JFF

WHAT IT TAKES TO INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH SYSTEMS CHANGE

Lessons from the Linked Learning
Regional Hubs of Excellence

AT A GLANCE

Despite good intentions, multiple regional efforts to increase student success can get in each other's way. Read how cross-sector leaders in California transformed competing programs into collaborative systems that help more low-income young people graduate high school and earn valuable postsecondary credentials.

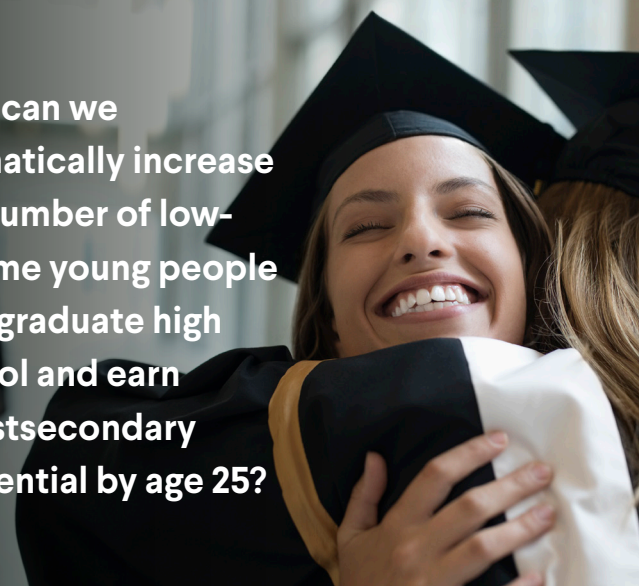AUTHORS

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FEBRUARY 2019

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How can we dramatically increase the number of low-income young people who graduate high school and earn a postsecondary credential by age 25?

INTRODUCTION

It's an urgent question across the United States, as more and more employers demand postsecondary education to fill good jobs. No one has cornered the market on solutions. But one strategy that reaches beyond traditional education boundaries is gaining traction: broad regional partnerships that bring together K-12 school districts and higher education with workforce development, business, and community-based organizations.

In California, regional cross-sector partnerships have grown particularly popular in recent years as education and industry seek to improve student success—and scale and sustain progress. Yet despite the nobility of collaborative efforts for change, the pervasiveness of these partnerships can actually impede progress as they compete for limited resources and sometimes work at cross purposes.

JFF and the James Irvine Foundation were among those investing in cross-sector partnerships through creation of the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of

Excellence in 2015. The goal, over three years, was to significantly increase the number of California graduates from innovative Linked Learning pathways that blend high school, college, and career (see box, "About" on page 4).[1] Scaling Linked Learning and figuring out how to sustain it after Irvine's funding ended would be key.

During the first year of the initiative, the team recognized that they would not be able to achieve their goal as long as multiple overlapping programs served to distract regional leaders as discrete, not complementary, efforts. So the Hubs sought to harmonize the discord. They started building the capacity of regional leaders to transform the disparate programs, including Linked Learning, into collaborative systems working toward a common mission of improving student outcomes.

With coaching and other assistance from JFF, each Hub led efforts to find synergies across all of the work in its region.[2] Hub leaders also aimed to build appreciation for how collaboration can yield greater results than isolated entities or efforts. This required fundamental changes from stakeholders, in habits, values, beliefs, and the way each leveraged power and funding.

And the results of this major mid-course correction? They are substantial. In just over three years, stakeholders

overwhelmingly agreed, the regional efforts had:[3]

- **Strengthened existing K-12 district** Linked Learning pathways;
- **Expanded the number of students** participating in quality Linked Learning pathways;
- **Smoothed transitions** for Linked Learning students between high school, postsecondary education or training, and careers; and
- **Helped higher education and employers** change practices to better support Linked Learning.

However, equally important was the significant progress made toward creating effective cross-sector regional systems focused on increasing student success. Across all partners there was a strong sense of commitment to working together. Highlights include:[4]

81% were open to learning what works and to adopting strategies accordingly;

79% now know how to solve problems together; and

55% developed new policies or practices that directly supported regional goals.

This brief describes the evolution of the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence and the points of momentum they achieved in transforming an array of individual programs into productive

regional systems. It is a summary of multiple years of learning and culminating reflections from the JFF team that supported the Hubs.[5]

As multiple partnerships across California continue seeking to improve student success, it is worth considering the lessons the Hubs learned and how they and others might leverage this momentum in the future.[6]

JFF on Educational Systems Change in California

This is one of two briefs summarizing lessons learned in the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence about improving student success in high school, college, and careers through systems change in California.

This brief, *What It Takes to Increase Student Success through Systems Change: Lessons from the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence*, describes how the Hubs strengthened regional cross-sector partnerships and implemented key elements of systems change.

The other brief, *How to Lead Systems Change for Student Success: Developing 6 Qualities of Effective Cross-Sector Leadership*, examines how to cultivate the leadership qualities that are key to creating high-performing regional systems.[7]

About Linked Learning

Linked Learning is a proven approach that creates high-quality career pathways to make high school relevant for students and prepare them for college. It integrates four key components: rigorous academics, career and technical education, work-based learning, and comprehensive support services to address the unique needs of individual students and ensure equity.

About the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence

The goal of the three-year California initiative was to increase at a substantial and sustainable scale the number of graduates from pathways that blend high school, college, and career. The James Irvine Foundation funded the effort and engaged JFF to design and manage the initiative, serving as the foundation's intermediary and leading technical assistance with grantees.

Four sites were selected as Regional Hubs of Excellence, each led by one or more anchor organizations and the regions were selected based on their commitment to Linked Learning, existing relationships among cross-sector partners, and strength of anchor organizations and leadership.
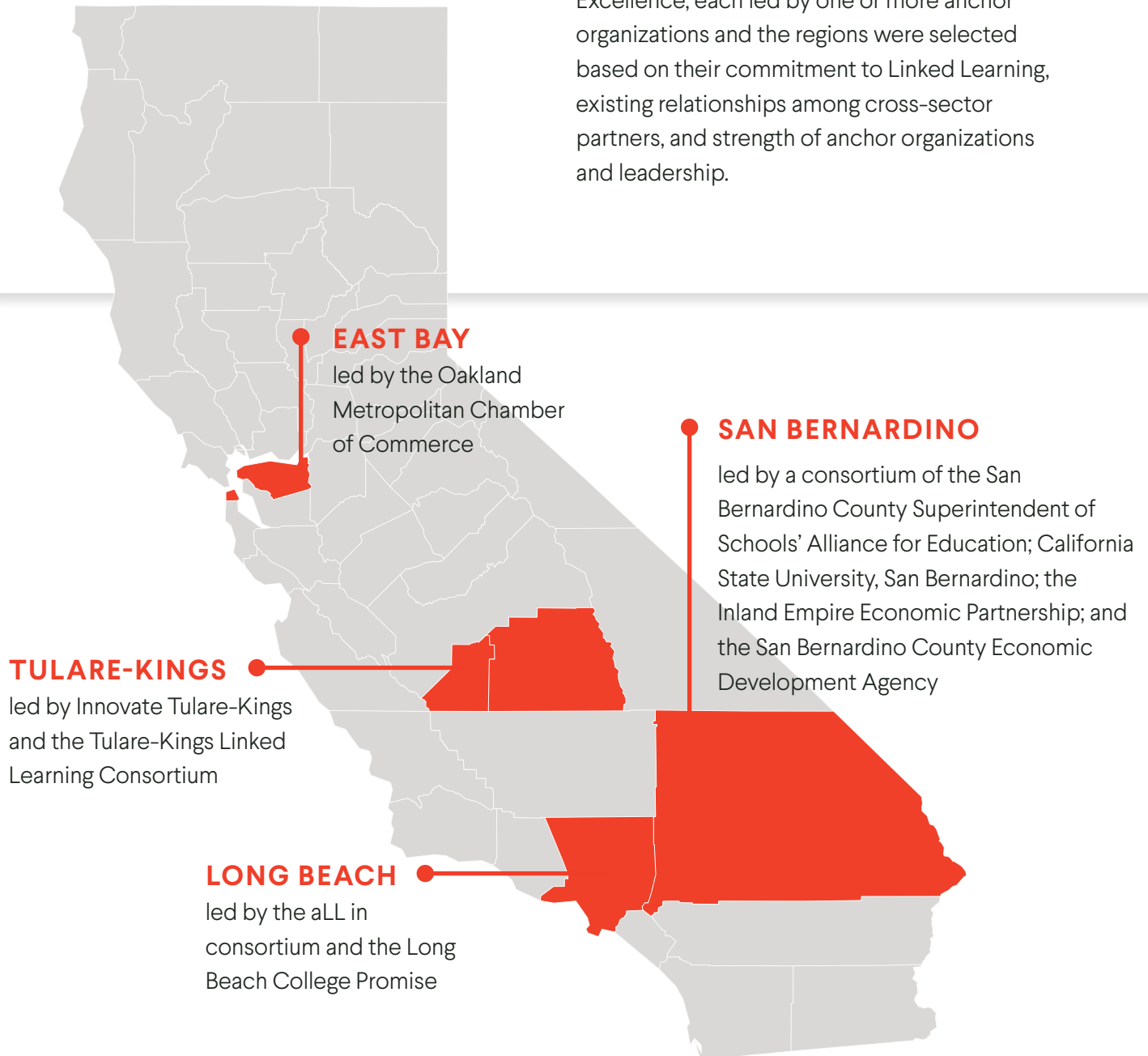
EAST BAY
led by the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

SAN BERNARDINO
led by a consortium of the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools' Alliance for Education; California State University, San Bernardino; the Inland Empire Economic Partnership; and the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency

TULARE-KINGS
led by Innovate Tulare-Kings and the Tulare-Kings Linked Learning Consortium

LONG BEACH
led by the aLL in consortium and the Long Beach College Promise

MEASURING PROGRESS

Increasing collaboration between systems is difficult under any circumstances. It is especially challenging in California education, where K-12 school districts and postsecondary education are governed and funded wholly independently. The segments are not set up to work together—or with outside entities, such as employers.

Without a central governing body to set goals, foster joint action, or ensure that students move smoothly and efficiently from one level to the next, this work falls to passionate individuals and their respective organizations. Collaboration between education and business is similarly challenging. Education must create mechanisms to align the skills and knowledge students attain with the needs of local industry, yet some would say educators and employers don't even speak the same language.

State policymakers have used funding to incentivize collaboration between education and business in time- and place-bound initiatives. While this has stimulated cross-sector efforts, research indicates the work is difficult to sustain. When grant funding wanes, regions lack the infrastructure, the will, and the power to continue the activity.[8]

But systems change has the potential to effectively channel regional resources to increase student success, by coordinating the efforts of organizational leaders who are tapped to participate in multiple, independent reform initiatives. When unified around a common goal, once-isolated initiatives become collaborative epicenters, or nodes, of activity in a broader, regional system.

However, it is difficult to identify when programs start evolving into systems—that is, when the collaboration can outlast the funding. One sign is that the network of stakeholders are owning and coordinating their collaboration collectively, with full support from their host organizations and with credibility beyond their respective sectors. To this end, Hub coaches worked tirelessly to expand the roles of system leaders and increase their influence.

To help participants focus on the big picture, JFF relied on a research framework that promoted five indicators of systems change: ideas or values, power, habits, skills or technology, and money (*see next page*).[9]

Systems Change Indicators & Lessons Learned

This chart shows five indicators of systems change, based on a research framework JFF used to help Hub leaders focus on the big picture. The right-hand column lists key lessons Hub leaders learned about each area during their work. The rest of the brief explores these lessons.

	FRAMEWORK	LESSONS
Ideas or values	There is a new definition of the problem and a new understanding of the activity needed to address the problem. This understanding is held by all participants.	Engage productively across epicenters, or nodes, of activity.
Power	Authority goes beyond individuals who are passionate about the activity. Rather, they are designated and have formal authority to lead the activity.	Value cross-sector perspectives and distributive leadership.
Habits	The interaction of participants becomes routine and not in response to a special program, initiative, mandate, or project.	Communicate principles, value propositions, and progress.
Skills or Technology	Participants have new skills that the activity demands and have a way to track progress.	Think and act beyond the initiative and the brand.
Money	Funding becomes routine and recurring, and can be relied upon for sustained activity.	*Hub leaders deemphasized funding issues so they could focus on elements that usually get less attention.*

LESSONS LEARNED

This section explores how the Hubs progressed in changing the elements described above and the lessons learned along the way. One element—money—is not discussed. While funding or sustainability is always an important focus, leaders tried to keep funding issues in the background, so they could focus on the other elements that rarely receive as much attention.

Engaging productively across nodes of activity

Ideas or values

Each region was already host to multiple initiatives when the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence launched, and Hub leaders felt pressure to compete with those initiatives, to merge, or to consolidate them into a clear structure.

At first, the JFF team used the image of a hub and spokes to depict this type of coordination in a network. However, the idea of one entity at the center of all the activity seemed too hierarchical. Instead, they moved toward the model of a constellation, where there is no center but rather a coordinated system of stars that create an image. This represented a significant shift in beliefs, values, and ideals to a mindset of appreciating each node of activity as a valuable contributor. Mapping the system of each stakeholder's unique contributions toward their shared goal was difficult, but each Hub made progress in moving beyond program-oriented activities and toward network development.

For example, in the East Bay Hub, leaders at the Oakland Chamber of Commerce acted on the philosophy that systems are built when individuals are able to engage in new, more productive ways with one another. The chamber was able to revive dormant relationships between key education and industry partners by helping them to see a new opportunity via the work—to create internships in a cybersecurity program. This project became a stepping stone for increased engagement between these partners. It also laid the groundwork for a successful grant proposal and participation in a larger statewide network, which led to increasing opportunities for students.

The Long Beach Hub also leveraged multiple nodes of activity in the region. At first, the Hub leaders were frustrated with the perceived duplication of efforts— that the same executives were sitting on each other's boards, going to each other's meetings, and joining multiple workgroups. They even joked about

needing to wear certain colored t-shirts to certain meetings to keep them all straight.

But then the leaders started to see signs of systems change in the region. For example, they noted when people established different collaborative work habits, used data differently, or defined a problem differently. They also realized that the overlapping group membership provided opportunities that could be leveraged to scale and sustain progress, especially through the involvement of partners outside of Long Beach.

Similarly, in San Bernardino, the Hub catalyzed better secondary and postsecondary connections when one anchor, Cal State San Bernardino, started teaching about Linked Learning principles in their education program. "They were really thinking more systematically," the Hub coach said.

The San Bernardino Hub leaders are also working to establish memoranda of understanding between regional partners. This represents significant growth in the Hub leaders' ideas and values. In the beginning of the Hub work, they were more inwardly focused on their internal coordination and turnover in significant roles. Now, they are acknowledging and connecting with others' activity and thinking about how to leverage funds more strategically from a regional perspective.

"I'm walking away with solutions that I would never have seen... I finally get the power of... working across sectors."

Valuing cross-sector perspectives and distributive leadership[10]

Hub participants highlighted the importance of bringing new partners with diverse perspectives to their work. This was essential to help them expand opportunities and address barriers to success for students of all backgrounds. For example, three of the four sites evolved their co-anchor models of shared leadership.

In San Bernardino, a team of anchor organizations initially represented high school education, postsecondary education,

and economic development. But the team eventually added a fourth co-anchor, the county workforce board, to invigorate the employer engagement strategy to expand work-based learning.

The new perspectives enabled the high school partners to step out of the lead design role and leverage the expertise of the economic development and workforce agencies. The arrangement led to the emergence of a regional network of organizations providing structures, processes, and partnerships promoting work-based learning. The network has expanded work-based learning opportunities for the region's students and built an infrastructure for ongoing support of regional work-based learning activities.

Similarly, the Tulare-Kings Hub brought in another anchor organization to diversify the perspectives of the original anchor, which was a work-based learning intermediary. Involving the Tulare County Office of Education helped to engage postsecondary partners and a broader range of school districts, including smaller districts in Kings County that had not previously participated in regional work. Education stakeholders said this was a critical pivot point because it enabled them to be collectively entrepreneurial—combining industry and education—to improve student outcomes. The inclusion of new partners also helped unify the

region. One principal noted appreciation that educators from small rural districts were being heard more than ever before.

Switching to a model that included the Tulare County Office of Education was also an important move for distributing leadership in that Hub. A cross-sector steering committee was established to guide the new "Tulare Kings Collaborative," comprising diverse and powerful decisionmakers in the region. The committee, co-chaired by a community college president and a K-12 district superintendent, included other K-12 and postsecondary leaders, workforce investment board stakeholders, and county education leaders, among others. Their involvement reflects a deeper understanding, especially among postsecondary partners, about the value of the work.

Long Beach also was intentional about distributing leadership and incorporating new resources and voices in the region's work. The Hub named its collective "aLL in" to honor its origin as the Long Beach College Promise but signal its expansion to a more regional—and less Long Beach-centric—approach. As one Hub leader said, in order to change the system, they needed to bring in "divergent thinkers and new voices," and to leverage partner strengths in new ways.

At first, Hub leaders were frustrated. Then they started to see signs of systems change in their regions.

Long Beach also made structural changes to its operational teams that resulted in more consistent cross-sector attendance. The Hub replaced static workgroups organized around broad topics with action-oriented teams focused on solving specific problems. According to the Hub coach, one workforce partner said, "I'm walking away with solutions that I would never have seen. They solved my problem, and I finally get the power of this work, of working across sectors."

In addition, Long Beach Hub leaders prioritized distributive leadership by building participants' capacity to develop and maintain their cross-sector network. They collectively funded a new position—an executive director—to help Hub participants navigate shared terrain in new ways. These included understanding the concepts of systems change, working through the politics, identifying the value of each regional stakeholder, and helping them communicate the value in their collective work. The executive director's efforts focused on changing habits so that the Hub was a shared space to address multiple needs in service of a common goal.

Habits

Communicating principles, value propositions, and progress

Connecting across nodes of activity, and being more inclusive of cross-sector partners, required Hub leaders to shift how they communicated their principles, value propositions, and progress to regional stakeholders. It was difficult work because existing partnerships in each Hub region varied significantly in their origins.

For example, in regions where partners convened around Linked Learning (a K-12 program), postsecondary stakeholders were largely not involved. In some regions, industry did not communicate well with education or vice versa. Some networks

were built on foundations of grant-funded initiatives, where there was little shared identity among stakeholders.

In order to make their networks more diverse and inclusive, Hub leaders built their capacity to understand the needs of different stakeholders and help them understand the value of systems work. This involved reaching out to a broader range of regional stakeholders, including partners to envision a goal for the greater regional community, and ensuring that all stakeholders could see themselves in the work.

For example, the Long Beach Hub coordinator spun a narrative about the region as a whole—not just Long Beach—that enabled more stakeholders to see how they might benefit and contribute. She shared data about the students, families, and workforce needs, and reminded them about the regional mission of aLL in.

The Tulare-Kings Hub leaders also significantly enhanced their communication skills, particularly with respect to problem definition. They were able to articulate the problem in their region more clearly than ever with the strategic use of data. This resulted in more postsecondary involvement because these partners could see how the regional work was valuable in producing students who

are well prepared to succeed in college and career.

The value proposition of the work has also become more compelling for the smaller districts in Kings County, and for the regional workforce investment board. Communicating the value proposition in Tulare-Kings has been valuable in helping them use funding more strategically. The Tulare-Kings Collaborative is the only Hub that shifted to a sustainable funding model through contributions of participating districts. Because the leadership team brought the right people in to observe their efforts, implemented quality activities, and made it a compelling value proposition, districts signed up to contribute to keep it going.

In the San Bernardino Hub, communication improved between the operational leads and partner organization executives such as school district superintendents, college presidents, and elected officials. Working more collectively, they helped each other see value in the work and found a way to systematize the habits, skills, and ideas of a systems-level perspective. The San Bernardino Hubs coach said: "They're able to tell the story much better now in terms of how these groups work together—versus how these groups are barriers to the progress—and what needs to happen and how the system should be set up."

Thinking and acting beyond the initiative and the brand

A key component to systems change is ensuring that the shifts in power, habits, skills, values, and money outlast the current initiative and the associated brands. JFF's theory of change with the Hubs was to create an environment infused with reflection and learning—a peer-to-peer network in which leaders enhanced their capacities to navigate politics, to build diversity and distributed leadership in their regions, to connect nodes of activity, to communicate value propositions of collaboration and shared goals, and to build trust among

stakeholders. Hub leaders, personally transformed, can go on to pollinate other activities with the values and ideas of this network development initiative.

A panel of three leaders who no longer work with the Hubs presented about this at the initiative's final conference—how they continue to build their network, to connect with other stakeholders to advance regional work, and to help new partners see the value proposition in collaboration. They continue to refine the skills and values they built as Hub leaders and impact their regions in new ways. There is much to do still to build a culture of continuous improvement in the regions, but each Hub has made progress in setting the regional networks up for success beyond the initiative.

For example, in the Tulare-Kings Hub, a college president who sat on the regional steering committee highlighted the need to rewrite community college charters so that the type of collaboration they took on would not be optional in the future. He suggested amending his job description so that when he retired, the priorities of regional collaboration would be institutionalized and non-negotiable.

In another example, the Long Beach Hub made it one of aLL in's goals to, in 18 months, "be a body that functions

together to address the problems within their community, not the funded initiative at hand," the coach said. Their goal is a deeper shift in the way that stakeholders work together.

The Long Beach Hub coach also described how the one stakeholder started her work with Long Beach City College, where she saw the work of the Hub as another commitment. Slowly, she began to understand how it was helping her efforts and those of others in the region. Her goal now, as the executive director, the coach said, is to get stakeholders deeply engaged not because they have to, but because they see the value. The coach said that this is about "ensuring that the Hub is proving its value not just as an idea, but really wanting each partner to feel as if their work in the Hub is helping to solve their problems."

In San Bernardino, they are formalizing the way they work, rather than formalizing new positions. As newcomers stepped in to fill vacancies, they found existing relationships that they could nurture. The Hub coach

said, "they are formalizing the way they work together, so that as they shape and shift, they don't lose momentum."

Similarly, in East Bay, Hub leaders highlight what they are learning along with what they are creating. The lessons they learn are permanent and helpful in network development beyond the Hubs initiative.

In the many ways that Hub leaders built their capacity together—in honest and sometimes tough reflection sessions; in sharing positions, personnel and funding; in experiencing failure—trust was identified as a critical component.

Every Hub coach underscored that systems change is people change, and it cannot begin without trust—a concept that transcends industry and sector. It is built through consistency, such as showing up to meetings and following through on action items, through developing relationships, and through working together productively.

LEVERAGING MOMENTUM

Going forward, there is much that can be done to use lessons learned in the Hubs initiative to build on these successes and to ensure that collaboration transcends the initiative. For example, Hubs learned to diversify perspectives and distribute leadership in their regions. They identified the importance of having both executive decisionmakers and operational leaders involved at every level, with shared goals toward systems change. Stakeholders have opportunities to continue to engage diverse voices, using lessons learned from this project, and to foster learning environments to build the capacity of leaders to enact systems change.

They also realized the value in identifying and communicating value propositions to regional stakeholders. They might continue to refine this skill, finding new ways to identify progress, balance quick wins with long-term goals, establish feedback channels, and create shared identities. This might include defining

success in ways that appeal to various partners, and crafting narratives that help new stakeholders see themselves in the work. By continuing to include diverse voices, define value propositions, and help stakeholders identify their roles in regional work, regional leaders can help connect nodes of activity in each region. Ideally, each node would understand their important role in the constellation.

An important goal will also be to transcend the state's independent governance and finance structures to incentivize deep, lasting, cross-segment, and cross-sector collaboration. Lessons from this and other systems-change initiatives need to be elevated in research, practice, and state policy circles.

Perhaps most important, regional stakeholders will need to create space, similar to what the Hubs provided, to share findings, resources, and ways to shift habits, values, and understanding toward network development. Stakeholders can take what they have learned, and refine the capacities they have built, to work toward the long-term goal of scaling quality Linked Learning pathways and the demand for graduates.

CONCLUSION

The Hubs were an experimental model in systems leadership, an important test of the role of intermediaries in creating learning environments, and an example of how funded initiatives need to remain flexible to meet current needs in the field. Hub participants learned that success in network development relies on "conspicuously reliable partners" who share commitment and respect.

Deep connections between these partners were evident at the final conference in Long Beach, where participants within and across regions recalled "storming and norming" at past meetings and the general challenges they faced together, as well as they success they achieved. The Hubs initiative was experimental, and four models emerged to influence the changes noted above. Their lessons are critical to leverage momentum for further network advancement.

APPENDIX A

Emphasis of the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence

- **Shift the paradigm**
  The intent of the initiative is to shift from thinking about individual programs to broadening understanding about how the systems involved interact and can work together more efficiently and effectively.

- **Adhere to network principles**
  Following network leadership principles is highly relevant to the success of the initiative in each region. JFF drew heavily from the scholarship of Jane Wei-Skillern and colleagues (*see Appendix B*).

- **Lead with power and agency**
  The Hubs initiative gives more power and agency to each grantee than might typically be experienced.

- **Experiment through prototypin***g*
  The initiative led with the hypothesis that systems change might result in better pathway experiences and outcomes for students.

- **Reflect**
  Reflection allows stakeholders to step back and see the bigger picture, ask important questions, exchange ideas, troubleshoot, draw connections, make meaning, make informed decisions, and plan for the future.

- **Exemplify incremental change**
  Systems change is incremental work. The Hubs initiative created examples of ways in which this develops.

APPENDIX B

Research Base for the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence

As the Hubs' designer and manager, JFF drew heavily on academic research regarding network development to make abstract concepts concrete and accessible for participants. In particular, JFF relied on the work of Jane Wei-Skillern and colleagues in "Four Network Principles for Collaboration Success."[11]

JFF coaches encouraged each Hub to embrace and apply the following principles, adapted slightly from their work:

1. **Put mission impact before organizational priorities**
   Leaders adopt strategies and tactics to achieve the mission, not necessarily to stimulate organizational growth.

2. **Build partnerships based on trust, not contro**l
   Trust and shared values are far more important than formal control mechanisms such as contracts or accountability systems.

3. **Promote others rather than yourself**
   Organizations work alongside their peers as equals and willingly take a backseat when their partners are in a better position to lead.

4. **Build constellations, not lone stars**
   The goal is to build the larger system that is necessary for delivering on the mission, not to become the leader.

The JFF team leveraged research and knowledge related to systems thinking, organizational change, collective impact, and network theory, among other frameworks. The common principle is focusing on activities that might yield greater returns than working in isolation, such as connecting, coordinating, and sharing resources and responsibilities. The team underscored the need for Hub leaders to understand the priorities of partners and support them in making progress toward their objectives.

ENDNOTES

1. Linked Learning is a proven approach to preparing students for college and career through integrated pathways-based curriculum, work-based learning, and comprehensive support services. An evaluation completed by SRI International can be found here: https://www.sri.com/work/projects/evaluation-california-linked-learning-district-initiative.

2. JFF provided coaching, introduced new models and theories of change, developed tools, distributed resources, and established a peer learning community.

3. *Linked Learning Regional Hubs Evaluation Survey: Overview of Key Takeaways* (Philadelphia: Equal Measure; San Francisco: Harder+Company; Pasadena: Engage R+D, 2018).

4. *Linked Learning Regional Hubs Evaluation Survey*.

5. Research methods for this brief included interviews, evaluation findings, and documentation of the sites and the initiative, including biannual JFF Hub team reflection sessions. JFF agreed not to attribute any comments from interviews to the individuals who made them.

6. This initiative was developmental in scope, and therefore the lessons they learned, featured in this brief, should be considered in that context. The Hubs were not evaluated on their achievement of end goals, and they each grew differently and achieved varying levels of impact on their regional systems. For more information and resources, see Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence on JFF's website: http://www.jff.org/initiatives/linked-learning-regional-hubs-excellence.

7. Marty Alvarado and Joel Vargas, *How to Lead Systems Change for Student Success: Developing 6 Qualities of Effective Cross-Sector Leadership* (Boston: JFF, 2019).

8. Colleen Moore, Andrea Venezia, Jodi Lewis, and Bina Lefkovitz, *Organizing for Success: California's Regional Education Partnerships* (Sacramento: Education Insights Center, 2015), http://edinsightscenter.org/Portals/0/ReportPDFs/organizing-for-success.pdf?ver=2016-01-15-161301-200.

9. Debbie Greiff, Tony Proscio, and Carol Wilkins, *Laying a New Foundation: Changing the Systems that Create and Sustain Supportive Housing* (New York: Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2003), http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Report_LayingANewFoundation.pdf.

10. Harder+Company and Equal Measure, *Cultivating Systems Leadership in Cross-Sector Partnerships: Lessons from the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellenc*e (San Francisco: Harder+Company; Philadelphia: Equal Measure, 2017). The initiative's evaluator, Equal Measure, wrote a brief about systems leadership, based on lessons learned in this initiative. It can be found here: http://www.equalmeasure.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Systems-Leadership-Issue-Brief-081017-FINAL.pdf.

11. Jane Wei-Skillern and Nora Silver, "Four Network Principles for Collaboration Success," *The Foundation Review* 5, no. 1 (2013): 121-129, https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/tfr/vol5/iss1/10.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Joel Vargas

Joel Vargas, EdD, leads the work of JFF's west coast office in Oakland, California, as well as the work of staff nationally focused on improving education and workforce outcomes for low-income youth. He has helped policymakers and intermediaries develop state and federal policies that integrate college and career experiences into high school, and developed strategies to support regional networks that promote conditions for improving economic advancement and learning. He has designed and implemented research and state policy agendas; created policy frameworks, tools, and model legislation; written and edited white papers, research, and national publications; provided technical assistance to state task forces and policy working groups; served national advisory groups; and organized and presented at national conferences. Joel received a bachelor's degree in journalism from Boston University, and a master's and doctoral degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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