



RESEARCH REPORT

# Developing Place-Based Two-Generation Partnerships

## Lessons from Three Community Change Initiative Partnerships

*Marla McDaniel, Theresa Anderson, Adaeze Okoli, Susan J. Popkin, Amelia Coffey, and Peace Gwam*

*February 2021*



## ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Urban has been the trusted source for rigorous analysis of complex social and economic issues; strategic advice to policymakers, philanthropists, and practitioners; and new, promising ideas that expand opportunities for all. Our work inspires effective decisions that advance fairness and enhance the well-being of people and places.

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Developing Place-Based Two-Generation Partnerships: Lessons from Three Community Change Initiative Partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
Two-Generation Approach	3
Partnership Models	4
Buffalo's FCCC Initiative	4
Columbus's FCCC initiative	5
San Antonio's FCCC Initiative	7
Creating Strong Partnerships	9
Lessons for Strong Partnerships	10
Sustaining Partnerships	15
Conclusions	16
<b>Appendix. FCCC 2016 Community Partnership Integration Matrix</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>About the Authors</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Statement of Independence</b>	<b>27</b>

# Acknowledgments

This brief was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute’s funding principles is available at <https://www.urban.org/aboutus/our-funding/funding-principles>.

We would like to thank Kantahyane Murray, Amoretta Morris, Burgundi Allison, Allison Holmes, Traci Callender, and Kimberly Spring from the Annie E. Casey Foundation as well as independent consultant Deborah Probe Adams for their support of this work. We would also like to thank the leaders from the three Family-Centered Community Change (FCCC) communities: Henrietta Muñoz, Chad Ketler, and Pam Hokanson, as well as the FCCC partners and staff who generously committed their time and insights to this research.

Finally we give a special thanks to the Urban Institute editors, Liza Hagerman and Serena Lei, and to our project team members, past and present, who have contributed to this study: Gina Adams, David Blount, Juan Collazos, Erwin DeLeon, Saunji Fyffe, Marcus Gaddy, Amanda Gold, Peace Gwam, Priya Saxena, Charmaine Runes, and Patrick Spauster.

# Executive Summary

Over seven years, local partnerships in Buffalo, New York, Columbus, Ohio, and San Antonio, Texas, embarked on an initiative focused on high-poverty neighborhoods with long histories of economic disinvestment. The Family-Centered Community Change (FCCC) initiative, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, developed integrated services for communities—including education and care for children and job training and financial and employment services for adults—to help family members succeed together in a two-generation approach.

Strong partnerships are essential in two-generation community change initiatives, but they are not simple to create. Urban Institute researchers tracked the initiatives as the communities designed and implemented them. This report highlights lessons from the partnerships about collaborating, integrating services, and building strong partnerships.

All three community change initiatives exemplify both challenges to and markers of strong partnerships. These partnerships are dynamic and require careful planning and ongoing nurturing. Community change initiatives must treat cultivating the partnerships as critically as they treat the services themselves.

Generally, partnerships are stronger when funding is secure, partners feel invested in the work, leaders communicate a clear vision and direction, and staff understand each other's contributions and roles. As the seven years showed—as has the time since the COVID-19 pandemic and renewed protests for racial justice began<sup>1</sup>—broader systemic and contextual factors will always be at play and part of the inevitable landscape community partnerships must navigate.

The report discusses takeaways for strong partnerships in two-generation community change initiatives.

- **Prioritize family and community partners.** FCCC, by its very name, aims to be family centered. One way to center families is to include them as partners with shared design authority. None of the FCCC partnerships implemented such a body, even though FCCC community members were intimately aware of conditions that made it difficult to pursue goals that could benefit themselves and their families—such as lack of child care options, inadequate transportation, predatory lending practices, and limited affordable rental housing. Solutions to these challenges were not always front and center in the FCCC programming. Including family

members in the initiatives' designs may have spurred greater focus on tackling structural barriers to community challenges.

- **Foster a culture conducive to partnerships.** Partner integration often involves sharing and relinquishing money, authority, ideas, acclaim, and habits for the larger initiative's cause. To foster a culture conducive to partnerships, organizations should enter these arrangements ready to acknowledge likely constraints and prepared and willing to compromise and navigate these areas including addressing schedule constraints and duplicate services among different partners.
- **Invest in a shared vision and empower leaders.** Strong service partners share a common vision and goal and adopt the same guiding principles for the initiative. A strong shared vision can be strengthened by initiative leaders who also have high-level authority within their organizations, especially for fostering community and cross-organizational partnerships . Consistent leadership is also vital to establishing a shared vision, though turnover and transitions did happen in FCCC. Shared vision and empowered leadership can strengthen the partnerships and solidify organizational ties even through anticipated turnover and transitions.
- **Create effective communication mechanisms.** Good communication including clear mechanisms for feedback loops between frontline staff and leadership is essential to moving from decision-making on a case-by-case basis to identifying more permanent solutions to common challenges and instituting procedures, policies, or practices that change the overall system of care for all families.
- **Build data-sharing capacity and infrastructure early.** Communities undertaking similar initiatives would benefit from thinking about data tracking and data collection requirements for all partners early on and prioritizing shared data capacity. Someone needs to lead the data sharing and coordinate effective strategies that make sense within the range of services offered and partners' legacy tracking systems. And partnerships need to guide frontline staff on how to best use data resources to inform their work while ensuring the content and format of the information is accessible and actionable.
- **Build partnerships that last decades, not only for the life of the grant.** Thinking toward sustainability early can help initiatives maintain momentum while recognizing that partnerships may change and evolve over the years. The most considerable sustainability challenge is often securing funding and other resources to continue and build on the work. But it also involves aligning continued work with organizational missions and policy-level priorities. Trust allows

organizations to have confidence in partners to stay the course and work through new challenges as they arise to plan together and count on each other to continue the shared work.

# Developing Place-Based Two-Generation Partnerships: Lessons from Three Community Change Initiative Partnerships

Over seven years beginning in 2012, local partnerships in Buffalo, New York, Columbus, Ohio, and San Antonio, Texas, embarked on an initiative called Family-Centered Community Change (FCCC)<sup>2</sup> with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The initiative focused on neighborhoods with long histories of racial segregation, systemic racism, and economic disinvestment (McDaniel et al. 2019; Popkin et al. 2019). The local partnerships developed integrated services within their communities—including education and care for children and job training and financial and employment services for adults—to help family members succeed together in a *two-generation approach*. The theory behind FCCC is that two-generation approaches, or initiatives with well-coordinated high-quality programs and services for children and parents, can disrupt poverty from one generation to the next and move families with low incomes toward greater economic stability.

From 2013 through 2019, Urban Institute researchers tracked the initiatives as the communities designed and implemented them. This report highlights lessons from the partnerships about collaborating and integrating services and what plans and relationships were sustained by the end of the seven years.

Data collection for the study ended only a few months before COVID-19<sup>3</sup> affected the nation and the world. The study also ended before the precipitating events of police violence and killings of Black/African American men and women stirred renewed momentum, anger, and demands for racial justice and equity across the country,<sup>4</sup> including in the FCCC communities. Though this report does not capture how the communities and partnerships are navigating these events, large systemic and contextual factors were at play throughout the initiative's first seven years, as reflected in a separate report focused on the local contextual factors affecting FCCC (Popkin et al. 2019). Influential conditions included the affordable rental housing crisis in all three cities, inadequate transportation, limited child care options, public elementary schools under financial and performance accountability pressures, and a rapidly changing public policy environment. Lessons about partnership were learned from the external forces affecting the pace and nature of community change.

---

## BOX 1

### Methodology

The Urban Institute research team visited each community twice a year between 2014 and 2019, interviewing staff involved in the three initiatives at all levels from each organization, institution, or agency. The team also held 41 interviews and 8 focus groups with family members and other community residents familiar with the initiatives to explore what drew people to or kept them from participating. For this report, we focus on themes related to partnership integration from qualitative interviews with staff about partnership structure and dynamics, leadership, communication, and data sharing. Broader findings from the study are included in a separate, final report (forthcoming).

---

## Two-Generation Approach

A two-generation approach expects service providers to operate “in tandem”—always considering adults and children together (Ascend 2014). In launching FCCC, the Annie E. Casey Foundation outlined its initial ideals:

- an intention to build and help normalize two-generation approaches as a general practice in local communities;
- a goal to find communities already primed and demonstrating affinity for two-generation work and willing and able to collaborate with Casey and local organizational partners, and to commit to evaluation and technical assistance;
- an expectation that local partnerships would collaborate closely to develop a seamless service-delivery system for families—adults and children—without those services conflicting in time, location, or goals for families;
- a plan that Casey would serve as a strategic coinvestor,<sup>5</sup> which included being nondirective, providing flexible funding to encourage grantee discretion, offering hands-on staffing support from the foundation, and expecting communities to collaborate with other funders.

In addition to these ideals, FCCC had a place-based<sup>6</sup> focus, operating within a targeted geographic area or place already designated as having a comprehensive community initiative—a community collaboration bringing new development and resources to targeted areas with high poverty and underinvestment (Popkin et al. 2019). Identifying comprehensive community initiatives already committed to supporting communities, Casey hoped the two-generation service approach and

philosophy would expand throughout the targeted area and influence broader community changes. Two years into the initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation also began emphasizing racial and ethnic equity and inclusion in its work and with its grantees in an effort to provide resources and education for (1) confronting structural racism and its impacts on the communities and (2) engaging families and community members more actively in FCCC design and decisionmaking (The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2016; McDaniel et al. 2019).

In applying for and receiving Casey funding, each FCCC community demonstrated its capacity to assemble providers committed to serving families using a two-generation approach with a shared goal of offering high-quality, well-coordinated services for families. Each initiative aimed to fashion a set of services that, from families' perspectives, would be comprehensive, well-coordinated (i.e., have minimal scheduling and access conflicts between high-quality adult and child opportunities), and seamless (i.e., have minimal duplication or multiple enrollment applications across service systems).

## Partnership Models

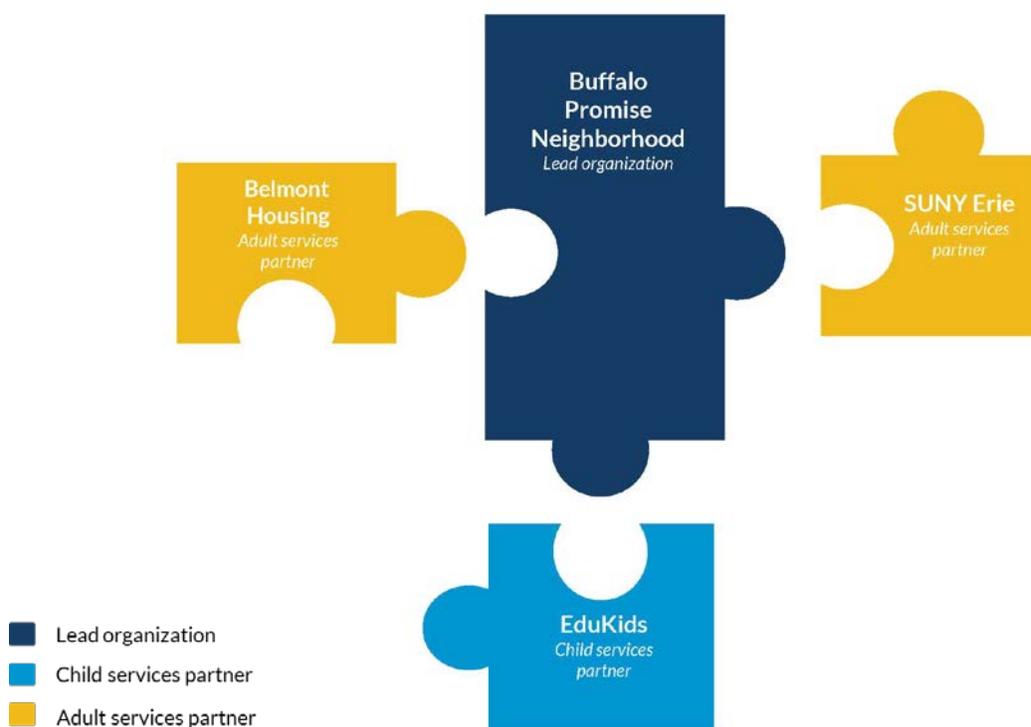
Each model and its lead organization had a unique approach to partnering, which also influenced how the communities designed their FCCC initiatives. Contrasts included how much control the lead organization maintained over decisionmaking and program design, whether or how partners fundraised together, whether partners could leverage additional funding for the work, and what the funding required as a condition (e.g., reporting or eligibility requirements).

### Buffalo's FCCC Initiative

Buffalo's FCCC effort—the Parent Achievement Zone (PAZ)—was built on the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood (BPN)<sup>7</sup> that targets a square-mile (97-block) community on the city's east side. Buffalo's comprehensive community initiative was a corporate-philanthropic, public-private partnership led by M&T Bank when Casey awarded the initiative a grant for FCCC. M&T Bank, through its charitable Westminster Foundation and BPN, had a longstanding relationship with Buffalo Public Schools and operated its own public charter school, Westminster Community Charter School, since 2004. After winning the Casey grant, the Westminster Foundation also temporarily managed Highgate Heights Elementary School under a school improvement grant (i.e., a federal school turnaround initiative) from 2013 to 2018 and built its own early childhood center in 2013 (opening a second one just outside the BPN footprint in 2019) called Children's Academy.<sup>8</sup> Through the Westminster Foundation and BPN,

M&T Bank contracted with organizations that could pair adult services with its education-focused work with children. On the early childhood education side, it initially opened its first Children’s Academy as a Head Start program and eventually transitioned to a privately funded 12-month provider, EduKids, that operated both academies. On the adult services side, it contracted with State University of New York (SUNY) Erie Community College for workforce development and Belmont Housing Resources for Western New York to provide financial and housing education services.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Parent Achievement Zone (PAZ) Partners in Buffalo, New York**



### Columbus’s FCCC initiative

Columbus’s FCCC initiative served a two-and-a-half square mile area in Weinland Park, a community adjacent to the Ohio State University experiencing rapid economic development. The FCCC effort included an intensive family coaching component called Next Doors. Columbus’s comprehensive community initiative and place-based community collaborative partnership, the Weinland Park Collaborative (the Collaborative), was formed in 2008. The Collaborative included Weinland Park community-based organizations, residents, and investors including the Columbus Foundation. Community

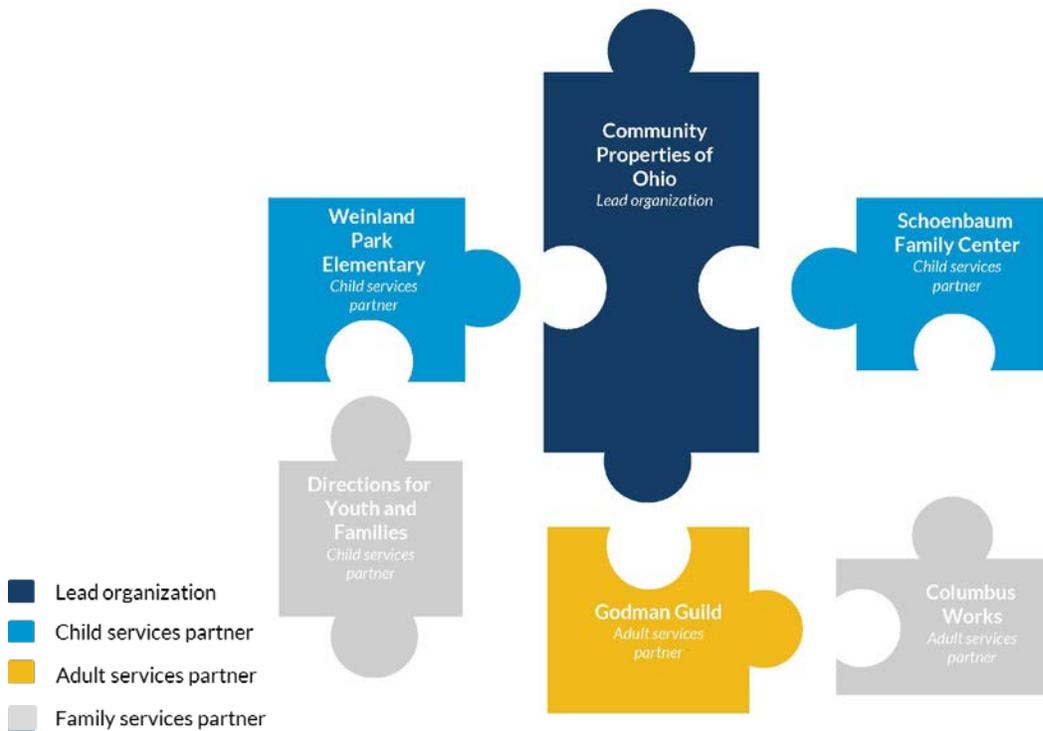
Properties of Ohio (CPO), a local nonprofit housing and services provider that owns and manages subsidized apartment units in the community, first coled FCCC with three other organizations and then eventually assumed full leadership. The Collaborative's primary partners in Columbus included

- Columbus City Schools via Weinland Park Elementary School (WPES);
- Godman Guild Association, a neighborhood human services provider;
- Directions for Youth and Families, a local mental health care provider;
- Columbus Works, a workforce development provider;
- the Ohio State University's (OSU) Schoenbaum Family Center, a laboratory school within the College of Education and Human Ecology that provides high-quality early childhood education for families affiliated with OSU and for community residents; and
- the Columbus Foundation, a local philanthropic organization assisting other organizations in strengthening and improving Columbus and surrounding communities.

The Columbus Foundation spearheaded the effort to secure the FCCC grant along with the Weinland Park Collaborative.

FIGURE 2

FCCC Partners in Columbus, Ohio



Note: Columbus Works and Directions for Youth and Families joined the FCCC partnership in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

### San Antonio’s FCCC Initiative

San Antonio’s Dual Generation initiative built on San Antonio’s East Side Promise Neighborhood and Choice Neighborhood initiatives and expanded to serve the city’s entire East Side Promise Zone.<sup>9</sup> The Dual Generation footprint is the largest of the three FCCC communities, covering nearly 72 square miles across 10 zip codes. United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County led the initiative—a broad-based civic engagement partnership—and convened partners, consisting of an organized and active consortium of city agencies and social service providers with a long history of collaboration. Dual Generation partners included

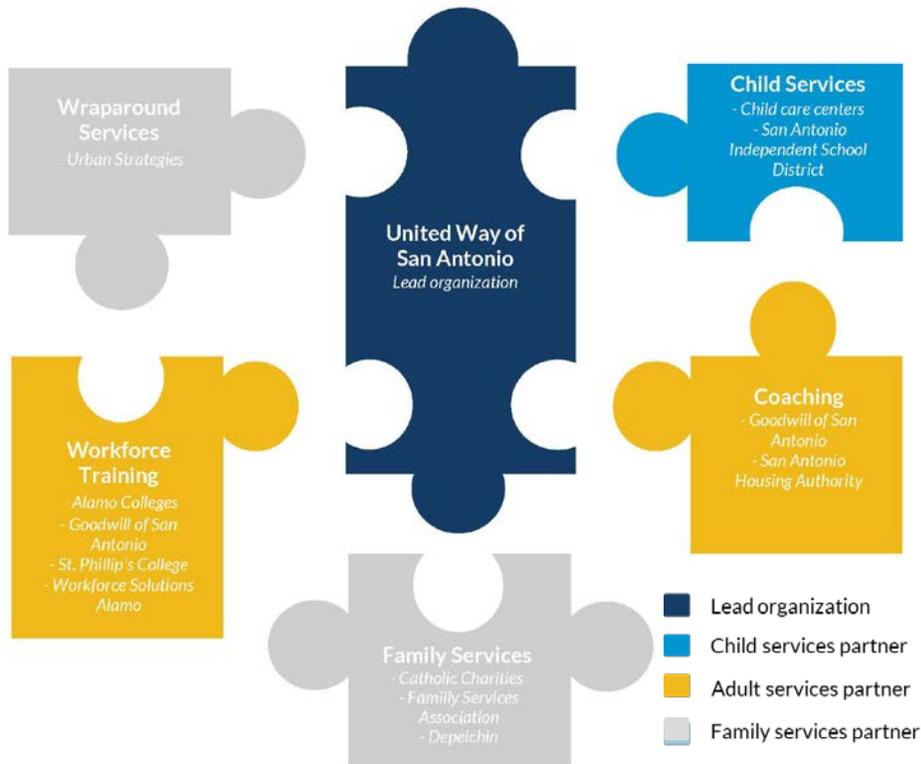
- Goodwill of San Antonio, which provided coaching and workforce training;
- San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA), which provided coaching and employment readiness supports through its Jobs Plus program;

- Alamo Colleges, which offered training through its Federal Health Profession Opportunity Grant and other programs;
- St. Phillip's College, which provided additional workforce training opportunities;
- Family Service Association, which provided financial coaching and ran the school-based Parent Rooms;
- DePelchin Children's Center, which provided home visiting;
- Urban Strategies, which provided wraparound supports to current and former SAHA residents from Wheatley Courts, its Choice development;
- Catholic Charities, which offered parenting supports;
- San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD);
- Workforce Solutions Alamo; and
- five child care centers.

The partnership also included many other organizations that provided adult training and supportive services to families. In 2018, the partnership moved its coaching services from the Ella Austin Community Center in the original Eastside Promise Neighborhood to a new East Side Employment and Training Center in a former school campus several miles away.

FIGURE 3

Dual Generation Partners in San Antonio, Texas



## Creating Strong Partnerships

How partners integrate their organizations' operations and services and to what degree typically varies along a continuum. Separate organizations in a partnership like FCCC may operate in **communication** (sharing information and understanding each other's work), in **coordination** (working together on a case-by-case basis), in **collaboration** (jointly analyzing and planning), or ultimately as a **coordinated community response** (establishing feedback mechanisms to assess how the systems are working and routinely planning future steps) (Burt and Spellman 2007). Depending on the initiative and its goals, different partners may be more closely integrated than others, and the appropriate level of integration depends on what is most conducive to success (Konrad 1996). Primarily, the local partnerships in FCCC were working toward coordinated community responses, though in practice different partners in the initiatives operated more commonly in communication, coordination, and/or collaboration (see the appendix for a matrix assessing place-based two-generation partnerships using the Burt and Spellman (2007) services integration framework).

Strong partnerships are important in two-generation community change initiatives, but they are not simple to create. Partners needed to overcome traditional organizational boundaries that naturally define independent organizations. The challenge rested heavily on the lead organizations who had to navigate their own cultures, mission, resource obligations, and capacities to blend and relinquish money, authority, ideas, acclaim, and habits for a larger community cause, at potential perceived risk to their own unique organizational identity. And the history and culture of partnership in the local area also had an influence—for example, San Antonio’s long history of collaboration on the east side and its lead organization’s role as both a cross-organizational convener and funder of community services made it easier for partners to come together to support FCCC.

## **Lessons for Strong Partnerships**

We discuss five lessons for strong partnerships in two-generation community change initiatives.

### **PRIORITIZE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

The name Family-Centered Community Change emphasizes families. One way to center families is to include them and community members in program design and decision making.

Despite discussions, none of the FCCC communities succeeded in implementing a formal, empowered community body with shared design-authority throughout the seven years. Early in its planning, Columbus hired resident engagement specialists—community members who helped with designing Next Doors, hiring key staff, recruiting program participants, and shadowing staff at the lead partner organizations to learn about their operations and services. But the initiative did not maintain those positions because the specialists’ role became less clear when the initiative’s focus turned to intensive family coaching. In all three communities, regular input from families came from periodic meetings or surveys, informal feedback through coaching relationships, and the annual FCCC convenings, in which the Annie E. Casey Foundation encouraged the partnerships to invite family representatives. Though direct community involvement in ongoing program design and implementation was not an expectation at the start, engaging families and community members as designers and decisionmaking partners became a regular topic over time, especially as the Annie E. Casey Foundation introduced topics and trainings related to racial and ethnic equity and inclusion (McDaniel et al. 2019).

The FCCC evaluation confirmed that community members were intimately aware of conditions that made it difficult to pursue goals that could benefit themselves and their families. Solutions to these challenges were not always front and center in the FCCC programming, partially because of how

embedded the issues were within systems, institutions, and policies—such as lack of child care options, inadequate transportation, predatory lending practices, and limited affordable rental housing (Popkin et al. 2019). Including family members in the initiatives’ designs may have spurred greater focus on tackling structural barriers to community challenges. As it was, the FCCC efforts focused on more individual- or family-level approaches, such as coaching and job training.

### FOSTER CULTURE CONDUCIVE TO PARTNERSHIPS

Leaders operate within an organizational culture that can affect how they engage with outside partners. Partner integration at a level of coordinated community response often involves both sharing and relinquishing money, authority, ideas, acclaim, and habits for the larger initiative’s cause.

Over time, FCCC partners grew to understand differences in organizational capacity and how that affected their approach to partnering. Strategies involved examining and understanding partners’ organizational practices, funding obligations and capacities, fundraising commitments, and data-sharing capabilities, in addition to the skills and expertise they brought—for example, partners have differing levels of flexible funding and distinct accountability frameworks and mandates. Differences in funding—both the amounts and how flexibly partners could use it—contributed to differences in the partnerships. All three FCCC lead organizations managed and distributed the Casey funding and could use it specifically for activities related to FCCC coordination, partnering, and data capacity, which helped hold the partnerships together. All three communities also had additional funding sources to draw on, especially San Antonio and Buffalo, who both varied in how much control they had over partners’ involvement and how much some partners contributed separately (Gold, Gaddy, and Gwam forthcoming). In San Antonio, United Way also provided funding from its own resources to some of its partners through the organization’s annual competitive grant process, which encouraged a strong fit and shared understanding about partner expectations and roles.

Schools were often particularly constrained and, despite continuous efforts, child-serving providers were not always well integrated. Often meetings between partners occurred during the school day, when staff from child care centers or elementary schools were unable to attend, reducing the opportunity to create a seamless connection between adult- and child-focused services. Operating in the schools also required building partnerships and gaining buy-in from school leaders, and the communities’ efforts sometimes competed with performance pressures on schools to improve child test scores.<sup>10</sup>

Adult service providers were able to achieve higher levels of collaboration with each other in many cases. Colocation of services provided by different partners facilitated appropriate and personalized

referrals. And regular meetings between frontline staff and leadership from partner organizations contributed to successful coordination, especially for adult services. But communities faced organizational and logistical challenges in achieving full coordinated community responses among adult-serving partners. Adult-focused providers that offered similar services sometimes struggled to distinguish and coordinate their services. They needed to define their parameters and relative strengths. Staff across communities often repeated the refrain “staying in my lane” when they discussed coordination with their counterparts. To foster a culture conducive to partnerships, organizations should enter these arrangements ready to acknowledge likely constraints and prepared and willing to compromise in areas related to funding, authority and power, schedule constraints, or even duplication of services to benefit the larger cause.

### **INVEST IN A SHARED VISION AND EMPOWER LEADERS**

According to collective impact and services integration frameworks, well-integrated service partners share a common vision and goal and adopt the same guiding principles and views of the problem (Konrad 1996; Kania and Kramer 2011). Conceptually, partners in all three FCCC communities shared a similar overarching vision: that a two-generation approach provides services addressing the entire family’s needs to improve community members’ lives. “Getting families to self-sufficiency” and “helping parents and helping children” were common sentiments staff expressed when defining two generation. The FCCC partners also held similar views of the problem: that many families have a hard time accessing high-quality services that both adults and children need to move out of poverty, and providing those services and supports in an integrated way will help families access them more efficiently and successfully, ultimately benefiting the entire community.

In practice, the partnerships struggled to turn an overarching shared two-generation vision into agreed-upon coordinated approaches for partners who otherwise (and necessarily) offer different specialties, may serve different generations (whether children or adults), and have distinct program models and short- and long-term goals and objectives. San Antonio introduced new partners to the two-generation framework underlying the Dual Generation partnership, including the importance of setting goals for both children and adults, through orientation materials. It was difficult to hold all partners accountable for both sets of goals. But initiative leaders also felt the practice contributed to productive discussions that centered partners around a broader community focus.

A strong shared vision can be strengthened by initiative leaders who also have high-level authority within their organizations. Leaders ideally have broad decision-making power, ability to devote enough time to the initiative, and capacity to align the missions of building cross-organizational partnerships

and two-generation approaches. In FCCC, some high-level organizational leaders devoted their energies primarily to running large organizations and were less singularly focused on building cross-organizational partnerships within a community change initiative; instead, they left responsibility for the initiative to senior managers. In contrast, having high-level organizational authority coupled with responsibility for fostering community change with a two-generation approach can help strengthen how shared vision is executed. Consistent leadership is also key to establishing shared vision, though turnover and transitions did happen in FCCC. The leadership changes became opportunities to reassess and reshape vision, though they also contributed to some disruption and uncertainty about roles among partners and staff. Ensuring initiative leaders have high-level organizational authority and responsibility for building cross-organizational partnerships and shared vision can strengthen the partnerships and may help solidify organizational ties even through anticipated turnover and transitions.

### CREATE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

Under a coordinated community response, partners have effective communication within and across organizations. This means that information travels well within each (i.e., leadership decisions filter to frontline staff, and frontline experience informs leadership decisions); they share knowledge about partner responsibilities and roles to know which information is most critical to which partners; and they have effective methods of communication that make it easy to connect and convey information across organizations (e.g., colocation, regular meetings, or shared technology platforms). Meetings among partner organization staff working on a coordinated community response are almost always productive and result in shared strategies across partners to help families and affect organizational practices. Also, direct service staff and leadership from all partner organizations have input into discussions on issues that affect families and the broader structure of the partnership. This good communication makes processes function better as a whole, encouraging active involvement from families and communities.

The goal of services integration is for frontline staff and leaders to move beyond decisionmaking on a case-by-case basis. Instead, organizations begin identifying more permanent solutions to common challenges and instituting procedures, policies, or practices that change the overall system of care for all families (Burt and Spellman 2007).

In FCCC, partners found ways to share physical space with colocated services for quick and frequent communication, which also facilitated smoother referrals. But even though they communicated well across organizations, some frontline staff and partners described feeling unheard by leadership. They were concerned about limited input in FCCC's overall design and programming. Such input, some staff and partners felt, could further improve programming and families' participation

and success. A lesson is the importance of creating effective mechanisms for vertical communication and feedback loops between frontline staff and leadership.

### **BUILD DATA-SHARING CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE EARLY**

A well-integrated two-generation partnership relies on useable data capturing indicators for both parents and children across partner organizations (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2018). Partners use these data to inform services for families. Under a coordinated community response, all partner organizations may have a shared data system where adult and child data are housed together and can be queried or viewed in a dashboard. Also, organizations may regularly look across data from all partners and consistently measure changes in family conditions and reconsider how to build a better cross-organizational service infrastructure for families.

Each community recognized the importance of data and worked to share and integrate it in their programming—also working on the timeliness and quality of the data entered. The initiatives worked through restrictions to sharing information with other partners, and all developed functioning data-sharing systems that captured family demographic and service participation information. Columbus developed a master data-sharing agreement among all core partners so they could securely and ethically exchange pertinent family-level data. San Antonio continued to refine its capabilities and at the time of this writing had developed a comprehensive referral network among different agencies across the city.

All three communities struggled to develop data-sharing practices that were useful to frontline staff working with families and also effective in monitoring outcomes. For example, frontline staff sometimes struggled to retrieve or understand the information available in an organization's data management system. Buffalo redesigned its system to better meet staff members' needs by better capturing case notes and other qualitative data.

Communities undertaking similar initiatives would benefit from thinking about data tracking and data collection requirements for all partners early on and prioritizing shared data capacity. Someone needs to lead the data sharing and be able to coordinate effective strategies that make sense within the range of services offered and partners' legacy tracking systems. And partnerships need to guide frontline staff on how to best use data resources to inform their work, while ensuring the content and format of the information is accessible and actionable.

# Sustaining Partnerships

Collaborators considering two-generation community change work should aim to build partnerships that last decades, not only for the life of the grant. Sustainability is partially driven by the effectiveness of collaboration during the grant period, but thinking toward sustainability early can help initiatives maintain momentum. The largest challenge in sustainability is often securing funding and other resources to continue and build on the work. But it also involves aligning continued work with organizational missions and policy-level priorities. For example, Buffalo is seeking to align ongoing two-generation work with the schools' priorities and include input and involvement from principals and staff.

An important element of sustained partnership work is trust. Partners did not always speak of their work in these terms, but elements of trust were a recurring theme in exploring challenges and opportunities for collaboration. Trust may relate to any of the elements discussed in this report: prioritizing each other's interests and perspectives; respecting other organizations' capacities; sharing a vision; communicating effectively; and sharing data and other information. It allows organizations to have confidence in partners to stay the course and work through new challenges as they arise so they can plan together and count on each other to continue the shared work.

Partnerships may change and evolve over the years. Buffalo and Columbus ended or changed the relationship with an original core partner by the end of the initiative, working closely with remaining partners around services and fundraising. San Antonio was able to largely maintain partnerships and expand and grow its partnerships in the end. As these initiatives look toward the future, Columbus may further refine the core partners it seeks to collaborate with to advance the work. And San Antonio may expand the target population, which could open the door for new partnerships.

---

## BOX 2

### FCCC Sustainability Plans at the Study's Conclusion

**Buffalo:** As the Casey grant was ending, SUNY and BPN established a partnership under a New York State Department of Labor grant for onsite and other job-related services within the FCCC community. With BPN's continued ties to the two elementary schools and to the two Children's Academies, BPN leaders were actively seeking funding and opportunities to further enhance supports available to families affiliated with the schools. From BPN's perspective, sustained two-generation work should align closely with the schools' priorities and include input and involvement from principals and staff.

**Columbus:** CPO leadership has committed to sustaining the school-based team and intensive coaching through Next Doors and intends to support these activities through CPO reserve funding until they are able to secure additional money. Key FCCC partnerships and collaborations remain in place, while fundraising efforts are currently separate.

**San Antonio:** United Way has raised enough money to continue funding partnership operations at 2019 levels through 2021 and carry over into 2022. Key partners, including SAHA and Goodwill, have committed to continuing the partnership in the coming years, and the partnering child care centers also appear poised to continue serving Dual Generation children. Possible changes include expanding the target population to serve other areas of the city and families with children older than age 10. Dual Generation has strengthened its partnership with Workforce Solutions Alamo, which has intake specialists now colocated with other partnering coaches at the East Side Education and Training Center. San Antonio has been able to maintain several of its key partners since the beginning of the initiative.

---

## Conclusions

All three community change initiatives exemplify both challenges to and markers of strong partnerships. Especially when focused on place-based, two-generation community change, FCCC and its lessons over seven years affirm five key ingredients for strong partnerships that can keep them relevant to communities and able to anticipate communities' needs. The five lessons—prioritizing family and community partners, fostering cultures conducive to partnerships, investing in a shared vision and empowering leaders, creating effective communication mechanism, and building data-sharing capacity and infrastructure early—each illustrate how partnerships are dynamic and require careful planning and ongoing nurturing. The lessons suggest that community change initiatives must treat cultivating the partnerships as critically as they treat the services themselves. Generally, partnerships are stronger when funding is secure, partners feel invested in the work, leaders communicate a clear vision and direction, and staff understand each other's contributions and roles. As the seven years showed—as has the time since COVID-19 and renewed protests for racial justice—larger systemic and contextual factors will always be at play and part of the inevitable landscape strong partnerships must navigate.

# Appendix. FCCC 2016 Community Partnership Integration Matrix

In 2016, midway through the FCCC grants, the Urban research team developed the rubric below to assess partner integration within the place-based two-generation framework, based on definitions established in the literature and examples seen among initiative partners and participants. In 2020 the research team updated the matrix to include a new category—how well programming and services align with community and family members’ priorities—which considers if and how community members are involved in program design and decisionmaking. The framework informs how we considered partnership in this report and structured our analysis of interview notes and transcripts. Because the initiative and associated partnerships evolved and changed, assessing partnership quality quantitatively was impractical. Instead, we have taken a qualitative approach to characterizing the partnerships in the narrative below. We reference the rubric to help define integration along various parameters in a place-based, two-generation context, offering what partnership integration might look like at the framework’s fifth level, a coordinated community response.

**TABLE A.1**  
**Community Partnership Integration Reference Matrix**

	Isolation	Communication	Coordination	Collaboration	Coordinated community response
<b>How partnerships are structured and led</b>					
<b>The partnership has a clear leadership and decisionmaking structure</b>	Each organization makes its own internal decisions; there are no common decisions to make or means to communicate organizational decisions	Each organization makes its own internal decisions and relays these to the group; other organizations may react based on their partners’ decisions, but there is no shared decisionmaking structure	Each organization makes its own internal decisions and a defined leadership structure exists through which the group can discuss these and make other decisions about the direction of the partnership’s efforts on a case-by-case basis	Each organization makes internal decisions informed by the group and also engages in a shared decisionmaking process across the organizations and among organizational leaders that facilitates joint analysis and planning	Each organization makes internal decisions considering partnership’s needs and the needs of common families in the service population; they come together to make group decisions through shared leadership structures; supporting active involvement from families and communities

	Isolation	Communication	Coordination	Collaboration	Coordinated community response
<b>Clearly defined partners work together for FCCC</b>	Each organization that serves families in the footprint operates alone, without much more than casual awareness of each other	A set of organizations have informally agreed to communicate with each other about community needs	A set of organizations have formally agreed to communicate with each other about community needs and try to align their responses to family issues through shared decisionmaking or policy on a case-by-case basis	A set of organizations have formally agreed to engage in shared decisionmaking and align their service offerings—including jointly analyzing and planning procedures—to meet families’ needs; the “right partners” for providing the scope of services defined for FCCC are at the table	A set of organizations have formally agreed to engage in shared decisionmaking and align and modify their service offerings to meet the families’ needs complement each other’s efforts, as well as establish feedback mechanisms for monitoring progress and planning future steps; supporting active involvement from families and communities
<b>How closely partners’ vision and goals align</b>					
<b>The partners share an overarching vision of how they would like to affect family well-being with community input</b>	Each organization has its own vision, but there is no shared vision across organizations for improving family well-being	Each organization has its own vision for improving family well-being and has communicated about this vision with other organizations	Each organization started with its own vision for improving family well-being but has reconsidered and potentially modified this vision in light of other organizations’ visions	The organizations have purposefully come up with a shared vision for families in the footprint and jointly analyzed and planned for that vision together	The organizations have purposefully come up with a shared vision for families in the footprint and have engaged the community in discussion about this vision; they have also established feedback mechanisms for monitoring goals and planning future steps

	Isolation	Communication	Coordination	Collaboration	Coordinated community response
<b>The partners agree on a concrete plan about how they will improve families' lives through FCCC</b>	Each organization has its own approach to helping families; no shared plan of action exists	Each organization has its own approach to helping families and they have discussed these through informal channels (e.g., neighborhood commissions)	The organizations have come together to discuss their efforts to support families and have aligned services to not conflict; one or more organizations may have created a general shared plan but with few collaborative action steps—or organizations make plans on case-by-case basis for families	The organizations have engaged in a shared design and planning effort; they have agreed on an approach to serving families that involves multiple organizations collaborating on shared services, including across generations	The organizations have engaged in a shared design and planning effort; they have agreed on a concrete and actionable approach to serving families that leverages each organization's strengths in a joint effort that serves both children and adults; feedback mechanisms are in place for partners and community members for constant improvement and future planning

**What strategies partners use to communicate for the purpose of integrating services**

<b>Partner organizations have effective mechanisms for communication to integrate services (additional examples include colocation and technology for easy communication)</b>	Organizational staff may know of each other's existence and make general referrals but do not have means of formal communication	Organizational staff have occasional meetings to communicate about each organization's individual activities for informational purposes and referrals	Organizational staff have regular meetings that are sometimes productive at developing coordinated action to serve families	Organizational staff have regular meetings that are almost always productive and result in shared strategies across partners to help families	Organizational staff have regular meetings that are almost always productive and result in shared strategies across partners to help families and affect organizational practices to make processes function better as a whole; they encourage active involvement from families and communities
	No shared space exists—organizations may be located in separate offices and not know where others are located	Organizations are located in separate offices but adept at helping families navigate to other organizations' offices	Staff are located in separate offices, but they often come together to provide services at the same location	Colocated organizations have useful interactions with each other and address family needs and improve processes	A "one-stop-shop" exists where families can go; staff from colocated organizations have useful interactions with each other to address family needs

	<b>Isolation</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Coordinated community response</b>
<b>Staff have shared knowledge of roles and responsibilities across organizations</b>	Organizational staff may know of each other's existence and make general referrals but do not have means of formal communication	Organizational staff have occasional meetings to communicate about each organization's activities for informational purposes and referrals	Organizational staff have regular meetings that are sometimes productive in developing coordinated action to serve families	Organizational staff have regular meetings that are almost always productive and result in shared strategies across partners to help families (other examples: cross-training staff on organizations that serve the same generation—for example, cross-training among staff at child serving organizations)	Organizational staff have regular meetings that are almost always productive and result in shared strategies across partners to help families and affect organizational practices to make processes function better as a whole; they encourage active involvement from families and communities (other examples: cross-training staff across adult and child serving organizations)
<b>Clear and functional mechanisms are in place for vertical communication between direct-service staff and management staff</b>	Leadership and direct service staff have formal communication within their own organizations	Direct service staff may talk with each other about issues and bring them to the leadership at their respective organizations, and vice versa	Direct service staff and leadership from multiple organizations have mechanisms to convey cross-organizational service issues to the appropriate levels so they can be addressed internally	Direct service staff and leadership from multiple organizations have mechanisms to convey cross-organizational service issues to the appropriate levels so they can be addressed internally; a related cross-organizational effort to address challenges exists	Direct service staff and leadership from all organizations in the partnership have regular and clear communication about issues that affect families and the broader structure of the partnership
<b>How partners organize and coordinate service delivery</b>					
<b>Child service providers collaborate around families' needs (and processes are institutionalized for long-term sustainability)</b>	Child service providers are aware of each other but have minimal interaction, except perhaps at one or two formal events (e.g., Kindergarten transition day)	Child service providers informally and occasionally communicate about children's needs, either around transitions or for siblings	Formal mechanisms exist for child service providers to communicate about child or family needs that are used only "as needed"	Formal mechanisms are in place for child service providers to communicate about child or family needs that are used regularly and have resulted in improved experiences for children and families	Child service providers are at the same "table" and make meaningful, coordinated plans to serve child and family needs

	<b>Isolation</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Coordinated community response</b>
<b>Adult service providers collaborate around families' needs (and processes are institutionalized for long-term sustainability)</b>	Adult service providers are aware of each other but have minimal interaction, except perhaps at one or two formal events (e.g., community career fairs)	Adult service providers informally and occasionally communicate about general service issues and challenges faced by shared clients	Formal mechanisms are in place for adult service providers to communicate about adult or family needs that are used only "as needed"	Formal mechanisms exist for adult service providers to communicate about adult or family needs that are used regularly and have resulted in improved experiences for adults and families	Adult service providers are at the same "table" and make meaningful, coordinated plans to serve adult and family needs
<b>Child and adult services collaborate around families' needs (and processes are institutionalized for long-term sustainability)</b>	Child and adult services are entirely separate and may not correspond to family scheduling needs; little recognition exists among staff of services provided to the other generation	Adult and child service providers informally and occasionally communicate about general service issues and challenges faced by shared families	Formal mechanisms exist for child and adult service providers to communicate about family needs that are used only "as needed"	Formal mechanisms exist for child and adult service providers to communicate about family needs that are used regularly and have resulted in improved experiences for families	Child and adult services are purposefully mutually reinforcing and supportive of holistic family needs; partners work together to establish feedback mechanisms to monitor progress and engage in future planning
<b>Whether and how partners share data</b>					
<b>A shared and usable data infrastructure exists capturing two-generation indicators across partner organizations that collects and provides information about all family members</b>	Each organization tracks data separately with no formal data-sharing infrastructure	Each organization tracks data separately, but there is a data-sharing infrastructure in place	Each organization tracks data separately, but this feeds (either automatically or manually) into a shared "dashboard" that allows various staff to view data across organizations and generations	Some organizations have shared data systems where cross-organizational data are housed together and can be queried or viewed in a dashboard, but not all organizations are part of this infrastructure	All partner organizations have a shared data system where adult and child data are housed together and can be queried or viewed in a dashboard

	<b>Isolation</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Coordinated community response</b>
<b>Partners use data to inform services to families, including across generations</b>	No strong culture of data usage exists within organizations; No sharing of information across organizations occurs	Organizations use data internally to assess service quality and communicate their findings to partners	Organizations look across each other's data to give advice about opportunities for service improvement within organizations	Organizations have occasionally looked across the body of data from all partners; they occasionally measure changes in family conditions and consider how to create a better cross-organizational service infrastructure for families	Organizations regularly look across the body of data in real time from all partners; they consistently measure changes in family conditions and reconsider how to build a better cross-organizational service infrastructure for families
<b>How well services and programming align with communities' and families' priorities and needs</b>					
<b>Families' experiences are streamlined when they access services across partners</b>	Organizations do not demonstrate awareness of families' participation with other organizations; families need to provide the same information to multiple organizations; families are not provided information on available services at other organizations	Organizations may sporadically provide families information about other related services but do not provide a "warm handoff"; families still may need to provide the same information to multiple organizations	Organizations have a mechanism to routinely identify family needs and refer to other organizations, and there may occasionally be a "warm handoff" on a case-by-case basis; some information might be shared across organizations, but it is case by case and not routine	Organizations have a mechanism to routinely identify family needs and refer to other organizations and almost always provide a "warm handoff"; organizations routinely share data so families do not need to repeatedly provide information	Organizations routinely identify family needs and refer to other organizations and almost always provide a "warm handoff"; organizations routinely share data so families do not need to repeatedly provide information; they seek feedback from families about how to improve cross-organizational services
<b>Community members and families are included in the program design and decisionmaking</b>	Organizations determine the services community members need internally, without meaningful communication with other organizations or community members	Organizations determine the services community members need internally and communicate their assessment with other organizations and/or community members	Organizations determine the services community members need internally and then refine that vision and make decisions about programming and services with input from other organizations and/or community members	Organizations come together to develop a joint vision of what services community members need and how to address those needs; community members are involved in that process in defined ways (e.g., survey, a one-time committee)	Community members are considered equal members of an effort among multiple organizations to work together to define community needs and approaches to address them; community members are actively involved in intervention strategies

# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Susan Milligan, “Pandemic, Recession, Unrest: 2020 and the Confluence of Crises,” *US News & World Report*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2020-06-02/pandemic-recession-unrest-2020-and-the-confluence-of-crises>.
- <sup>2</sup> FCCC is pronounced “F triple C” by the three communities and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- <sup>3</sup> “About COVID-19,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, updated September 1, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cdcresponse/about-COVID-19.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> Milligan, “Pandemic, Recession, Unrest: 2020 and the Confluence of Crises.”
- <sup>5</sup> “Lessons from Casey’s Strategic Coinvestor Approach to Community Change,” The Annie E. Casey Foundation (blog), August 19, 2020, <https://www.aecf.org/blog/lessons-from-caseys-strategic-coinvestor-approach-to-community-change/>.
- <sup>6</sup> Place-based strategies seek to strengthen the physical, social, structural, and economic conditions of a community that affect the well-being of the children, families, and individuals who live there (Turner 2017).
- <sup>7</sup> In 2011, Buffalo was awarded a five-year \$4.4 million Promise Neighborhood grant from the US Department of Education.
- <sup>8</sup> Westminster Foundation continues to fund three academic Buffalo Public School positions as well as a school resource coordinator at Highgate Heights.
- <sup>9</sup> In 2011, the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County was awarded \$23.7 million Promise Neighborhood grant. In 2012, San Antonio received a five-year \$29.75 million Choice Neighborhood implementation grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to revitalize the Wheatley Courts public housing development and the Eastside neighborhood. In 2014, San Antonio was also designated a Promise Zone.
- <sup>10</sup> Marcus Gaddy and Theresa Anderson, “Four Lessons on Building 2Gen Partnerships in Schools,” *Urban Wire* (blog), August 11, 2020, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/four-lessons-building-2gen-partnerships-schools>.

# References

- The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2018. *Advancing Two-Generation Approaches: Integrating Data to Support Families*. Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2016. *Deploying Casey's REI Framework: Lessons from the Civic Sites*. Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Burt, Martha R., and Brooke E. Spellman. 2007. "Changing Homeless and Mainstream Service Systems: Essential Approaches to Ending Homelessness." In *Toward Understanding Homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*, edited by Deborah Dennis, Gretchen Locke, and Jill Khadduri, 2-1-2-46. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Chase-Landsdale, Lindsay P., and Jeanne Brooks-Gun. 2014. "Two Generation Programs in the Twenty-First Century." *The Future of Children* 24 (1): 13-39.
- Gencer, Arin. 2014. *Creating Opportunities for Families: A Two-Generation Approach*. Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Gold, Amanda, Marcus Gaddy, and Peace Gwam. Forthcoming. *The Costs of Two-Generation Programs: Labor Costs of the Two-Generation Initiatives in Buffalo, Columbus, and San Antonio*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute
- Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. 2011. "Collective Impact." *Stanford Social Innovation Review* Winter 2011:36-41.
- Konrad, Ellen. 1996. "A Multidimensional Framework for Conceptualizing Human Services Integration Initiatives." *New Directions for Evaluation* 69:5-19.
- McDaniel, Marla et al. 2019. "Fostering Racial and Ethnic Equity and Inclusion (REEI)." Washington, DC: Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/fostering-racial-and-ethnic-equity-and-inclusion-reei>
- Popkin, Susan J., Theresa Anderson, Amelia Coffey, Marcus Gaddy, Charmaine Runes, Marla McDaniel, Adaeze Okoli, and Patrick Spauster. 2019. *Incorporating Two-Generation Approaches in Community Change: Lessons from the Family Centered Community Change*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Turner, Margery. 2017. "History of Place-Based Interventions." Washington, DC: US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty.

# About the Authors

**Marla McDaniel** is a senior fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population whose research examines racial and ethnic disparities; low-income children, youth, and families; and the programs and policy environments that touch families' lives.

**Theresa Anderson** is a senior research associate. She is a member of the Building America's Workforce cross-center initiative in the Income and Benefits Policy Center and is affiliated with the Center on Education Data and Policy. She leads teams in conducting in-depth, mixed-methods research on evaluations of workforce, education, and social safety net programs and policies. She is particularly interested in improving access to and success in education throughout the life course, from early childhood to adulthood. Her work has focused on student parents, families with low incomes, opportunity youth, adult education students, underprepared college students, high school students from historically underserved populations, and public housing residents.

**Adaeze Okoli** is a former research analyst in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population. Okoli is passionate about the intersection of data, research, and policy to drive sustainable social change. Her previous research experiences focused on the impact of demographic factors such as race and migrant status on key economic outcomes.

**Susan J. Popkin** is director of the Urban Institute's Housing Opportunities and Services Together (HOST) Initiative and an Institute fellow in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. A nationally recognized expert on public and assisted housing policy, Popkin directs a research program that uses community engagement and community-based participatory approaches to explore new strategies for improving outcomes for families, and she conducts evaluations of complex community-based interventions. Popkin is the author of *No Simple Solutions: Transforming Public Housing in Chicago*; coauthor of the award-winning *Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty*; lead author of *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*; and coauthor of *Public Housing Transformation: The Legacy of Segregation*.

**Amelia Coffey** is a research associate in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, specializing in qualitative methods and project management. Her work focuses on research and evaluation of policies and programs intended to support financial stability and well-being for families and young people. Before joining Urban, Coffey spent several years at a nonprofit research center

focused on improving child outcomes, where she gained experience designing and conducting evaluations of programs serving disadvantaged children and young people.

**Peace Gwam** is a research assistant in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. Gwam holds BA's in economics and history from the University of Maryland.

## STATEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE

The Urban Institute strives to meet the highest standards of integrity and quality in its research and analyses and in the evidence-based policy recommendations offered by its researchers and experts. We believe that operating consistent with the values of independence, rigor, and transparency is essential to maintaining those standards. As an organization, the Urban Institute does not take positions on issues, but it does empower and support its experts in sharing their own evidence-based views and policy recommendations that have been shaped by scholarship. Funders do not determine our research findings or the insights and recommendations of our experts. Urban scholars and experts are expected to be objective and follow the evidence wherever it may lead.



500 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Washington, DC 20024

[www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)