



## INTRODUCTION

### **Achieving Impact by Funding Systems of Support**

In areas of concentrated poverty<sup>1</sup>, systemic barriers to advancement such as limited high-quality, education options, poor access to health care, and a lack of workforce development opportunities are all too common. As a result, residents in these communities have few opportunities to earn a living wage and often lack the knowledge and skills needed to get and keep a well-paying job. Children living in concentrated poverty bear a special burden. Childhood illness and hunger are widespread in these communities, leading to elevated rates of chronic absenteeism from school, which only exacerbates low academic achievement and contributes to low graduation rates.

The challenges are pervasive, and the services and supports needed to overcome them are often administered by a variety of social service, education, health agencies, and community based organizations that operate in silos. As a result, communities often struggle to coordinate and leverage the resources that can best address the full scope of community needs.

This brief describes how federal investment in targeted technical assistance (TA) helps communities develop new, more systemic and collaborative approaches to overcoming barriers to success. Experienced TA advisors are partnering with communities across the country to develop aligned strategic financing plans that can accelerate community-level impact by coordinating, blending, and braiding local, state, philanthropic, and federal funding. Two accompanying case studies provide examples of this work in rural Southeastern Kentucky and suburban Broward County, Florida.

<sup>1</sup>In areas of concentrated poverty the poverty rate exceeds 40 percent.

---

## THE CHALLENGE

### **Leveraging Resources to Fund Comprehensive Programs that Address Diverse Needs**

Community organizations have long sought to provide an array of services and programs that mitigate the effects of concentrated, multi-generational poverty. Typically, federal grants have been important sources of funding for these programs; however, fragmented data systems and onerous administrative requirements attached to public funds frequently undermine the impact and sustainability these programs can offer.

Some communities are beginning to think differently. An increasing number are coordinating multiple funding streams at the administrative level to create systems of comprehensive supports instead of narrowly focused interventions. Federally supported place-based initiatives acknowledge the importance of place and the power of community, highlighting neighborhood-level coordination as a key strategy to promote multi-sector collaboration, streamlined delivery of services, and the innovative use of federal funding streams.

Inspired by the success of local initiatives such as the Harlem Children's Zone<sup>2</sup>, the federal government has offered technical assistance around using financing strategies and structures, setting measurable community-level goals and using data as a tool to demonstrate impact. As a result, more communities have established diverse, local collaborative bodies committed to developing and implementing a strategic vision and taking action to address equity, opportunity, and resource gaps by coordinating multiple funding streams to provide systems of support, as opposed to disconnected programs.

An increasing number of communities are coordinating multiple funding streams at the administrative level to create systems of comprehensive supports instead of narrowly focused interventions.

---

<sup>2</sup> See here for a detailed overview of Harlem Children Zone's Impact: <https://hcz.org/results/>

## NEW LENS ON PROGRAM FUNDING

### Flexibly Funding Cross-System Coordination

Local leaders are constantly challenged to expand and diversify the resource base that supports programs and services for children, youth, and communities. The ability to creatively leverage funds that already exist in the community is critical. Cohorts of state, local, and tribal jurisdictions can respond to this challenge by leveraging flexible financing approaches that include **coordination, pooling, and decategorization**.

Often federal and state grant, program, and entitlement funding can only be used to provide a narrow set of services and supports. For example, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, has a provision to provide job training and readiness programs for high school-aged youth. Many communities try to attract youth to job centers that are often far from high school campuses to participate in that program. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant funds afterschool programs for K-12 students. Grantees of this program are sometimes challenged to offer activities that are relevant to older youth. Broward County Public Schools in Florida has overcome this challenge by blending over \$1.7 million in WIOA, 21st CCLC, and Performance Partnership Pilot (P3) funds to support an afterschool program that offers certification-granting job training in six high schools across the district.

Communities can also make use of a more complex flexible funding approach known as decategorization. In some cases, eligibility, reporting, and programmatic requirements for certain federal funding streams (such as the Child Care Development Fund program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) may be removed, reduced, or realigned to push more resources to beneficiaries or to reduce administrative costs. Kansas City, for example, adopted this approach by streamlining its application processes for free and reduced-price school meals and child care subsidies, offering a single point of service delivery for families in need. Since this approach often requires agency rule changes, success is dependent upon a strong relationship with policymakers.

Communities that have a track record of sustaining comprehensive and aligned cradle-to-career supports leverage flexible funding strategies such as coordination, pooling, and decategorization to maintain a stable base of funding that addresses identified needs instead of simply funding programs.

Communities can **blend funds** (combine several programs into one funding stream) or **braid funds** (use multiple funding streams to support a single service) to maximize existing resources. For more information, visit <http://tools.sparkpolicy.com/overview-blending-braiding/>

## FISCAL MAPPING

### Uncovering Opportunities

Knowledge and understanding of local, state, and federal funding streams is the first step in leveraging additional resources to sustain community supports. A fiscal mapping project can help local leaders identify funding that is already supporting local work, as well as additional sources that can be leveraged to scale up or sustain services. The process starts with a clearly articulated vision of the supports and programs a community is seeking to provide. With an understanding of a community's specific goals and needs, a fiscal mapping work group can explore tools and resources that include: The JFF [federal financing tool](#), [youth.gov's Map My Community tool](#), the [Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance](#), and state and local budget to identify current funding and untapped opportunities. Each of these tools can help users find federal funding streams that support specific programs and activities.

To learn more about fiscal mapping, visit the [Fiscal Mapping Toolkit](#) on our website.

**Fiscal mapping** is a research approach to identify and analyze expenditures systematically.

A fiscal map shows:

- + resources currently available
- + gaps in funding
- + how resources can be more effectively coordinated, maximized or secured

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Collaborative Funding Across Systems

Communities across the country have embraced cross-system development and coordination of resources, creating new energy around the potential of flexibly funded programs and initiatives. Broward County and Southeastern (Berea) Kentucky, in particular, have demonstrated the impact of that shift for thousands of disconnected youth and their families.



## Success Story: **Broward County**

In 2015, the Children’s Services Council (CSC) of Broward County designed a strategy that addressed the community’s growing need to improve supports for disconnected youth<sup>3</sup> and youth at risk of becoming disconnected. To inform this strategy, which eventually became the Best Opportunities to Shine and Succeed (BOSS) program, CSC conducted several needs assessments that examined a variety of factors contributing to youth disengagement from school and disconnection from the workforce. Of the six high schools that would later go on to participate in the BOSS program, four had graduation rates lower than the district four-year average for at-risk youth (70.7 percent). CSC also found that high numbers of at-risk youth in the county lacked knowledge about the skills required for success in the workplace. And of those surveyed, 71 percent failed to address questions about job skills and only 12 percent could appropriately discuss job performance with a supervisor.

With these insights in hand, CSC developed a program that targeted at-risk youth who are credit deficient, have failed an end-of-course exam, or who have a documented behavior problem. The BOSS program aims to help participants get back on track to earn their high school diploma and prepare for the workforce through evidence-informed interventions that encompass academic supports, parent engagement, personal enrichment and well-being, and employability training.

With the support of a \$700,000 grant from the P3 program, CSC braided funds from U.S. Department of Education 21st CCLC and U.S. Department of Labor WIOA programs—along with funding from the Library Services Technology Act—to create an afterschool program that supports youth in the transition to college or career. Today, the BOSS program helps 420 disconnected and disengaged youth access personal enrichment, academic, and career readiness programming and resources.

Buoyed by the success of braiding multiple funding streams together through a single point of service to create the BOSS program, CSC has embarked on a fiscal mapping project to identify and leverage local, state, and federal funds that can support a more comprehensive vision for supporting youth that are diverted from the juvenile justice system in the county. Read more about this fiscal mapping project in an accompanying case study, titled: Exploring the Children’s Services Council Strategic Use of Resources, Funding, and Partnerships to Support Disconnected Youth.

**Broward County** is one of six counties in Florida that have local Children’s Services Councils, special ad valorem taxing districts established through ballot initiatives that fund organizations serving children and families—and ensure dollars spent on these programs have broad community impact. For more information about CSCs, visit <http://flchildrenscouncil.org/about-cscs/overview/>

<sup>3</sup> Disconnected youth are typically defined as youth, ages 14-24, who are homeless, in foster care, involved in the justice system, or are neither employed nor enrolled in an educational institution (youth.gov).

## Success Story: **Southeastern Kentucky**

In 2011, Partners for Education (PFE) at Berea College established a more seamless continuum of cradle-to-career services for youth and families across its expansive service area. With limited infrastructure and low population density, the 22 counties across Southeastern Kentucky have distinct, localized identities and can be reluctant to coordinate resources and services with others outside their communities. The first Promise Neighborhood grant offered a chance for PFE to overcome the insularity in its region by braiding and aligning funding streams that best serve each of these individual counties' needs.

### **Partners for Education (PFE)**

**at Berea College**, originally established in 1967, uses a place-based, student-focused approach to improve educational outcomes in Appalachian Kentucky. By braiding its services and aligning its various funding streams, PFE leverages \$25.8 million per year to serve over 35,000 young people and their families. For more information about PFE, visit <https://www.berea.edu/pfe/#0>

As the first rural Promise Neighborhood implementation grantee (2011) and the first rural Promise Zone grantee (2014), PFE has effectively braided over \$39 million in federal funds annually from a variety of federal Department of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services programs that include: GEAR UP, Investing in Innovation (i3), Community Based Crime Reduction<sup>4</sup>, and Upward Bound to provide a continuum of cradle-to-career supports to residents of Southeastern Kentucky. In the process, PFE has gained additional insight into how to further promote alignment and coordination among state and local funding streams.

Today, PFE offers seamless, comprehensive wraparound services to nearly 10,000 youth and families in its primary service area—inclusive of Clay, Jackson, Owsley, Knox, and Perry counties—and 35,318 others across Southeastern Kentucky. In doing so, PFE is making collective strides toward the region's five result areas, which encompass core education, workforce, and health and wellness outcomes. It is taking a new, cross-system approach to funding the comprehensive programs that support its counties' unique needs. At the cornerstone of this cross-system approach is a local, state, and federal fiscal mapping project to determine if there are county by county gaps in the cradle-to-career programming aligned to its five result areas. For example, early in the process, one county identified the need to bolster the funding for quality afterschool programs for children in grades pre-K through 8, which stood in contrast to a preponderance of funding supporting college preparation programs. Over the next few years, PFE will map resources in other counties in their service area, generating opportunities to coordinate funding not only in a single town or county, but across the region.

<sup>4</sup> This funding stream was formerly known as the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Grant.

---

## **Conclusion**

More and more, local leaders and community stakeholders are taking steps to critically assess the linkages across youth-serving systems, coordinate investments, and bring the power of a community to the enduring issues that young people face in communities of concentrated poverty. However, work still remains to be done to ensure this collaborative mindset exists in all communities. Local leaders nationwide must come together to think differently, and fund outcomes across systems—and not just individual programs. By using this approach, they can deconstruct education, health, and workforce silos, and recognize how a coordinated approach to leveraging resources to deliver all of these services contributes to youth success.

The additional case studies in this series will share the stories of the challenges Broward County and Southeastern Kentucky have met—and overcome—as they focused on better aligning funding and services to meet their regions' needs.