IMPACT IN PLACE

A Progress Report
on the Department of Education's
Place-Based Strategy

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Under the leadership of the Obama administration, the federal government has been taking a comprehensive look at how place matters: How a community comprehensively supports the lives of the people who live there, how overlapping investments in a particular place can be coordinated to increase impact, and how an understanding of community context improves the efficacy of service delivery. From this work, the Department of Education has adopted a "place-based approach" – recognizing that the federal government can support strategies to achieve better outcomes for children and families by taking into account where investments are made and how those investments interact with other resources, policies, and programs. Through a focus on place, the Department is able to align its work with that of other levels of government to address interrelated challenges and focus aligned and integrated public resources on people and places in accordance with their needs. For the first time, the Department is explicitly using place as the unit of analysis and not just the set of programs that the agency funds.

Place-based strategies focus on the whole set of issues a community faces and tackle those issues in tandem, taking advantage of the synergy achieved by addressing multiple issues at once. Communities that face underperforming schools, rundown housing, neighborhood violence, and poor health know that these are interconnected challenges and that they perpetuate each other. The place-based framework helps the federal government respond to such challenges with interconnected solutions. In the education world, the focus on place is particularly important, as it gives the Department a mechanism to see how its investments focused on "in-school" levers of change interact with "out of school" conditions for learning and the interventions meant to address them.

This report looks at the progress that has been made since the Department of Education adopted a place-based approach and since other agencies have been analyzing how place matters for their policies and investments. From this work and through feedback from communities across the country, six key elements emerged as critical to the development and success of a place-based strategy: 1) Engage the Community Through Asset Mapping and a Needs Assessment; 2) Focus on Clear Results and Develop Shared Data Tools; 3) Integrate Programs From Cradle to Career; 4) Build Core Capacities Within Organizations and Communities; 5) Break Down Silos; and 6) Capture and Share Learning. On the following pages, we lay out each element in detail and lift up examples of implementation. By explaining what it means to be place-based and showing how communities around the country have adopted this model to direct resources and see results for those who need it most, we hope to encourage other communities and agencies to work in a place-based way as well. This report will show how to turn the place-based theory into actions that produce results for children, families, and communities.

Place Matters: Place-Based Strategy

Under the leadership of the Obama administration, the federal government has been taking a comprehensive look at how its policies affect the way urban and rural areas develop and how well those places support the people who live there, in all aspects of their lives—education, health, housing, energy, and transportation. In 2010 and 2011, President Obama directed the Office of Management and Budget, the Domestic Policy Council, the National Economic Council, and the Office of Urban Affairs to conduct a comprehensive review of federal programs affecting places, the first of its kind in 30 years. For the first time, agencies were asked to consider how place matters to their work. The reviews represented important first steps toward more strategically leveraging federal investments in an integrated way, on a regional scale, and in a particular place to have the most transformative impact.

This report looks at the progress that has been made since that first place-based budget guidance was issued in 2010: How federal agencies are working together to coordinate and leverage their work in particular places, how a community of practice is being formed as organizations adopt the place-based approach, and how the Department of Education is working to achieve transformative impact through a focus on people, places, and results. We also will explain what it means to be place-based and show how communities around the country have adopted this model to direct resources and realize results for those who need it most. We also will highlight the unique role of federal agencies in catalyzing this approach and the value proposition of a place-based strategy in the education sector.

Place-based strategies focus on the whole set of issues a community faces and tackle those issues in tandem to improve a comprehensive and common results framework, taking advantage of the synergy achieved by addressing multiple issues at once. The focus on places – and therefore on groups of people connected by geography – instead of a focus on programs or separate individuals, is most effective in three scenarios: 1) when a program is designed to address a spatially concentrated problem; 2) when place is an efficient platform for service delivery; or 3) when the effects of a program have the potential to "spill over" to others in the community, even those who aren't participating.[1] Communities that face underperforming schools, rundown housing, neighborhood violence, and poor health know that these are interconnected challenges and that they perpetuate each other. The place-based framework helps the federal government respond to such challenges with interconnected solutions.

As a result of this work, the Department of Education has adopted a "place-based approach" – recognizing that the federal government can support strategies to achieve better outcomes for kids and families by taking into account where investments are made and how those investments interact with other resources, policies, and programs. Through

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[1] Bloom, Howard S. *Learning More from Social Experiments: Evolving Analytic Approaches.* Russell Sage Foundation, 2005.

a focus on places, the Department is able to align its work with that of other levels of government to address interrelated challenges and focus aligned and integrated public resources on people and places in accordance with their needs (i.e. the most resources for those most in need). For the first time, the Department is explicitly using place as the unit of analysis and not just the set of programs that the agency funds.

In the education world, the focus on place is particularly important, as it gives the Department a mechanism to see how its investments focused on "in-school" levers of change interact with "out of school" conditions that affect learning and the interventions meant to address them. In a speech at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in February 2012, Education Secretary Arne Duncan focused on a "false choice" in current education debates—the influence of in-school and out-of-school factors on student achievement. Secretary Duncan offered a simple but powerful framework for settling this debate: "Boosting student achievement is not an either-or solution. Educators and the broader community should be attacking both in-school and out-of-school causes of low achievement." With research showing that out-of-school factors influence kids' experiences in the classroom, the place-based framework helps the Department move to "both-and" solutions.[2]

Programs to boost student achievement are a perfect example of where the place-based framework can be effective. Programs to affect achievement can be targeted at schools and neighborhoods with the highest need; school buildings provide a physical space for both academic and non-academic service delivery; and peer influence is an example of the spillover effect. The Department's signature place-based effort is the Promise Neighborhoods program, which moves beyond a singular focus on low-performing schools to recognize the role an entire community plays in a child's education. Promise Neighborhoods creates common metrics of success and a cradle-to-career continuum of services by partnering with community-based organizations, taking advantage of the compounding effect achieved through multiple investments directed toward the same goal.

In addition to Promise Neighborhoods, the Department has been working to incorporate the place-based approach into its full set of programs and to develop relationships with other federal agencies to coordinate resources. This report documents that work and shares lessons learned both from federal efforts and community-driven strategies. An

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[2] Children living in high-poverty have an increased likelihood of facing mental health and physical challenges (Sampson et al., 2002), and of being afraid to attend school (Rumberger and Palardy, 2005). Asthma (Taras and Potts-Datema, 2005) and access to school breakfast (Taras, 2005) have negative and positive associations, respectively, with student attendance. Similarly, unsafe school environments, including environments where bullying and harassment occur, are associated with disengagement from school and increased absences (Nansel et al., 2003; Osher and Weissberg, 2007; Paludi et al., 2007; Smokowski and Kopasz, 2005). Students in poor neighborhoods also change schools frequently (Burkam et al., 2009), and that mobility is associated with negative effects on academic outcomes (Reynolds et al., 2009). Living in a disadvantaged neighborhood also is associated with parental behaviors that result in reduced verbal skills of young children (Kohen et al., 2008).

effective place-based policy requires comprehensive interagency and multidisciplinary collaboration that can ensure an increased impact of dollars and a greater return on investments. By concentrating resources, acknowledging that place matters, and collaborating across silos, the place-based approach helps move the nation towards more robust social and economic outcomes.

Implementing the Place-Based Approach: Case Study of San Francisco

The former Mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom, came to office in 2004 having promised during the campaign to create opportunities for families and children living in the city's distressed neighborhoods. Working with his leadership team and community stakeholders, Mayor Newsom began to develop a comprehensive strategy for investment. The team quickly realized that thinly spreading resources across all struggling neighborhoods had been tried before and, as it was in the past, was likely to be unsuccessful again. Instead, as Deputy Director of the Mayor's Office of Community Development Fred Blackwell stated, "To really gain traction, we need to focus on the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, flood them with supports, and provide them opportunities to become self-sufficient." As documented in Bridgespan's Communities of Opportunity report, Mayor Newsom's team set out to turn its city-wide strategy into a place-based one, the first step of which was figuring out what places to target.

The team drew upon the findings from an in-depth study the city's Human Services Agency had recently completed, which was the first of its kind in being a comprehensive look at how those in need accessed the city's various systems: mental health, juvenile justice, and foster care. The study found that many families were interacting with more than one system and that place really mattered. The most intensive service users were clustered around seven street corners. The Communities of Opportunity team decided to intensively focus on four of the seven corners, calling them "nodes," and figure out how to leverage the city's resources already present in those areas. To enhance its focus further, the team assessed each family's level of need and implemented a tiered intervention model whereby the families with the highest need received the most intense level of service. What started as a citywide strategy that would have spread resources thinly across San Francisco's entire population became a place-based, targeted approach that would help 2,600 families with 5,800 children in four specific parts of the city.

According to Bridgespan, "There was no shortage of social programs and services intended to address [the] numerous challenges [in the four nodes], yet the bleak conditions remained," leading the team to analyze public resources flowing to the four nodes and how they could be coordinated for greater impact. The team was stunned to find that nearly $100 million annually was flowing into the two ZIP codes that encompassed the four nodes. Poor service accessibility, low participation, and providers' lack of capacity were cited as reasons for dismal program effectiveness and failure to achieve transformative outcomes. To mobilize the provider community and focus resources, the team decided to drive toward a set of shared outcomes: 1) The majority of the communities' families will be self-sufficient, and 2) The proportion of families in crisis will not exceed 10 percent. The Communities of Opportunity team has continued its

work, leveraging private investment and driving the effort to achieve success for those 2,600 families.

Key Elements: Place-Based Theory of Action

Through the Department's efforts to implement a place-conscious approach and through feedback from communities across the country that had been doing this work long before the federal government was, six key elements emerged as critical to the development and success of a place-based strategy: 1) Engage the Community Through Asset Mapping and a Needs Assessment; 2) Focus on Clear Results and Develop Shared Data Tools; 3) Integrate Programs From Cradle to Career; 4) Build Core Capacities Within Organizations and Communities; 5) Break Down Silos; and 6) Capture and Share Learning. This report lays out each element in detail and presents an example for each, showing how to turn the place-based theory into actions that produce results for children, families, and communities.

Engage the Community Through Asset Mapping and a Needs Assessment

Making the shift from a focus on programs to a focus on people, places, and results requires a deep understanding of each domain. Are there identifiable segments of the people and families in the neighborhood? What are the needs and assets in the place? What set of desired results will guide the analysis? For example, if Kindergarten readiness is a priority result, how will we collect and analyze early learning assessment data, as well as the existing early learning resources in the community? The answers to these questions should ultimately direct the strategy to improve population-level outcomes.

A prerequisite to catalyzing and sustaining the work is an authentic desire for change within a community. Leaders of place-based efforts must be guided by the voices of residents. How do families experience public safety challenges? What are the dreams and aspirations for the community's children? One way to get there is to create opportunities for residents to be actively involved throughout the entire process. Engaging community members in the needs and assets analysis—at the beginning of a place-based reform effort—creates an initial sense of ownership of the community's challenges and can help ensure that change efforts are relevant and accountable to residents over time.

As part of its needs assessment and asset analysis during the Promise Neighborhoods planning process, Family Connection/Communities in Schools of Athens, Ga., conducted "Living Room Conversations" with residents, aligned with each of its target results. Mary (name changed), a public housing resident and mother of a two-year-old, participated in a conversation about early learning hosted by a neighborhood leader in Whatever it Takes, the Athens Promise Neighborhoods initiative. She strongly and vocally agreed with the other five parents that "reading to your young child is very important." When the neighborhood leader asked the parents if they read to their children, all but Mary

immediately said yes. When pressed, Mary said that she didn't and, when asked why, said that she did not know how to read. Her feelings of embarrassment and shame quickly gave way to gratitude as the other parents asked if she wanted to learn how to read and told her that the public adult literacy/GED program had relocated onto the same campus that houses Whatever It Takes. She enrolled in a basic literacy class, has a long-term goal of obtaining a GED and postsecondary education, and has a short-term goal of reading to her daughter. Due in part to the community outreach efforts of the Athens Promise Neighborhoods, Mary is serving as a role model for her daughter on their path to educational success.

The administrative and survey data collected as part of the Athens Promise Neighborhoods planning process are driving much of the agency's strategy. Mary's voice and the fact that neighborhood residents referred her to an existing program are empowering and reflect an authentic community desire for the Promise Neighborhoods approach.

Focus on Clear Results and Develop Shared Data Tools

Place-based approaches often function as collaboratives, drawing together disparate resources, organizations, and leaders, all with the intention of driving results in a particular location. Collaboratives are messy, and it is often hard to hold partners accountable. In order to ensure that collaboration leads to success, a place-based strategy must clearly identify the results to be achieved and the metrics that will be used to gauge progress. The *Stanford Social Innovation Review*'s article "Collective Impact" lays out how collective impact initiatives take collaboration a step further: They "involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants."

A common agenda and shared measurement represent a sharp deviation from how many organizations function. Most often, applicants for funding wish to isolate the impact they are able to achieve individually so as to make the case for receiving funding, and funders wish to award limited grant dollars to the individual organization that can make the greatest contribution. As the Stanford article suggests, this approach is flawed in that the problems communities face are complex, and it is rare that a single organization has the capacity to implement all pieces of the interconnected solution.

Instead, place-based approaches can connect the work of individual organizations through a shared agenda and a set of metrics that will be used to gauge progress and hold organizations accountable. A remarkable example of this work is Strive, a nonprofit subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, based in Cincinnati. Strive has brought together local leaders, first in Cincinnati and now across the country, to improve student achievement by driving efforts toward a set of shared outcomes. In Cincinnati, more than 300 leaders have agreed to work cooperatively to build a cradle-to-career continuum, to focus on five overarching goals, and to measure success using 53 aligned indicators. Through regular and facilitated sessions, participating organizations discuss progress on the shared

indicators, troubleshoot areas of weakness, and readjust the group's strategy based on patterns in the data. An example of such a readjustment was one made to preschool programs. The data showed that children were losing ground during the summer break before the start of kindergarten. Strive partners responded to this information by launching a summer bridge session across all preschool programs. As a result, Strive saw average kindergarten readiness scores increase throughout the region by an average of 10 percent in a single year.[3]

Clear results and shared data have led Strive to improve student achievement markedly in the four years since it began its work: Of the 53 success indicators tracked, 34 have shown positive trends, including in critical factors such as high school graduation rates, fourth-grade reading and math scores, and the number of preschool children prepared for kindergarten.

Central to the approach of Strive and similar initiatives is the use of simple dashboards that make desired results and progress toward improving the results accessible and visible to all stakeholders. The United Way of Central Iowa (UWCI) is another example of an anchor organization using clear results and data to improve outcomes. UWCI uses The Results Scorecard™, a dashboard aligned with the Results-Based Accountability framework for managing outcomes. Starting with the goal, UWCI selected three results to guide nearly all its investments and direct services work: 1) All youths are ready for college, work, and life; 2) All families are economically self-sufficient; and 3) All children and adults are healthy and avoid risky behaviors. For each result, UWCI gathered indicator data to establish a history and baseline for how well central Iowans fared. Having this outlined in the scorecard allowed UWCI leaders to think together about what strategies would help turn the curve on their selected results. Because no one organization alone can directly impact population change, they selected and funded more than 70 agencies whose services aligned with UWCI's strategic plan.

To ensure effectiveness and maintain accountability, each agency is required to identify a set of headline measures that exemplify the quantity, quality, and impact of their work. Using the scorecard, programs are able to enter their data into a common platform, report on their activities, set up projects, and show progress to UWCI, other partners, and the public. The dashboard allows UWCI leaders to determine whether their collective efforts are making a difference by looking at individual program performance, aggregating program performance, and mapping the outcomes against their population results. Promise Neighborhoods, some receiving Department of Education grants, and other high-scoring applicants, have modeled UWCI's use of the scorecard. Neighborhoods like Boyle Heights (Los Angeles), United Way of Salt Lake, United Way of San Antonio, River Rouge (Michigan), and Zona de Promesa (Tucson, AZ) are inputting data into the scorecard to create a neighborhood profile from which they will begin their analysis and work through to their strategic plans in an effort to improve the conditions of well-being for their communities.

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[3] "Successful Starts," United Way of Greater Cincinnati, Second Edition, Fall 2009.

Integrate Programs From Cradle to Career

Once a community has established a clear results framework, an education-centered, place-based approach builds a cradle-to-career continuum of solutions to dramatically improve the results over time. Because the results are comprehensive—including both education and other social supports—the solutions also will be comprehensive. Communities are braiding and integrating the solutions into a coherent continuum, focusing on common outcomes and milestones, supporting transitional time periods (e.g., the beginning of kindergarten, the middle grades, or graduation from high school), and addressing the time and resource gaps that often create obstacles for high-needs students to making progress.

In San Antonio, Choice Neighborhoods and Promise Neighborhoods grantees have forged a partnership on the city's east side to make this program integration more seamless. The White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI), a federal interagency work group established in part to integrate the two programs, created incentives for San Antonio and other communities to align resources, set guiding principles to include comprehensive revitalization goals, and leverage existing resources to support the work. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education named the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County the recipient of a $312,000 one-year Promise Neighborhoods grant to fund the plan to revitalize San Antonio's east side. A year later, the organization received a $24.6 million five-year grant to implement the plan. The San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) was subsequently awarded a $250,000 Choice Neighborhoods planning grant by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to transform the layout and general conditions of Wheatley Courts, a public housing complex within the 3.2 mile footprint of the Eastside Promise Neighborhood. The two grantees recognized early in the planning phase that matching resources to the needs of families and residents would have to be a collaborative effort. After communicating with the same local services providers, key stakeholders, and community members, they realized they were duplicating efforts and leadership was spread too thin. By more strategically integrating their efforts, both the United Way and SAHA gained additional resources and more effectively and efficiently began to address the needs of the east-side neighborhood.

"The best way to describe the relationship between Promise and Choice in San Antonio is as a marriage. It's not easy, but we're like two individuals, intimately bound together to address the key challenges of one neighborhood," says Henrietta Munoz, director of the Eastside Promise Neighborhood. "The partnership is definitely greater than the sum of its parts." Mary Ellen Burns, United Way vice president of partner relationships and supporter of this allied approach, identified three critical components of the partnership: deep resident engagement, treetop collaboration, and data sharing.

Specifically, the Promise and Choice partnership has come together in these areas:
- Hosting community-wide meetings to ask residents and families of Wheatley Courts to share what they think are the greatest needs of the east side and voice ideas for how funding should be used;

- Successfully executing a Memorandum of Understanding between Promise and Choice partners to incentivize parent participation and support student retention in schools in the target area;
- Facilitating daily calls and establishing recurring meetings for Choice and Promise leadership to align goals and define roles; and
- Committing Promise and Choice partners to share aggregate data to successfully implement the neighborhood revitalization plan.

The Eastside Promise and Choice Neighborhood is still in the very early stages of implementation, but the benefits of integrating the programs can already be seen. Helping with this integrated set of services is a shared governing board responsible for making joint decisions regarding the progress of the revitalization plan. Representatives from the United Way, the San Antonio Housing Authority, and the San Antonio Independent School District as well as several east side community members, all have a seat on the board. The partnership, catalyzed and supported by the federal agencies that are part of NRI, is helping organizations on San Antonio's east side work better together, more effectively use their resources, and ultimately improve outcomes for the neighborhood's children.

Build Core Capacities Within Organizations and Communities

Not all organizations and communities are ready on Day One to implement a successful place-based strategy. Capacities such as the leadership competencies of the organization's staff, the ability to authentically engage the community, or using data for learning and continuous improvement are critical to the success of a place-based approach, and must be developed and resourced. The federal government, philanthropy, and intermediaries must continue to fund and build the infrastructure required to do this work and provide change agents with the tools needed to be successful.

In the education sector, the most important unit of change is the teacher, and the field works to build excellent teachers through various types of professional development activities. In comprehensive place-based work, the unit of change is often a set of organizations or a local government in a community. Examples of professional development tools these organizations need are articulated by the Center for the Study of Social Policy's capacity building framework. They argue that capacity for place-based strategies is a combination of knowledge, skills, relationships, interactions, and organizational resources, including:

- Managing a broadly supported community process designed to improve results for children and families in a particular neighborhood;
- Working with neighborhood residents as leaders, "owners" and implementers of neighborhood transformation efforts;
- Creating strategic and accountable partnerships that engage multiple sectors and share accountability for results;
- Collecting, analyzing, and using data for learning and accountability;

- Designing and implementing strategies based on the best available evidence of what works;
- Developing financing approaches that better align and target resources;
- Addressing policy and regulatory issues;
- Using sophisticated communications strategies to build public and political will
- Deepening organizational and leadership capacity.

The federal government is working to build capacity through the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative (SC2), an effort led out of the White House Domestic Policy Council that involves 12 agencies working directly with six cities. Memphis, Tenn., was one of the cities selected for the initiative, recognized for its strong public-private partnerships, community assets, location as the hub for the Mid-South region, and deep need in terms of poverty and distress. SC2 sent a team of federal officials to Memphis in September 2011 to work with the city over the course of a year, testing a new kind of partnership between federal and local government: Federal officials work to understand local context, provide tailored support for community issues, and support cities to more effectively and efficiently use the federal funds they already receive.

During the Memphis SC2 team's first week on the ground, the team met with Mayor A. C. Wharton and his leadership team to get a sense of the projects to which the team could provide support for the city. Not short on ideas or areas of need, the team quickly accumulated a long task list and a heavy set of strategic plans and program documents to review. After a few weeks of trying to tackle everything at once, the team went back to the mayor and asked him to narrow the scope and provide a framework within which to prioritize projects. The mayor surprised the team with his response, saying that the city had been trying to do just that – be more focused, move from a system based on triage to one based on strategy – and asked if the team would lead the way in helping his administration to do so. The city lacked the capacity to drive this work as city staff were stretched thin and there was no official division responsible for strategic planning.

The team's first step was to conduct an inventory of the 42 strategic plans under way in the city. The 42 plans were the result of the mayor's dynamism: The city had engaged in local public-private partnerships, attracted outside investment (like the SC2 team), and participated in community planning efforts, leaving the city with the enviable problem of having too many good things going on at once.

With the inventory of the plans complete and an informal factor analysis showing the key areas of overlap among the plans, the team recommended that the mayor establish clear priorities, and craft a communications and operations plan to support implementation. The mayor accepted the team's recommendation and adopted four priorities for his new term that began Jan. 1, 2012: 1. Create Safe and Vibrant Neighborhoods; 2. Grow Prosperity and Opportunity for All; 3. Invest in Young People; and 4. Advance a Culture of Excellence in Government. The city's tagline is now City of Choice: Create, Grow, Invest, Advance. To communicate this focus, the team helped create a logo and draft the mayor's State of the City speech, in which the priorities were unveiled. To implement

and operationalize this focus, the team helped launch the mayor's 100 Days of Action, showing quick wins within each of the four priorities.

Though the priorities have already shown success in rallying the community and focusing the city's efforts, the mayor wanted to be able to track in a more tangible way the city's progress in the four areas. The team connected the mayor to best practices in data-driven performance management and is helping the City to launch a CityStat process, which has been used in New York City, Baltimore, and several other cities, whereby senior city executives meet to monitor progress toward well-defined targets and refine resource allocation. Through CityStat, the mayor identifies measurable goals under each priority and uses data on a regular basis to check progress on those goals. The SC2 team is helping Memphis to benchmark CityStat after the federal government's HUDStat program – an example of how capacity is built by translating innovation from one government agency to another.

Break Down Silos

The antithesis of this place-based approach is the prevalence of programmatic and agency silos. Taking its name from tall, cylindrical towers on farms used to store grain, silos in the public and private sectors create blinders, causing people to focus insularly on their own work within their own program or agency. A siloed perspective loses sight of other resources and strategies that can be leveraged to help achieve the broader goal. Silos can be horizontal, existing across social domains (e.g., in health, education, housing), and vertical, separating federal, state, and local programs and agencies. Among the many problems with this approach are the inherent administrative costs and duplication of efforts. Each agency typically has its own reporting system, rules, and regulations, even if services flow to the same people in the same places. While most think about silos existing between agencies, they also exist within agencies among different programs. In effect, even silos have silos.

Focusing on common results for people and places is in fact the most effective silo-busting strategy. Working beyond silos to develop and focus on community results takes time, energy, and a commitment to doing things differently. However, when presented with the opportunity, organizations are quick to take advantage. In September 2011, President Obama and Secretary Duncan announced a process for states to receive flexibility from specific provisions of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (*ESEA*, reauthorized in 2001 and more widely known as the *No Child Left Behind Act* or *NCLB*) in exchange for ambitious reform efforts to ensure that all students are on track to graduate college and be career ready. To date, 38 states have responded with locally designed plans. Colorado in particular proposed to significantly reform the way the state coordinates funds. Colorado's approved *ESEA* flexibility request builds upon the state's Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) process, which transformed six separate program silos—each tied to its own Federal funding source—into a single planning process. This created a more rational, tiered support system that focuses resources on the needs of particular schools and districts instead of requiring separate applications for each program silo. The UIP is data-driven and flexible, allowing school leaders to spend more

time on performance challenges in a cycle of continuous improvement rather than filling out duplicative paperwork. The flexibility-in-exchange-for-results exemplified by the *ESEA* waiver opportunity created the context for this new approach to take hold.

There are numerous other examples of silo-busting approaches across the country. A partnership between Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles County, and the City's Trust for Children's Health analyzed comprehensive health data, such as Chlamydia rates, childhood obesity, and violence by school attendance zones to identify 15 Health Hot Spots to be targeted with a school health center. The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) System in Multnomah County in Portland, Ore., integrates a number of county-supported services, such as education, public health, and anti-poverty programs, at the school-level to provide more comprehensive services for students and families. Like SUN, Boston's Circle of Promise is a partnership between the city and Boston Public Schools to target a five-mile geographic area that has some of the lowest-performing schools with integrated education, health, and human services focused on shared, cradle-to-college results.

Capture and Share Learning

The final element in the place-based theory of action is to create opportunities to share knowledge within and across communities. Process evaluations, compelling case studies, and robust impact evaluations are all key tools to document and scale effective, place-based interventions. Peer-to-peer communities of practice are also a promising strategy to help groups of practitioners learn from each other in real time.

One of the biggest wins of the inaugural Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) cohort was the connection of city leaders in Milwaukee and New Orleans working in their own communities to reduce dramatically high homicide rates. New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu launched the Mayor's Strategic Command to Reduce Murders as part of the SOS NOLA: Saving Our Sons Campaign in response to the murder rate in New Orleans that is 10 times the national average. Lynn Overmann, senior advisor in the Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice (DOJ) served on the New Orleans SC2 Community Solutions Team, dedicated to supporting the city's public safety strategy. Having knowledge about evidence-based crime prevention practices that were implemented around the country, Overmann recommended that Mayor Landrieu create a task force modeled after the highly successful Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission (MHRC). To make the pitch, Overmann invited Mallory O'Brien, executive director of the MHRC, to New Orleans in September 2011 to share some of the findings of the Milwaukee model. Showing a 54 percent reduction in homicides in just four years, the MHRC model has been highly regarded as a National Best Practice by DOJ

The New Orleans model consists of five action teams that are responsible for reviewing the cases:

- The **Executive Action Team will** serve as the governing body of the task force and is responsible for making all final policy recommendations as a result of the findings**.**

Representatives include the mayor, chief of police, and members of the FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration.

- The **Initial Action Team** will assist with the initial investigation and surviving witnesses of the crime. The New Orleans Police Department, the district attorney, and members of the faith-based community are represented.
- The **Criminal Justice Action Team** will consist of law enforcement agency representatives knowledgeable of crime data, policies, and programs. The group will focus on open and closed murder cases in the prior month to share data, identify patterns, and make recommendations to partners.
- The **Community Service Provider Action Team** will be made up of non-profit and social service agencies. This team will review closed cases to identify gaps in existing public services or resources.
- The **Re-Entry Workforce Action Team** will represent the business community and local chambers of commerce. It will review closed cases to help address local economic and financial challenges, and identify opportunities for formerly incarcerated persons.

The traditional fact gathering by local law enforcement officials still takes place after a homicide in New Orleans; however, the action team reviews dive much deeper to explore more systemic questions underlying each case. The team's focus is on community challenges, such as mental health and housing, gaps in public and social services, education inequities, or joblessness, that contributed to both the victim and perpetrator getting to the point of the crime.

With Overmann's support and the leadership by Mayor Landrieu and his team, the newly established Strategic Command to Reduce Murders opened up communication that had been previously blocked by administrative silos, allowing for more substantive, data-driven conversations. Leading those conversations is David Seal, a Tulane professor with expertise in community health and behavioral sciences, who was hired as the command's first director of research. Together, Seal and the Strategic Command are building a rigorous review process that is data and expert driven and, as a result, are shaping a neutral environment for a solutions-focused dialogue. The uniquely place-based approach of SC2, creating opportunities for practitioners to share evidence-based strategies with each other, has created a powerful tool for New Orleans to address one of its most intractable challenges.

How the Department of Education Is Implementing Place-Based Strategies

The Department of Education has been working intently to apply placed-based principles to interagency partnerships, proposals for new funding, existing programs, and innovative tools for communities, all with a focus on using this approach to achieve transformational outcomes for children and families. In this section, we highlight the Department's efforts within each of the six elements of the place-based theory of action.

Engage the Community Through Asset Mapping and a Needs Assessment

In the education sector, one of the most effective strategies to improve community engagement in a place-based approach is to strengthen the partnership between schools and families. The Department's Investing in Innovation (i3) program supports the development and expansion of innovative practices that can serve as models for improving student and school outcomes. The program also identifies and documents best practices that can be shared and taken to scale based on demonstrated success. Because of the critical role that parents and families play in increasing student achievement and supporting school improvement, the FY 2012 Development Competition for i3 includes an absolute priority focused on parent and family engagement. As states and school districts implement new, more demanding academic content standards, parents' and families' understanding of those standards and the related assessments will be instrumental in helping children improve their academic performance. There is also a nationwide need for enhancing parents', families', and guardians' knowledge, skills, and abilities to support student learning and school improvement. The priority in the third round of i3 funding is an opportunity for the Department and subsequently private funders (due to the program's private match requirement) to increase their investment in and begin to scale effective practices that support school staff to better engage parents in ways that increase parents', families', and guardians' capacity to support their children's educational needs.

Focus on Clear Results and Develop Shared Data Tools

The Department of ED has been looking at how data tools can support place-based strategies. An important component of the place-based theory of action is the ability to map the assets and resources present in a particular community, but the ability of existing federal data tools to accomplish this is limited. Centralized sites, such as grants.gov or findyouthinfo.gov, provide data only on the location of the primary grant recipient, which can often be the headquarters address of a non-profit organization or state or local agency rather than the actual service locations (e.g. schools, neighborhoods, health centers, etc.). Moreover, most federal grant programs do not yet require grantees to submit Geographic Information System (GIS) or National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) school ID codes as part of the application or post-award process, making it very difficult to figure out what funds are available in a particular place.

In addition to not being able to pinpoint what funds are available in a particular place, current data tools do not provide other information that would be relevant for community planning, e.g., the grant lifecycle, how much of a grant has already been spent, or the distribution of funding across program priorities.

In response, the Department is working to develop the Place-Based Grants Data Tool, a centralized and user-friendly database of federally-funded programs that can track grant service locations and integrate administrative data at the neighborhood level. Building on the functionality created by the data.ed.gov platform and the School District

[Demographic System Map Viewer,](#) select ED programs would make data available using NCES school codes, which could then be linked to Common Education Data (CED) and select Census data (such as the size of the school-age population in a Census tract). Eventually, this tool could also allow grants to be searched and/or filtered by neighborhood, school, funding agencies, topics (e.g., mentoring, afterschool, parenting), targeted population (e.g., early learning, youths, adult, seniors), grant lifecycle (start and end dates), and, possibly, the evidence level and outcomes of the programs funded.

The Department is supporting efforts by NCES to geocode school attendance zones, which will make the Place-Based Grants Data Tool possible, allowing practitioners, policymakers, and researchers to do significantly more analysis by integrating education and program data with other comprehensive administrative data (i.e. demographic, economic, health, etc.).

An example of the type of analysis the Place-Based Grants Data Tool will facilitate comes from a project attempted by the Department of Education that was put on hold when data limitations were realized. Once equipped with community-level data, with this tool an organization could overlay this data with attendance zone and Census data, such that they could estimate the number of students in a particular community that might be served through a place-based investment. Such an analysis might also facilitate the identification of families in crisis for targeted intervention, as was done in San Francisco through the Communities of Opportunity Process. Identifying and profiling families in crisis would require using geographic clustering to select areas for further analysis, differentiate families in crisis from self-sufficient families, and identify key risk factors requiring intervention. The federal data tool provides a conceptual framework and basic data interface for communities that then invest heavily in community analysis, place-based strategy planning, programs, and outreach.

Integrate Programs From Cradle to Career

All six elements of the place-based theory of action are exemplified by the Department's Promise Neighborhoods program. In addition, like the i3 program's parent and family engagement priority, several of the place-based elements are key to other centerpiece programs of the Department. The Race to the Top District competition (RTT-D), [announced by Secretary Duncan](#) on May 22, 2012, builds on previous state-level RTT competitions by rewarding districts that have the leadership and vision to implement reforms that move beyond a one-size–fits-all model of support and instruction to a personalized, student-focused approach. Successful districts will ensure that students and teachers have access to information, tools, and supports that let students and parents take ownership of student learning and improvement. In addition to a continued focus on the four RTT assurances (college- and career-ready standards, data systems, great teachers and school leaders, and turning around lowest-performing schools), a competitive preference priority in RTT-D creates an incentive for applicants to include strategies that address the social-emotional, behavioral, and other special needs of students. The strategies go beyond simply aligning this approach with a district's overall efforts. Programs for students with disabilities, English learners, and students struggling with the

impacts of poverty or family instability must be explicitly integrated with an applicant's reform plan. Specifically, the RTT-D competitive preference priority focuses on an applicant's partnerships for identifying and improving results from cradle to career; its strategy for targeting resources that improve the results and integrate education and other services; and its plan for building the capacity of school staff and families to take this approach, from identifying needs and assets to routinely assessing implementation progress. Whereas Promise Neighborhoods expects strong partnerships with schools and districts in a place-based strategy, RTT-D will support districts in taking a leadership role in "both-and" solutions to improve student achievement.

Build Core Capacities Within Organizations and Communities

In order to meet communities where they are – realizing that not all are immediately ready to engage in a comprehensive place-based strategy – the Department has invested in capacity building through the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP), an effort funded by DOJ, HUD, and ED, as part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative. BNCP is designed to support neighborhoods in places where historically there have been barriers to creating viable revitalization plans and where leaders struggle with such issues as concentrated poverty, high rates of crime and issues of community safety and justice, low-performing schools, inadequate access to housing and healthcare, and the absence of economic vitality. Through the provision of intensive technical assistance, capacity building support, and financial investment, the BNCP team will work with two to three neighborhoods in two to three jurisdictions to create comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans, and make effective use of and attract a range of federal, state, and local resources.

Break Down Silos

In September 2010, the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI) was launched as a framework to break down silos and coordinate the most promising neighborhood revitalization models – programs like Choice Neighborhoods, Promise Neighborhoods, and the Byrne Criminal Justice Initiative. These programs were built on evidence generated from years of innovation at state and local levels, proving that, to transform a neighborhood successfully, revitalization must confront housing, education, safety, and health challenges concurrently, and by channeling resources across sectors – government, business, and non-profit. Secretary Shaun Donovan from HUD and Secretary Arne Duncan from ED published a joint op-ed celebrating the work of the partnership between the departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services, and the Treasury.

As the first step in coordination, the NRI worked with the programs to design common eligibility criteria for grant applicants, program requirements to cut red tape, and metrics to judge success. Through competitive grant preferences and funding set-asides, the NRI made it easier for neighborhoods to access enough resources to implement comprehensive public safety, housing, and education strategies. For example, DOJ

transferred funds directly to ED and HUD to help Promise and Choice Neighborhoods grantees address violent crime in their communities.

The federal departments participating in NRI have also committed to coordinating the review processes for funding applications, including sharing reviewers with expertise across disciplines, and to jointly supporting integrated technical assistance.

Today, neighborhoods in Boston, San Antonio, Atlanta, Tulsa, Little Rock, and Washington D.C., have complementary Promise and Choice Neighborhoods grants. Boston's grantees worked jointly on each grant application – leveraging the others' expertise and relationships – and continue to collaborate as the grants roll out. As one partner observed, "I'm not sure we could have done the Choice application effectively if we had not already done the Promise application. We already had the pulse of the community … the work has been accelerated tenfold over what it would have been without both."

Though many communities haven't yet accessed these programs, the NRI published a White House report on effective ways to coordinate existing federal, local, and philanthropic funds to revitalize neighborhoods – a tool that is being used by school superintendents, public housing authority directors, and mayors across the country to replicate the NRI's place-based strategy.

The Department of Education has also been a key participant in the White House Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative, providing support to five cities across the country in tandem with 23 other agencies. Strong Cities teams operate as a unit, breaking down silos by focusing holistically on the needs of a particular place rather than addressing narrow needs through agency and program cylinders.

Another important silo-busting effort is the Performance Partnerships proposed in the president's budget for fiscal year 2013. These partnerships, which build on a strategy implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency, allow states and localities to pilot better ways of using federal resources by giving them additional flexibility in using discretionary funds across multiple federal programs in exchange for greater accountability for results. Currently, limited flexibility and contrasting requirements across federal program areas –including affordable housing, economic and community development, education, and workforce development – can make it challenging for local leaders to use federal funds for truly comprehensive neighborhood revitalization.

The administration proposes to focus Performance Partnership pilots on two areas where flexibility may be particularly needed and appropriate: Improving outcomes for disconnected youths and revitalizing distressed neighborhoods. Through dialogue across federal agencies and with state and local officials about disconnected youths and neighborhood revitalization, bipartisan consensus is emerging that greater flexibility to blend and braid funds – if tied to a strong plan for improving outcomes – could improve the impact of federal investments that now flow through multiple programs supporting the same broad goals.

Performance Partnership pilots could provide models for how to address interconnected challenges in a place-based way.

Capture and Share Learning

In an effort to both break down its own program silos and share learning, the Department's Promise Neighborhoods and School Turnaround teams are partnering to lift up a framework and examples for taking a place-based approach to school turnaround. Scores of communities and schools are incorporating elements of a place-based approach in their school turnaround strategies. Many are using School Improvement Grant (SIG) and other resources to hire a family engagement liaison or to partner with an organization that can provide social services at the school. Nearly 1,000 members of the School Turnaround teams are interested in this particular topic and will have access to resources through the partnership from both the Promise Neighborhoods and SIG programs to learn about promising practices in the field and interact with other practitioners taking a place-based approach. This includes presentations from Mass Insight, a nationally recognized organization dedicated to school turnarounds, and the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, which is scaling up a successful community school and leveraging SIG funds to turnaround two other low-performing schools in its footprint. Following the presentation, the Department's Office of School Turnaround Learning Community will allow the 3,000 plus members to collaborate online by reflecting on and sharing challenges and other promising strategies for taking a place-based approach to school transformation.

Lessons Learned From Taking a Place-Based Approach in the Obama Administration

Reorienting the federal bureaucracy from a focus on programs to a focus on places, results, and people is a significant challenge with multiple barriers, such as legislative and regulatory requirements for how money must be allocated, how data is collected, and how agencies (and offices within agencies) operate. In cases where flexibility exists and culture (not the law) creates silos, the prospects for shifting to people, places, and results are even more promising.

Through its innovative data efforts, ED has realized that a significant barrier for communities is the inability to track program implementation and federal funding at the neighborhood level. While administrative data is tracked to the census level, program data shows only the primary grant recipient and not the places served. Moreover, many funds are awarded to states and then subgranted to communities, and there is no central repository of this information, such that we cannot see how or which places receive state funds. There is an emerging opportunity, consistent with the Obama Administration's Open Data Initiative, to connect practitioners, policy makers, funding organizations, technologists, researchers, and citizens to get more and better information about more decisions in real time.

Finally, there is a need for cross training federal staff and other practitioners on the whole set of issues that communities face. Due to federal silos, staff tend to be experts at solutions to one particular problem and aren't able to meet communities where they are, tackling a suite of integrated issues and looking for integrated solutions. Interdisciplinary expertise is a crucial element of capacity; creating more opportunities like SC2, Promise and Choice Neighborhoods, and the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative will help federal staff break out of their silos, focusing less on their own particular agency or program, and more on a set of results for people and places.

Conclusion

This report has highlighted key elements of an emerging place-based approach to meet the education needs of the nation and improve educational outcomes. Six key elements of the place-based theory of action have been identified with compelling examples from the field and federal agencies. In describing significant progress made at the Department of Education and across the administration since the first place-based budget guidance was issued in 2010 by the White House, as the report also identifies lessons learned to inform future progress.

On Sept. 8, 2011, President Obama acknowledged a key strength of the American people: "Yes, we are rugged individualists. Yes, we are strong and self-reliant. And it has been the drive and initiative of our workers and entrepreneurs that has made this economy the engine and the envy of the world." The president went on to describe an equally important characteristic that exemplifies the opportunity of taking a place-based approach to tackling our country's and our communities' most daunting challenges. "But," he said, "there's always been another thread running throughout our history—a belief that we're all connected, and that there are some things we can only do together."