summary of Midterm Implementation Progress



Four of the six sites have made substantial progress in terms of community engagement

- All three of the cities with a neighborhood focus placed a significant emphasis on engaging residents whether through visioning sessions, community network building, or community improvement activities like neighborhood clean-ups.
- Community engagement was not limited to neighborhood-based work—Lawrence cultivated parent engagement through a model of Community Education Circles in the schools.
- Community engagement efforts appear to be generating increased interest and participation and may be leading to changed perspectives about the targeted neighborhoods.
- The WCC-supported efforts have exposed other partner organizations that had not previously incorporated community engagement in their processes to the value of community engagement. In some cases, those organizations are now expressing a desire to change their practices and prioritize community engagement in non-WCC efforts.

Cross-Site Summary of Midterm Implementation Progress



Early signs of system change have been seen in many communities

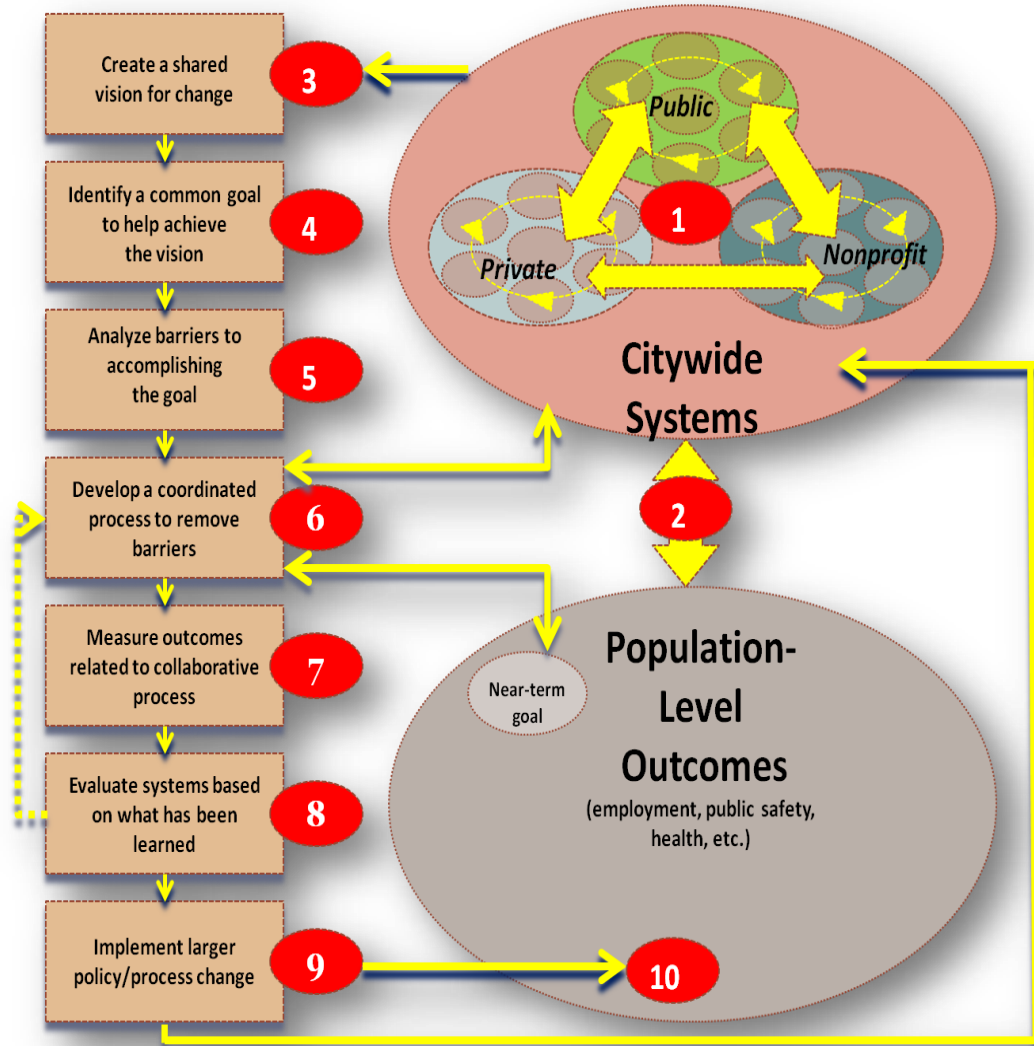
- The most prevalent changes to date are around building new or deeper relationships. While the types of new relationships vary, examples include:
 - Stronger relationships between community-based organizations and local colleges or universities.
 - Deepened relationships between chambers of commerce and other partners at the table.
 - Building partnerships with local hospitals.
 - Creating closer alignment with the workforce development system and community partners.
- Policies and practices are beginning to change in a number of cities. Examples include:
 - Changes to city business registration system in Holyoke.
 - New capacity and changed practices related to building inspections and policing in Chelsea.
 - Increased focus by the city on problem properties and more data-driven approach in Fitchburg.
 - Lawrence Public Schools' adoption of parent engagement strategies modeled in WCC.

WCC Progress in Context of Theory of Change

WCC communities have developed dedicated, and often quite effective, cross-sector tables. In many cases, more work is needed to distribute leadership among individual organizations and across sectors.

WCC communities have a clear vision for change and have taken steps to implement strategies toward that vision.

While some communities devoted substantial time in the past year, with WCC support, on understanding the barriers to accomplishing their goal, overall, more work is needed in that area, including better use/analysis of data to refine both programmatic and system-oriented strategies.



Summary Progress Assessment: Interim Outcomes



	Implementation progress	New and deeper relationships	Changing perspectives	Policy, practice, change	New sustainable community capacity	Indicators of scalable, sustainable progress toward result
Chelsea						
Holyoke						
Fitchburg						
Lawrence						
Salem						
Somerville						

=Strong, =Mixed/some challenges, =Weak

Summary Progress Assessment: WCC Elements



		Cross Sector Engagement			
	Governance	Business	Public Sector	Use of Data	Community Engagement
Chelsea	□	□	■	◻	■
Holyoke	■	◻	■	□	□
Fitchburg	■	□	◻	◻	■
Lawrence	◻	◻	■	◻	■
Salem	■	■	■	◻	■
Somerville	□	□	◻	□	□

■ =Strong, ◻ =Mixed/some challenges, □ =Weak

Formative Assessment: Cross-Site Issues and Questions



Cross-Sector Table

- While all sites have made progress, communities have varied success in building truly cross-sector tables and developing robust mechanisms for governance.
- More clarity is needed around role of cross-sector table:
 - Are tables intended as advisory boards providing input on implementation or are they collective impact tables intended to align individual organizational efforts toward a shared result?
- Table size and structure vary:
 - Is there a point of view on the minimum breadth or depth needed at a table to achieve the changes in collaboration envisioned in the theory of change?

Path to Long-Term Shared Result

- Sites pursuing more Critical Community Improvements (CCI)-like neighborhood-based strategies have struggled with focus, prioritization, and connections to broader citywide efforts that might benefit the targeted neighborhood.
- Sites choosing a citywide result for a specific population have chosen highly programmatic approaches to reach their goal.
- Sites need to more clearly articulate their theory as to how current activities, projects, and programs will lead to substantial progress toward the long-term result.

Sustainability

- Some sites are already thinking about fundraising to sustain activities post-WCC.
 - What is WCC's view on sustainability? Should sites require sustained external funding?

Formative Assessment: Cross-Site Issues and Questions



Leadership Transitions

- Many cities have struggled with staffing changes within partner organizations. Slows process during transition and requires re-establishing trust and shared vision.

Leveraging Additional Funding

- Finding additional resources to support the efforts has costs as well as benefits:
 - Fundraising is time consuming and can divert attention from the work.
 - When successful, the additional funds can allow for more diverse strategies and accelerate the pace of change.
 - The risk to the WCC initiative is that building a big tent to accommodate additional funding sources can dull the focus on the large-scale shared result.
 - Need to consider the strength of WCC influence when other funders present.

Staffing

- Hiring staff was critical milestone. With right staff, key accelerant in site progress.
- Challenging when there is no dedicated staff.
- Getting the right staff not always easy. Often time consuming. Some missteps.

Formative Assessment: Cross-Site Issues and Questions



Use of Data

- Sites clearly get the message this is important to Federal Reserve—some see it as the strongest message conveyed.
- Putting this priority to action has been quite challenging:
 - Administrative data vs. Census data.
 - Central database vs. data sharing.
 - Privacy issues.
 - Resources required to develop data collection and management systems, and organizational commitment to utilize not to be underestimated.
- Lack of clarity on role and purpose of data emphasis:
 - Use of data to initiative design (identify barriers to address).
 - Use data to track and communicate outcomes.
 - Use data to learn and adapt approaches.
 - Use data to identify broader system issues to be addressed.

Formative Assessment: Cross-Site Issues and Questions



Community Engagement

- Most sites engaged the “community” as part of the WCC initiative, although “community” may be defined as a neighborhood or a population group (entrepreneurs, working age parents) affected by the local WCC initiative.
- Strong CDCs with experience engaging the affected population accelerate work:
 - In some cases, that makes it challenging to identify what is new as a result of WCC since strong CDCs were already engaging in similar work.
 - In other cases, it appears that the WCC collaboration has enabled strong CDCs to diffuse the value of and specific approaches to community engagement in a broader set of organizations.
- Some WCC partners with limited prior community engagement experience have developed an understanding of its value and have expressed intentions, as a result of work through WCC, to better incorporate community engagement practices in the future.
- While most site stakeholders saw both the value of and progress in building the capacity for community engagement, some wanted greater clarity on the desired outcome of community engagement—an end in itself or a vehicle to another outcome—community vision setting, responsive program design, social capital.
- Despite the progress to date, in cities where particular populations or ethnicities feel marginalized, more focused engagement strategies may be needed.

Formative Assessment: Cross-Site Issues and Questions



System Change

- Much of the policy and practice change has been emergent and opportunistic. To accelerate progress toward their long-term result, cities will need to consider:
 - Engaging in intentional discussion at the governance tables about how the work to date has informed the group's understanding of the key system barriers.
 - Prioritizing a focus on the system change drivers likely to have the greatest impact on the long-term result.
 - While leaving room for emergent and opportunistic changes, groups could better articulate the site's system change strategy and goals.
- WCC may want to consider what assistance can be offered when cities face system issues that are beyond their span of control:
 - Examples: Undocumented workers, workforce system limitations.

Sites' Perceived Value of WCC Intervention



Site Liaisons

- The Fed's initiative design calls for a relatively light touch of staff engagement with the site partnerships. The engagement beyond the site convenings (Learning Communities) is primarily with the project directors and the director of the lead organization.
- While some stakeholders interviewed wished for deeper engagement from Fed staff, either in the form of on-site presence and facilitation or more explicit direction, others were quite satisfied with the problem solving assistance and responsiveness when asked for help.

Technical Assistance

- Those sites that sought WCC-supported technical assistance (TA) found it quite valuable with one site referring to it as “game changing.”

Learning Communities

- Despite significant effort on the part of Fed staff to hone the content and design, the majority interviewed feel Learning Communities are not effective vehicles for deepening the cross-sector table, advancing the work of the table, or establishing a strong peer city network:
 - Travel and time commitment were barriers to getting key site partners to attend.
 - Developing a content focus and structure relevant to all working cities was a challenge.
- The Learning Communities did facilitate new relationships between the cities and key TA providers.
- Smaller convenings of project directors and leads appear more beneficial.

Broader Support of Federal Reserve

- In some instances, the connection to the Fed offered the working cities access to new expertise (within the Fed) as well as new relationships with the private sector as a result of the Fed's attention.

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Considerations for Round 2/Replication



Site Selection

- Look for opportunities to build on previous effective planning efforts where some groundwork has already been completed.

Emphasis in Planning Period

- More early attention to defining the problem to be solved and the relevance of the selected approach to achieving the desired result.
- More work on prioritizing, narrowing, focusing effort.
- More early attention to development of a governance group and reflection on how each organization can act differently to help achieve the result.
- Be prepared to invest heavily in and adequately support the convener/facilitator of planning process—challenging but critical role.
- Six-month planning period likely still not enough.

Considerations for Round 2/Replication



Early Implementation

- Staff director position is critical:
 - Make sure grant is large enough to support or that other aligned funds can be leveraged to support the position.
 - Move to staff project director position quickly.
 - Missteps with secondary staff roles in first round suggest sites may need further assistance in scoping those positions prior to hiring.
 - Invest in staff with additional professional development and peer networking.

Stakeholder Considerations

- Most first round sites have strong CDCs with capacity in community engagement. Carefully consider who can play that role in less advanced sites.
- Most of the first round sites have relatively strong, well-respected city government. Carefully consider potential effect on cross-sector collaboration in different environments.