

## A PROVEN FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE: THEORY OF ACTION™

StriveTogether first released the Theory of Action™ in 2013 to provide communities with a roadmap to changing the systems that shape opportunity for youth and families. This framework for change is rooted in how the work happens in communities across the Cradle to Career Network. The framework evolves as network members fail forward and learn together, building the civic infrastructure critical to getting better outcomes for youth and families.

This latest iteration, the fifth revision to the Theory of Action™ in eight years, was developed with network cradle-to-career partnerships. It strengthens the focus on racial and ethnic equity and places an even greater emphasis on **systems transformation**. Systems transformation occurs when communities build civic infrastructure that enables every Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and family and those experiencing poverty to have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential, cradle to career. This is a result of partnership with system leaders in making fundamental and institutionalized shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures to eliminate structural racism and advance equitable outcomes.

Cradle-to-career **partnerships** are formal groups consisting of cross-sector organizational and system leaders (e.g., education, business, government, nonprofits, etc.) as well as grassroots organizations, neighborhood leaders and individual members of affected populations, especially youth and families who come together around a shared community vision. With support from backbone staff, the partnership group works together to define population-level challenges, develop and implement strategies to address those challenges, and hold systems accountable for results.



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StriveTogether®  
theory of  
**ACTION**™

GETTING  
BETTER  
RESULTS  
FOR EVERY  
CHILD,  
CRADLE TO  
CAREER

	EXPLORING	EMERGING	SUSTAINING	SYSTEMS CHANGE	SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION	LEADS TO EQUITABLE OUTCOMES
<p><b>SHARED COMMUNITY VISION</b></p>	<p>A cross-sector partnership, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty, defines a geographic scope and organizes around an equity-driven cradle-to-career vision</p> <p>The partnership establishes a diverse, cross-sector leadership table and accountability structure</p> <p>The partnership develops a set of messages aligned to the equity-driven cradle-to-career vision, and communicates these messages across the community</p>	<p>The partnership operates in alignment with the accountability structure</p> <p>The partnership builds authentic relationships with youth, families and diverse community partners and publicly communicates progress toward shared goals</p>	<p>The partnership takes aligned action to shift policies, practices, resources and power structures</p> <p>The partnership refines its vision and strategies in collaboration with, and centering the perspectives of, youth and families</p>	<p>Multiple sectors are aligned and accountable to the cradle-to-career vision, and youth and families contribute to decision making</p> <p>The partnership publicly communicates progress and challenges to grow its coalition and promote shared accountability</p>	<p>Youth and families use decision making authority to shift policies, practices, resources and power structures across systems</p> <p>The partnership regularly communicates about the aligned contributions of partners in service of economic mobility</p>	<p><b>PROOF POINT</b> is a designation for partnerships that meet the systems change/transformation benchmarks and are seeing more equitable outcomes*</p> <p><b>OUTCOMES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kindergarten readiness</li> <li>Early grade reading</li> <li>Middle grade math</li> <li>High school graduation</li> <li>Postsecondary enrollment</li> <li>Postsecondary completion</li> <li>Employment</li> </ul>
<p><b>EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING</b></p>	<p>The partnership identifies core indicators for the cradle-to-career outcomes to share accountability for improving</p>	<p>The partnership collects and publicly shares data for core indicators disaggregated by race, income, gender and other priority demographics</p> <p>The partnership identifies, collects and publicly shares systems indicators</p>	<p>The partnership facilitates the sharing of data for youth- and family-informed cross-sector action</p> <p>The partnership mobilizes partners to use systems indicators to address inequities in policies, practices and resources</p>	<p>The partnership supports a cross-sector data infrastructure that enables partners to shift policies, practices, resources and power structures</p>	<p>Cross-sector partners, including youth and families, regularly use outcomes and systems data to achieve equitable outcomes</p>	
<p><b>COLLABORATIVE ACTION</b></p>	<p>The partnership adopts a framework for collaboration</p> <p>The partnership prioritizes focus areas based on disaggregated data and community perspectives and insights</p>	<p>The partnership establishes collaborative action networks with cross-sector representation and a clear call to action, effectively applying its collaborative framework</p> <p>Collaborative action networks identify underlying factors that lead to inequitable systems</p> <p>The partnership builds collaboration skills among backbone staff and the community</p>	<p>Collaborative action networks align to advance equitable outcomes</p> <p>The partnership tests strategies that address inequitable systems using rapid-cycle continuous improvement</p> <p>The partnership mobilizes the broader community to advance equitable outcomes</p>	<p>Sustained collaborative action efforts shift policies, practices, resources and power structures</p> <p>The partnership spreads and scales strategies that advance equitable outcomes</p>	<p>Youth and families lead decision making in collaborative action networks that informs the adoption and implementation of cross-sector strategies to advance equitable outcomes</p> <p>Strategies that advance equitable outcomes are sustained and scaled</p>	
<p><b>INVESTMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY</b></p>	<p>The partnership establishes a backbone with daily management capacity, revenue sources to cover operational expenses and demonstrates commitment to hiring and retaining diverse staff</p> <p>The partnership engages with local, state and/or federal leaders who influence policy</p> <p>The partnership engages investors to support the operations and collaborative work of partners to advance equitable outcomes</p>	<p>The partnership capacity exists to support daily management, data needs, facilitation, communication and engagement with the community and has multiple revenue sources to implement its work</p> <p>The partnership identifies policy changes that will lead to equitable outcomes and identifies how key policy roles will be filled</p> <p>The partnership allocates resources to strategies that support the advancement of equitable outcomes</p>	<p>The partnership develops a sustainability plan that includes implementing and sustaining practices to advance racial equity and inclusion</p> <p>The partnership co-creates policy advocacy efforts with youth and families</p> <p>The partnership aligns public and private resources toward strategies that demonstrate equitable outcomes</p>	<p>The partnership secures resources to ensure its continuation and builds the capability of diverse staff, partners and leaders to implement its strategic plan</p> <p>The partnership advocates for changes to local, state and/or national policies based on the perspectives of youth and families. Policies change to advance equitable outcomes.</p> <p>The partnership aligns public and private resources to spread and sustain data-informed strategies</p>	<p>The partnership secures resources to implement its strategic plan and consistently builds capability of diverse staff, partners, leaders and youth and families to shift policies, practices, resources and power structures</p> <p>The partnership maintains a sustainable policy infrastructure, led by youth and families, resulting in advocacy for and implementation of policy changes across institutions and sectors that advance equitable outcomes</p> <p>The partnership ensures that youth and families have formal authority to make decisions about the allocation of public and private resources that shift policies, practices, resources and power structures</p>	

\*StriveTogether is partnering with the Cradle to Career Network to redefine the requirements for the Proof Point designation given the impact of COVID-19. The Proof Point designation will emphasize accelerated population-level outcome improvements for Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and those experiencing poverty as well as the closing of equity gaps across outcomes and systems indicators.