Track 2: Needs Assessment, Asset Map and Neighborhood Action Plan Guidance

Table of Contents

I. Solidifying Partnerships - Formal Agreement

ENOUGH partnerships should have a formal partnering agreement (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement) signed by all organizational partners which accomplishes the following:

1. defines the purpose or vision of the cross-sector partnership as it relates to place-based work conducted in the focus community;
2. details the roles, responsibilities, and commitments of partnering organizations; and
3. describes any agreed upon norms or protocols related to collaborative decision-making, establishing and refining partnership priorities, community engagement, data sharing, equitable practices, or other mutual understandings or agreements.

Most Track 2 grantees submitted a partnering agreement in their original ENOUGH application, but may need to refine, update or add signatures to this document as partnerships evolve and additional collaborating organizations are added to the partnership. Please submit any updated or refined partnering agreements or addendum documents to the GOC as soon as feasible.

II. Creating Needs Assessment and Asset Map for GOC Review

For the ENOUGH Act initiative, collaborative partnerships are expected to systematically examine local policies, systems, organizations, agencies, and programs to:

- **Identify Key Resources** supporting child development and upward mobility.
- **Reveal Gaps or Threats** hindering healthy child development and opportunity.
- **Surface Opportunities** to strengthen and change conditions for children and families.

After building a core leadership team, identifying a community quarterback, solidifying partnerships, and defining the geographic service area, the following steps[1] can produce a needs assessment and asset map that yields *clear and actionable recommendations*:

1. Develop Community Data Profile
2. Conduct Community Asset Mapping
3. Data Collection & Community Engagement
4. Develop Findings & Reporting

---

[1] This guidance for needs assessment and asset mapping is based on expertise and generous thought partnership provided by the William Julius Wilson Institute at Harlem Children's Zone.

1. Develop a Community Data Profile

1.1. Use Mixed Methods and Multiple Sources

- **Quantitative Indicators:** Poverty rates, employment, graduation rates, health outcomes, crime, and housing data. The GOC will provide each ENOUGH grantee with a data scorecard that includes critical population level data. Additionally, publicly available datasets may include the U.S. Census Bureau (ACS), local school district data, and CDC PLACES. Grantees may request support from the GOC gathering additional data that was not provided in the ENOUGH Scorecard.
- **Qualitative Insights:** Ensure the data are interpreted in the context of local lived experience.
- **Community Schools Needs Assessments**: Incorporate findings and insights from needs assessments conducted by the local community school(s) that are serving the focus community.
- **Synthesize EXISTING Reports and Data:** Develop metadata tables and crosswalks that acknowledge and integrate existing insights and data (e.g., Community Health Needs Assessments, Economic Development Strategic Plans, etc.)

Best Practice: *Combine quantitative and qualitative methods (surveys, focus groups, interviews) to capture both the scale of issues and the lived experiences behind the numbers.*

---

2. Conduct Community Asset Mapping

2.1. Inventory Tangible & Intangible Resources

Asset mapping pinpoints the resources already in place—schools, service providers, community centers, businesses, and public spaces—and highlights barriers or threats (e.g., blighted buildings, high-traffic roads, pollution sources).

2.2. Engage Stakeholders for Accuracy and Buy-In

- **Collaborative Process:** Residents, local agencies, and nonprofits should collectively identify assets and discuss their value to the community.
- **Spatial Analysis:** Visualize resource distribution to see whether critical supports are concentrated or lacking in certain areas.

Best Practice: *Asset mapping is not just about locations on a map; it's about strengthening partnerships, spotlighting underutilized resources, and ensuring equitable distribution of services.*

---

3. Data Collection & Community Engagement

3.1. Surveys, Focus Groups, and Interviews

- **Community Surveys:** Capture a broad range of perspectives on what works well and what needs improvement.
- **Focus Groups & Interviews:** Gather in-depth insights from residents, service providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Intentional Inclusion: Seek out voices often left unheard—low-income families, immigrants, youth, and others disproportionately affected by intergenerational poverty.

3.2. Build Trust and Transparency

- **Honor Local Expertise:** Compensate residents for their time when appropriate, and communicate how their input will be used.
- **Establish Feedback Loops:** Share preliminary findings to validate data and refine interpretations before finalizing.

Best Practice: *Co-design engagement strategies with community leaders; use culturally and linguistically appropriate methods that respect different norms and knowledge bases.*

---

4. Develop Findings & Reporting

4.1. Synthesize Strengths, Gaps, and Opportunities

- **Link Findings to ENOUGH Act Focus Areas:** For each priority (education, economic stability, health, safety, community capacity), outline key strengths, existing gaps or threats, and opportunities to leverage or create new resources.
- **Create Actionable Recommendations:** Tie next steps to specific partner roles, potential funding sources, and timelines.

4.2. Produce Accessible Reporting

- **Multiple Formats:** Summaries for broad audiences (e.g., infographics, brief reports) and detailed reports for technical stakeholders.
- **Public Sharing & Accountability:** Host community forums, post updates online, or distribute newsletters. Encourage dialogue and feedback from community members.

Best Practice: *Reporting is a critical bridge between data collection and action. Make it clear, concise, and relevant to different stakeholder groups—including residents, local agencies, funders, and policymakers.*

III. Creating Neighborhood Action Plan (NAP) for GOC Review

Tips for creating the Neighborhood Action Plan:

1. Use your assessment data to focus your efforts on what matters most to the community.
2. Secure community and stakeholder engagement at every stage to boost effectiveness, ownership, and sustainability.
3. Stay flexible as new information emerges or community needs shift. Incorporate touchpoints to regularly review and update your plan for lasting relevance and impact.

1. Review and Summarize Needs Assessment Findings

- Compile data and feedback: Gather the results of surveys, focus groups, interviews, and any other methods used during the community needs assessment.
- Identify key themes: Look for recurring issues, challenges, or gaps highlighted by community members.
- Create a concise summary: Summarize the priority issues in a clear format that is easy to share with stakeholders.

Outcome: A clear, consolidated understanding of the community's most pressing needs and overarching goals.

---

2. Prioritize Issues

- Use objective criteria: Determine the priority of each identified need based on severity, scope, feasibility, and potential impact.
- Evaluate Actor Influence: Consider which issues are within the control or influence of the Community Quarterback, Partnership Collaborative, policymakers, residents, etc.
- Engage stakeholders: Involve community members, local leaders, and partner organizations in the prioritization process to ensure consensus and buy-in.
- Rank or group needs: For example, place issues in categories such as "critical," "moderate," and "low-priority," or use a matrix that measures impact versus effort.

Outcome: A ranked or grouped list of priority needs that will guide your action plan.

---

3. Establish Clear Goals and Outcome Indicators

- Translate needs into goals: For each prioritized need, define a broad goal (e.g., "Reduce youth unemployment").
- Select Outcome Indicators: Determine how you will measure success (e.g., job placement rates, graduation rates, reduced wait times for health services). GOC has provided all Track 2 grantees with an Outcome Indicators bank to help guide collaborative identification of priority indicators.
- **Results Based Accountability:** Use principles of **Results-Based Accountability (RBA)** to design your goals and objectives, including criteria for evaluating the power of selected outcome indicators. Training and support on RBA will be provided by GOC.

Outcome: A set of clear, focused objectives that are directly tied to prioritized community needs.

---

4. Identify Resources and Constraints

- Map available resources: Consider financial, human, and material resources. This could include local government grants, volunteers, or partnerships with existing agencies.
- Note constraints: Be realistic about budgetary limitations, logistical challenges, and policy restrictions that might affect execution.
- Explore partnerships: Look for collaborative opportunities with local businesses, non-profits, educational institutions, and community groups.

*Outcome: A precursor to your **fiscal map** (resource inventory) and an understanding of limitations that inform the feasibility of your proposed actions.*

---

5. Develop Strategies and Action Steps

- Brainstorm possible strategies: Involve diverse stakeholders (community leaders, experts, and residents) to ensure multiple perspectives and innovative ideas.
- Match strategies to objectives: For each objective, decide on specific activities or interventions. For example, if an objective is to improve nutrition for families, strategies might include establishing a food pantry or launching community garden initiatives.
- Ensure alignment: Make sure the proposed strategies directly address the prioritized needs and have community support.

Outcome: A list of concrete, actionable steps that outline how each priority will be addressed.

---

6. Assign Roles and Responsibilities

- Identify leadership: Determine who will oversee the action plan (e.g., a steering committee or project manager).
- Delegate tasks: Assign specific tasks to individuals or teams, ensuring that responsibilities are clearly understood and aligned with each person's expertise.
- Create accountability: Establish reporting structures and expectations for progress updates.

Outcome: A clear structure of who does what, minimizing confusion and ensuring accountability.

---

7. Set a Timeline and Milestones

- Create a schedule: Map out start dates, deadlines, and sequence of events or tasks.
- Set milestones: Define measurable checkpoints (e.g., launching a pilot program, holding community outreach events).
- Plan for overlap: Some actions may need to happen simultaneously or depend on the completion of other tasks; keep track of dependencies in your schedule.

Outcome: A structured timeline that guides implementation and helps monitor progress.

---

8. Outline Progress Measures and Evaluation Methods

- Determine Progress Measures: These track the performance and effectiveness of a strategy, program, or activity. They help you understand: (1) How much you're doing, (2) How well it's being done, and (3) Whether anyone is better off.
- Note: When designing progress measures, consider:
    - Communication Power – Will this data be easily understood by the public and decision-makers?
    - Proxy Power – Does this measure reflect broader changes you care about?
    - Data Power – Is the data available, reliable, and actionable?

- Determine data collection methods: Will you use surveys, observation, public records, or participant logs?
- Set regular check-ins: Schedule times to assess progress against milestones and adapt the plan if needed.

Outcome: A clear monitoring and evaluation framework that captures the impact of each action and overall progress toward objectives.

---

9. Develop a Communication Plan

- Identify audiences: Consider local government, residents, partner organizations, funders, and media outlets.
- Choose communication methods: Emails, newsletters, social media, public forums, or local press releases.
- Emphasize transparency: Regularly report progress, successes, and challenges to maintain trust and gather ongoing support.

Outcome: A communication strategy that fosters community involvement, keeps stakeholders informed, and encourages feedback.

---

10. Implement and Monitor the Plan

- Start with pilot or high-priority activities: Launch the initiatives that are feasible and have high potential impact.
- Maintain momentum: Keep the community engaged and ensure team members have the resources they need.
- Document progress: Record successes, challenges, and lessons learned for future reference.

Outcome: Tangible community projects and programs underway, demonstrating action and commitment.

---

11. Evaluate, Adjust, and Sustain

- Periodic reviews: Hold regular meetings or evaluations based on the pre-determined schedule and indicators.
- Analyze impact: Compare collected data against your baseline and objectives; identify what worked and what didn't.
- Adjust strategies: Modify actions or reallocate resources as necessary to improve effectiveness.
- Plan for sustainability: Work with community partners and potential funders to maintain or scale successful initiatives long-term.

Outcome: An evolving action plan that continuously improves and adapts to meet the community's changing needs.

IV. Expectations for *ONGOING* Assessing Structures, Processes, and Norms

1. **Continuity & Iteration**: Make **needs assessment** and **asset mapping** a **regular, repeated** process—rather than a one-time event.
2. **Inclusive Structures**: Formalize **governance** roles and promote **open communication** to build long-term trust.
3. **Built-In Feedback Loops**: Consistently engage **community voices** to validate findings and guide future actions and **report back** how their input was used to guide action.
4. **Data- and Asset-Informed Prioritization**: Use **transparent criteria** and **local input**—including updated asset maps—to decide where to invest resources for the greatest impact.
5. **Sustainability**: Secure diverse funding, maintain funder relationships, and align funder impact indicators and stakeholder communications around a single "fundable plan" with braided and blending sources of investment and demonstrated community support.

By embedding these ongoing processes, structures, and practices, grantees can remain responsive to changing conditions, leverage existing and new assets, foster shared ownership of ENOUGH activities, and ensure that investments reflect and address community priorities over time.

1. Establish Processes for Continuous Assessment

- **Iterative Assessment Cycle**
    - **Plan → Collect & Analyze Data → Share Findings → Act → Evaluate → Refine**
    - Schedule regular check-ins (e.g., quarterly or annual) to review/update data and reassess community priorities.
- **Inclusive Data Collection Methods**
    - Use **mixed methods** (surveys, focus groups, interviews) to capture diverse voices, especially from underrepresented groups.
    - *Asset Mapping:* **Maintain and regularly update** an inventory of local organizations, services, facilities, and resources. Keep track of changes that might create new opportunities or reduce existing supports.
- **Shared Decision-Making**
    - Involve **residents**, community-based organizations, and relevant public agencies in setting priorities and reviewing findings.
    - Co-create the assessment scope and goals with community members to ensure alignment with real needs.

---

2. Operationalize Structures for Governance and Accountability

- **Leadership & Coordination**
    - Designate a **steering committee** or staff team within the "community quarterback" to oversee the continuous assessment process, coordinate partners, and ensure follow-through.
    - Define **roles and responsibilities** (e.g., data collection, outreach, asset mapping, reporting) to prevent duplication of efforts.
- **Transparent Communication Channels**
    - Maintain **public dashboards** or easily accessible summaries of assessment findings and updated asset maps.
    - Provide **regular updates** at community meetings or via digital platforms to build trust, keep everyone informed, and hold partners accountable to community.
- **Formal Agreements and Protocols**
    - Develop **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** or similar documents clarifying how partners collaborate and share data.
    - Set guidelines for **confidentiality**, **ethical data use**, and **community feedback** to protect and respect participants.

---

3. Embed Practices for Ongoing Feedback, Data Analysis, and Prioritization

- **Feedback Loops with Community Members**
  - After collecting and analyzing data, **report back** to residents and stakeholders through forums, listening sessions, or easy-to-read summaries.
  - Encourage **two-way communication** so community members can validate findings, provide asset updates, and suggest refinements.
- **Priority-Setting Mechanisms**
  - Use **criteria-based selection** (e.g., impact, feasibility, equity considerations) to decide which needs or opportunities to address first.
  - Involve the community in **participatory budgeting** or **advisory committees** to align funding with the most urgent and important goals.
- **Regular Monitoring and Adjustments**
  - Track progress on **key indicators** (e.g., improved school attendance, reduced eviction rates) to see what's working.
  - Update **asset maps** and adjust investment decisions if data show a shift in needs or if certain interventions underperform.

Appendix A: Sample Data Rights Language for Contracts and Agreements

Individual and Community Data Rights:

1.1 Each Party agrees to respect and protect the rights, privacy, and confidentiality of individuals and any community-based organizations ("CBOs") whose data may be collected, used, or shared in connection with this Agreement.

1.2 All data originating from or owned by individuals or CBOs shall remain under the control of the originating individual or CBO, as applicable, unless otherwise explicitly agreed upon in writing. Each Party shall comply with all applicable privacy and data protection laws, regulations, and standards when handling such data.

1.3 Where data from individuals or CBOs is used in the creation of intellectual property (whether solely or jointly developed), the Parties shall ensure the data is handled, processed, and incorporated in accordance with all relevant privacy and data protection requirements and in a manner consistent with any express data-sharing agreements with those individuals or CBOs.

1.4 Unless otherwise agreed in writing, no intellectual property developed under this Agreement shall confer ownership or control over the original data of any individual or CBO. Any use or disclosure of such data within the context of the developed intellectual property shall be strictly limited to the purposes authorized by the relevant individual or CBO.

Additional Resources:

- Why Am I Always Being Researched? A Guidebook for Community Organizations, Researchers, and Funders to Help Us Get from Insufficient Understanding to More Authentic Truth
- Understanding Research Fatigue in the Context of Community-University Relations

Appendix B: Additional Resources and Tools

Partnering Agreement Examples and Templates

The Governor's Office for Children held a webinar with StriveTogether on "Partnership Norms and Agreements for Successful Cross-Sector Collaboration" that may be helpful in refining your partnership agreements. You can find the recording here and slides here. StriveTogether also offered sample partnership agreements and MOUs which you can find at the links below:

- Partnership agreement_Example 1
- Partnership agreement_Example 2_Leadership Council
- Partnership Agreement_Template
- Partnership MOU_Example 1

Needs Assessment and Asset Mapping Resources

1. Pre-Application Webinar Slide Deck from the William Julius Wilson Institute (WJWI) session focused on Needs Assessment
2. Community Needs Toolkit (in ENOUGH **Resource Library**) recommended by WJWI
3. Purpose Built Communities Narrative Framing Resource categorized under Community Needs (also in ENOUGH **Resource Library**)
4. Asset Mapping Toolkit (in ENOUGH **Resource Library**) recommended by WJWI

Neighborhood Action Plan Exemplars

Please see also similar Neighborhood Action Plan publications and media for reference:

1. Rise East (Oakland, CA)
2. Fresno Drive (Fresno, CA)
3. Northwest Dayton Partnership (Dayton, OH)
4. More for Memphis (Memphis, TN)