

Funders' Playbook: Tools for Thinking About Family and Community Engagement

A Resource from the Parent and Community
Learning and Action Network

A REPORT FOR

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Written by
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Educational inequities are maintained and exacerbated when certain families have the resources and know-how to navigate, support, supplement, and shape their children's educational experiences while other families do not.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Students thrive when families are involved in their education, and schools are stronger when they have close ties to their communities. In recent years, foundations have made it a growing priority to foster those conditions through strategic investments in family and community engagement. This playbook provides two new tools to help foundations strengthen their grantmaking in these areas.

The first tool helps foundations to thoughtfully consider the mix of family and community engagement approaches that they support, whether they want to concentrate investments in certain areas or achieve a more balanced portfolio. The second tool allows grantmakers to consider how their investments fit into a local or regional ecosystem of family and community engagement activities, to better understand whether there are opportunities to bolster their investments in family engagement, and to consider whether they want

to strengthen existing programs or address gaps. These tools are not meant to be objective measures, nor were they created to advocate for a particular investment strategy. Rather, they are designed to help foundations think strategically about their goals and how they can best structure their family engagement investments to achieve them.

This resource was developed through the work of the Parent and Community Learning and Action Network, a partnership of five philanthropies spearheaded by Carnegie Corporation of New York and informed by extensive analyses of family engagement activities in urban communities in different regions of the country. Along with the Corporation, the other members of the Network are Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Heising-Simons Foundation, Overdeck Family Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation.

Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR NEW GUIDANCE ON GRANTMAKING

A large body of research points to the benefits of family and community engagement in education.¹ Student learning and other youth outcomes improve when families and local stakeholders are involved in schooling. This makes intuitive sense. Families have the highest stake in children’s learning, making them natural partners to support educators in advancing student success. Children also spend most of their waking hours outside of school, which ideally situates families to enhance their children’s education, so long as they are empowered to do so.

Families can play an equally critical role in spurring broader systemic change. The success of any education reform effort depends on buy-in from the entire school community, including families. It is therefore vital to ensure that families are engaged in those efforts.

Perhaps most importantly, there is widespread recognition that family and community engagement is an essential strategy for addressing long-standing inequities in opportunities and outcomes. Educational inequities are maintained and exacerbated when certain families have the resources and know-how to navigate, support, supplement, and shape their children’s educational experiences while other families do not.

Education grantmakers are increasingly looking to support family and community engagement — terms we use interchangeably in this paper — as a strategy to improve schools and ensure that all students graduate prepared for lifelong success. This trend can be seen in a 2016 survey commissioned by Carnegie Corporation of New York: Among the 74 foundations polled, 60 percent said they make grants in family and community engagement, with a combined total investment estimated at approximately \$230 million.² Of those that reported investing in this area, 45 percent said they had been doing so for less than five years.



This growing focus has created the need for more guidance to ensure that investments in family and community engagement truly benefit students. Many respondents in the Corporation-commissioned survey agreed that progress in the area of family engagement is hampered by a lack of clarity around what works, how to measure effectiveness, and how to deploy investments in family and community engagement to best support student success.

Another challenge cited by survey participants was a lack of a common language for grantmakers to discuss their investment strategies in this area and learn from one another. Different foundations define family and community engagement differently. Some define it primarily in terms of community organizing, while others are more focused on engaging families to support their children’s learning. Using the same terms to refer to such different activities can make it challenging for philanthropies to collaborate and communicate about their grantees’ work.

1 For an overview of this research base, and its implications for policy and practice, see Global Family Research Project, *Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next-Generation Family Engagement: Engaging Families to Transform Education* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2018).

2 For more findings from this survey, see *Family Engagement Landscape Analysis for Funders* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2017).

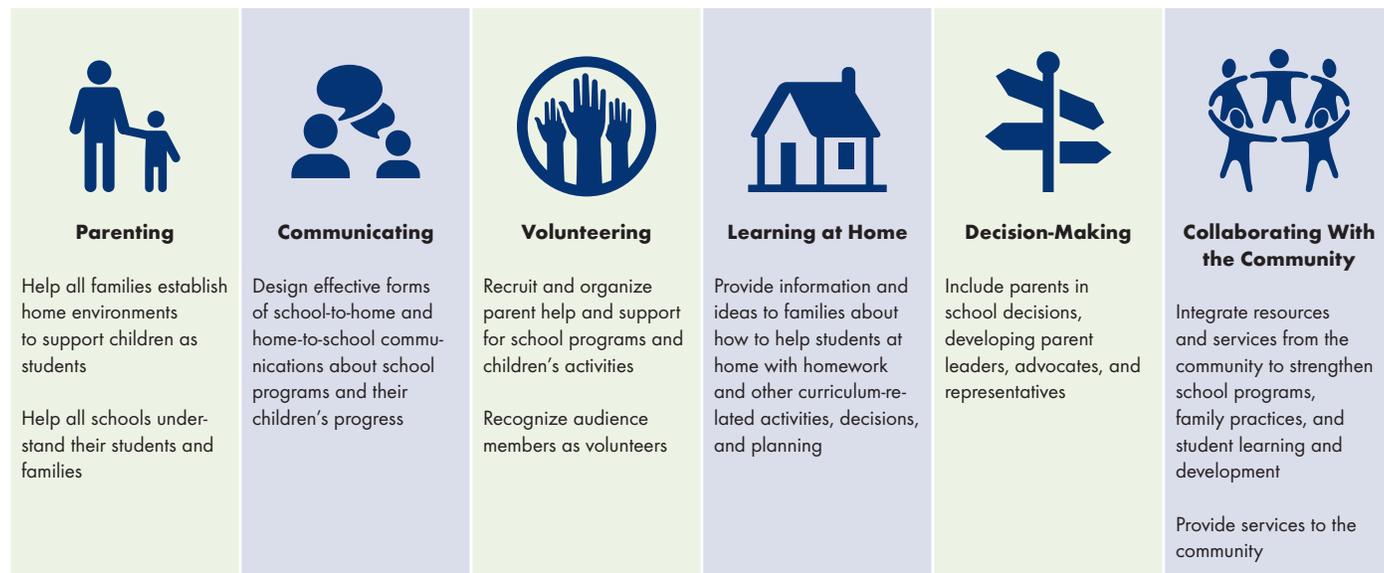
This diversity in approaches makes sense, given funders’ distinctive objectives and the variety of contexts in which they work. In practice, family and community engagement encompasses a wide range of initiatives (see Figure 1). Engagement initiatives reflect the unique needs and goals of a community, with strategies and activities aligned to those priorities. At the same time, many funders feel that they could be more effective in this area if they had more information, practical tools to guide their current and potential investments, and increased collaboration with other grantmakers.

Two years ago, this demand prompted the formation of the Parent and Community Learning and Action Network, a partnership of five philanthropies working together to enhance their understanding of effective family engagement investments — and to share lessons learned with the wider community of education grantmakers. A major goal of the Network has been to learn how to better identify gaps and opportunities in the family engagement funding landscape so grantmakers can continuously refine their investment strategy and advance their educational improvement goals.

FIGURE 1

Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs of Partnership

The breadth of important activities that fall under the umbrella of family engagement is reflected in Joyce L. Epstein’s framework of six types of parent involvement in school. The director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education developed the framework based on extensive research on successful engagement programs.



Source: “School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, 4th edition,” by Joyce L. Epstein, Mavis G. Sanders, Steven B. Sheldon, and Associates. Corwin Press. 2019. See www.partnershipschools.org for more information.

The tools in this playbook are a direct product of this collaboration, which included a deep dive into family engagement initiatives in five cities across the country. Drawing on findings from that study, along with a review of the research literature on family and community engagement, the Network developed a set of frameworks for describing and evaluating family engagement grants and activities. Network members then applied these frameworks to their own family engagement portfolios to think more strategically about their investments and the contexts in which they invest. Two tools resulted from this work:

- **Family and Community Engagement Investments Mapping Tool:** This tool can help a grantmaker assess the extent to which its family and community engagement investments align with its theory of action for how family engagement supports educational improvement. The tool categorizes each of a foundation's investments based on two important criteria: whether the activity is aimed at system-level change or student-level change, and whether the activity is meant to provide families with information and resources or designed to equip them to be effective advocates and changemakers in their communities.
- **Family and Community Engagement Ecosystem Assessment Tool:** This tool can support grantmakers in evaluating local conditions to assess whether investments in family engagement activities are poised to succeed and achieve sustainability. Foundations can also use this tool to evaluate the existing landscape to understand the range of activities taking place, the extent to which they are coordinated, the role of the local school district, and the degree of financial stability. That information can then be used to consider whether to invest and how to maximize impact in the local context, either by building on existing strategies or seeking to address gaps.

We must emphasize that these tools do not represent validated measures of effectiveness. We cannot say what the optimal mix of activities would look like when they are plotted using these tools. Rather, their utility is in providing a more detailed picture of the family and community engagement landscape, so funders can be more thoughtful and strategic in using investments to improve educational outcomes. With that picture in mind, funders can also consider the extent to which a particular approach is best aligned with their views on how investments in this area can improve student learning.

Some of these tools may be more or less relevant to a foundation based on its grantmaking approach. A key distinction between many foundations is whether they target their investments on a particular city, state, or region. Foundations also differ in the larger school-improvement strategies they emphasize. These differences will shape how a grantmaker uses these tools, and many grantmakers may find it makes sense to adapt them for their own circumstances. Nonetheless, we believe most funders that invest in family and community engagement will find these tools and the underlying frameworks helpful in thinking more deeply about their investments.

MAPPING INVESTMENTS BY THEIR APPROACHES

 One useful way to think about investments in family and community engagement is in terms of their approaches. Ultimately, most such investments are aimed at improving student and youth outcomes, but they seek to achieve those ends in different ways. One program might train parents to become effective advocates of policy change, and another might help families to better support their young children in learning to read. Both programs seek to bolster family engagement in order to improve student outcomes, but their methods differ significantly.

Given those conditions, grantmakers will find it helpful to consider the various ways in which a set of investments aims to advance their goals. A hallmark of strategic philanthropy is that grantmaking is guided by a theory of action to determine how support for a group of activities will lead to positive change. A grantmaker with such a theory of action has reason to believe that funding certain kinds of activities will produce changes that advance the philanthropy's overall objectives. This aids decisions about where to invest. Additionally, by monitoring the progress of its grantees, a grantmaker can assess and adjust its theory of action to continuously improve outcomes.

Categorizing a set of grants based on their purpose is one way to check for alignment between a grantmaker's investments and its thinking about how best to promote positive change. A foundation can then ask: To what extent do the kinds of activities we support match what we think is needed? Another way to pose this question would be: Does our grantmaking tend to focus on family engagement initiatives with a particular set of purposes — and, if so, to what degree do those purposes align with our theory of action?

Asking such questions may point to gaps in a foundation's family engagement portfolio or suggest different types of investments that might complement its existing efforts. A grantmaker might realize, for example, that strategies for achieving system-level change may benefit from some investments that also engage families in meeting the needs of their children.

Key Aspects of Investment Approaches

The five foundations in our Network set out to identify important ways in which family and community engagement activities differ in how they seek to promote change. Working together, we considered the research on the topic, as well as surveys and interviews with organizations and leaders involved in family and community engagement activities across the country. Based on this analysis, we saw that most such activities could be organized based on where they fall along two key axes:

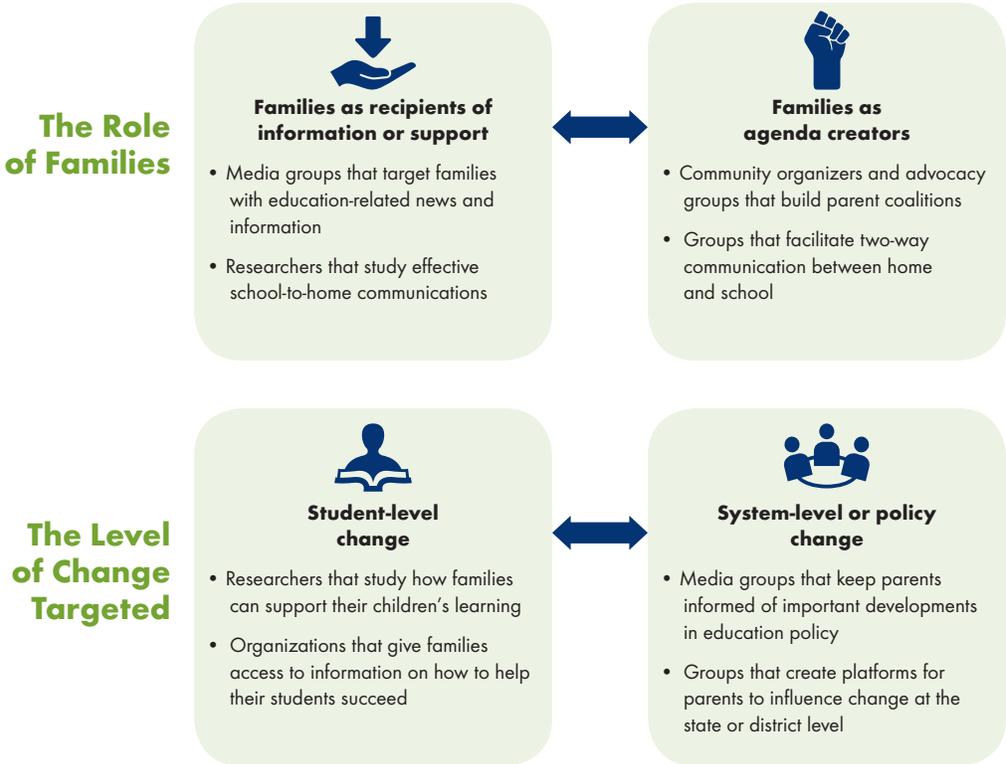
- **The parent or family role:** In particular, the extent to which an activity treats family members primarily as receivers of information and support, versus treating them as agenda-setters
- **The level of change sought:** Whether the activity is primarily aimed at helping family members to directly support their own children's learning, versus being geared toward helping families advocate for change at a more systemic level, such as through changes in district or state policy

These two dimensions suggest a way of describing a family or community engagement initiative in terms of its key characteristics. Most such initiatives will generally either seek to provide families with information or enable them to serve as agenda-setters, and they will engage those families either for the sake of supporting individual children’s education or for promoting change at the system level. To be sure, some family engagement programs may include activities that fall on both sides of these dimensions. But, typically, a program will put most of its emphasis on one side or the other.

We should stress that these are neutral descriptors. They are not meant to suggest that a family engagement initiative is more valuable if it falls on one side or the other, and there are good reasons a program might skew in either direction. There is a healthy body of research suggesting that children benefit when their families are given information on how to support their learning. But there is also a strong argument to be made that systemic reforms have a better chance of attaining long-term sustainability if families and other stakeholders are deeply engaged in the reform process.

FIGURE 2

**Key Differences in Approach
Among Family Engagement Activities**



Source: Parent and Community Learning Network

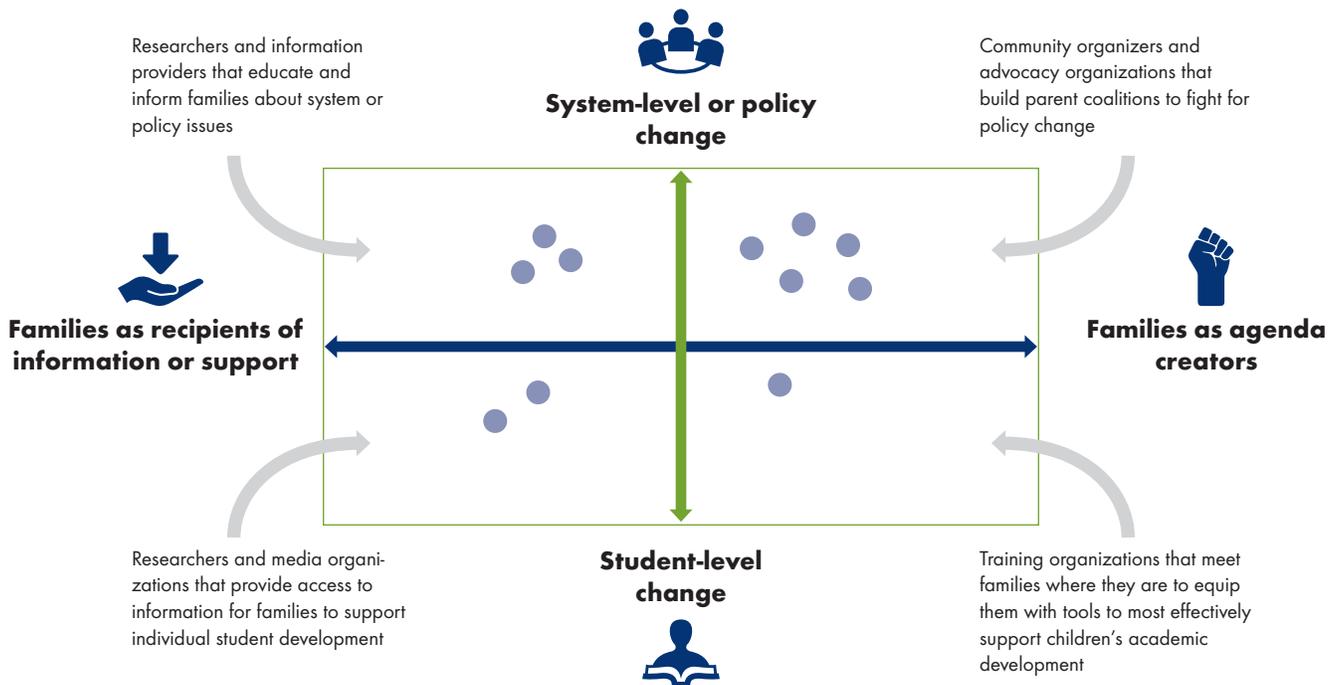
Mapping Investments to Different Approaches

Instead of a yardstick for judging individual programs, these dimensions provide a useful lens for considering a foundation’s full range of investments in family and community engagement. A grantmaker can see where all of its grants sit with respect to the role of families and community members and the level of change the foundation seeks to affect. This can be visualized by plotting each grant against two axes: one for the role of stakeholders in the program supported, and one for level of change. This would place each grant within one of four quadrants, as seen in Figure 3.

Mapping a set of grants in this way allows a funder to see where its investments tend to cluster with regard to these distinct approaches toward family and community engagement. In Figure 3, where each dot represents a single grant, more of the foundation’s grants are aimed at promoting system-level changes than at helping families support their children’s learning. This foundation’s grants also skew more toward empowering families as agenda-creators than providing them with information. Therefore, the map provides a visual representation of the types of activities that the foundation tends to support.

FIGURE 3

Mapping Grants Based on Key Aspects of Their Approach



See Appendix for a blank version of this map that grantmakers can use to plot their own investments.

Source: Parent and Community Learning Network

This is not to suggest that there is some ideal pattern of investing that most foundations should strive to achieve. We cannot say that a grantmaker would be more likely to meet its goals if its grants were clustered in one of the four quadrants or if they were instead more evenly distributed among them. Whether a particular clustering represents a good investment strategy for a foundation will depend on that foundation's particular objectives, beliefs, and areas of focus, as well as the contexts within which the foundation seeks to promote change.

Questions for Grantmaker Self-Reflection

The value of mapping a set of grants against these dimensions is that it supports self-reflection. A foundation can look at its pattern of investments and ask itself useful questions, such as:

- Is the resulting pattern what we expected to see? If not, does that suggest our investments might not fully match our foundation's goals and strategies?
- Should we look to coordinate our work with other foundations whose investments complement ours?
- Do we think our efforts might be more successful if we made more grants in areas where we currently have few investments?

These are productive questions for grantmakers to explore, as we found for our Network. After members plotted their grants along these two dimensions, they were able to see more clearly how their portfolios were oriented. For some members, this confirmed the focus of their grantmaking strategy. For others, the exercise prompted a discussion about whether additional types of investments might further advance the foundation's objectives. For example, a portfolio aimed largely at providing families with information might be strengthened by additional investments to elevate family and community voices in policy discussions.

The same framework may also be used to compare a foundation's investments with the full landscape of activity taking place in a particular area. In this way, a grantmaker may realize that most of its grants in a region are geared toward one set of approaches (e.g., informing families about system-level issues), while most family engagement organizations in that region support use a different strategy (e.g., supporting family involvement at the student level). Such a lack of overlap might make sense if the goal is to complement what is already happening in the area. Or, acknowledging this discrepancy may help grantmakers identify additional programs worth funding.

Grantmakers also may find it useful to compare their investment maps with those of other foundations. Most grantees receive support from multiple sources, and multiple foundations tend to make investments in the same region. As we discovered in our Network, even foundations with quite different orientations (e.g., national versus local) may overlap to a significant degree in where and in whom they invest. Such overlaps, when revealed by comparing investment maps, may suggest opportunities for coordination and for addressing any apparent gaps.

More specific uses aside, a framework of this kind serves a larger purpose by helping to organize our thinking as grantmakers. The issue of family and community engagement is complex and multifaceted, encompassing a wide array of approaches. Thinking about those approaches in a more coherent way allows us to better evaluate the alignment between what we hope to accomplish and how we're attempting to accomplish it. As helpful as that may be, this framework is just one useful lens through which to consider a set of investments. While we see value in the mapping tool we developed, we encourage grantmakers to consider other dimensions of engagement that may be important to their theories of action.

Are You Listening?

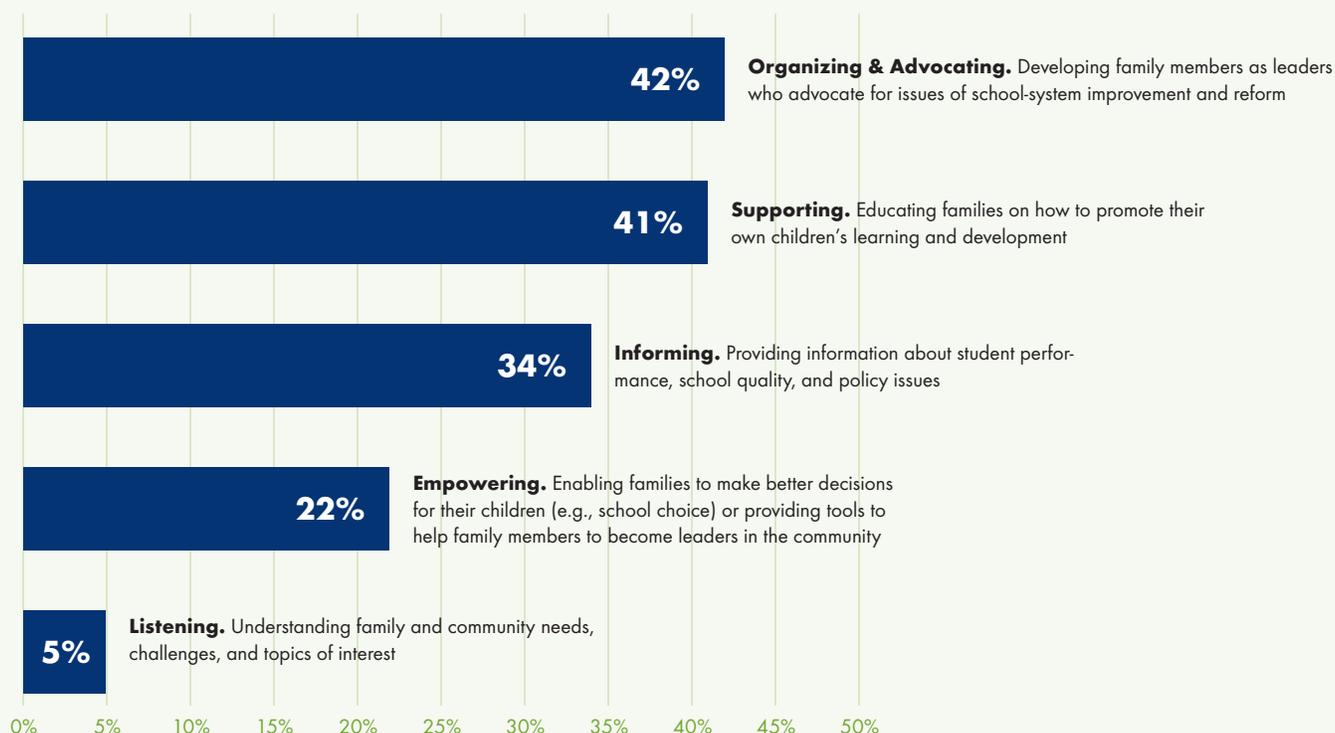
When you think about family and community engagement, what kinds of activities come to mind? Our Network explored this question through a survey of 74 foundation leaders. What we found was telling. Conducted in 2016, the survey asked an open-ended question to elicit respondents' own definitions of family and community engagement. The responses were then analyzed to identify common themes. The results of that analysis are presented below.

As seen in the chart, foundation leaders most often defined engagement in terms of organizing families to advocate for system-level change, or in terms of helping families to support their children's learning. Only 5 percent of respondents included activities aimed at listening to families and community members. In other words, when asked to explain what they meant by family and community engagement, very few foundation leaders described attempts to understand the needs and perspectives of families and community members.

To some extent, this lack of focus on listening is understandable. Most education grantmakers are seeking to advance a particular strategy for educational improvement, with investments in family and community engagement geared toward that approach. Additionally, there is always a tension between the urgency to improve outcomes and the time required to build a broad consensus among stakeholders. Nonetheless, we, as foundation leaders, should consider whether we are more likely to achieve our long-term objectives if our engagement includes efforts to understand the concerns of families and community members, so we can design an approach that builds the trust and buy-in likely to foster sustainable success.

FIGURE 4

Percent of Foundations Indicating Each Concept in Their Definition of Family and Community Engagement*



* Percentages add up to more than 100 because individual foundations included multiple concepts in their definition.

Source: Parent and Community Learning Network

ASSESSING A FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ECOSYSTEM

Local conditions play a significant role in the success of any educational improvement initiative. Education is a complex social system, in which numerous actors and forces contribute to outcomes. Any effort to change such a system must take these interactions into account.³ Grantmakers' investments in family and community engagement reflect a recognition that multiple stakeholders contribute to student success: involving families and community members in reform initiatives is critical to achieving a foundation's goals.

In the same vein, conditions will play an important role in whether a set of engagement activities achieves its desired impact. Do the activities have the support of local leaders? Are multiple organizations involved, and, if so, does their work complement each other? Are there funding sources that can support the activities for the long term? Answers to these and similar questions can suggest the extent to which engagement investments in a particular community, city, or region are likely to promote better youth and student outcomes.

Grantmakers can make better-informed decisions by understanding the family and community engagement ecosystem in the places where they are considering making investments. By "ecosystem" we mean the full set of family engagement activities within a particular geographic unit and how those activities may relate to one another. A foundation may take into account an ecosystem's quality when deciding whether to make a grant there. Are the conditions in place to ensure that investments bear fruit? In this context, how can a grantmaker best invest in family and community engagement to maximize positive impact for students?

Important Qualities of an Investment Ecosystem

To understand how to gauge the quality of a particular family and community engagement ecosystem, the partners in our Network investigated activities in five cities across the country, commissioning extensive interviews with family and community engagement organization leaders and stakeholders in each area.⁴ These individuals were asked to identify what was working and what was not in local efforts to engage families and communities, and why. Based on this work, the Network identified four important themes:

- **The amount of activity:** What is the degree to which multiple engagement efforts are at work within a region, and do those efforts collectively serve all student populations?
- **The extent of coordination:** Does some group play a central role in making sure different activities are aligned and not in conflict? In some cities, for example, a single nonprofit serves as a "quarterback" organization by soliciting financial support for multiple family and community engagement organizations.
- **The role of the school district:** Families and community members are more likely to participate in their children's learning if their local school district plays an active role in engaging them.
- **The sustainability of funding:** Family and community engagement efforts are more likely to gain traction in a region where they benefit from multiple sources of long-term financial support.

³ For more on promoting change in a complex social system such as education, see *From Fragmentation to Coherence: How More Integrative Ways of Working Could Accelerate Improvement and Progress Toward Equity in Education* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2018).

⁴ The five cities were Albuquerque, Atlanta, Denver, Indianapolis, and Oakland.

These are certainly not the only relevant themes for evaluating the quality of a family engagement ecosystem. Nor do we wish to suggest that family and community engagement efforts cannot succeed where one or more of these qualities are lacking. Our intent was not to create a valid measure that could predict the likelihood that such efforts will achieve their objectives in a particular context. Rather, we sought to identify important characteristics that a grantmaker could use to better understand the context in which it might make investments.

We outline some questions to consider in Figure 5, but it is important to note that the possible answers are not simply “yes” or “no.” There are varying degrees to which a set of engagement activities might support multiple student populations or benefit from the work of a coordinating organization. And yet, any determination of where an ecosystem sits on these continuums will necessarily be subjective. Nonetheless, it is useful for grantmakers to think about how they might rate the conditions in a region based on these criteria. Doing so may surface opportunities for strengthening a strategy that were not otherwise apparent.

For example, a foundation might learn that while many practitioners in a given city are involved in engagement activities, their work is uncoordinated. This could be problematic if families are bombarded with incoherent or even contradictory information as their children proceed through their schooling. Alternatively, grantmakers might find that, while the engagement activities in a region are well-coordinated, the local districts are minimally involved — indicating a potential missed opportunity.

Due Diligence, Entry Points, and Collaboration

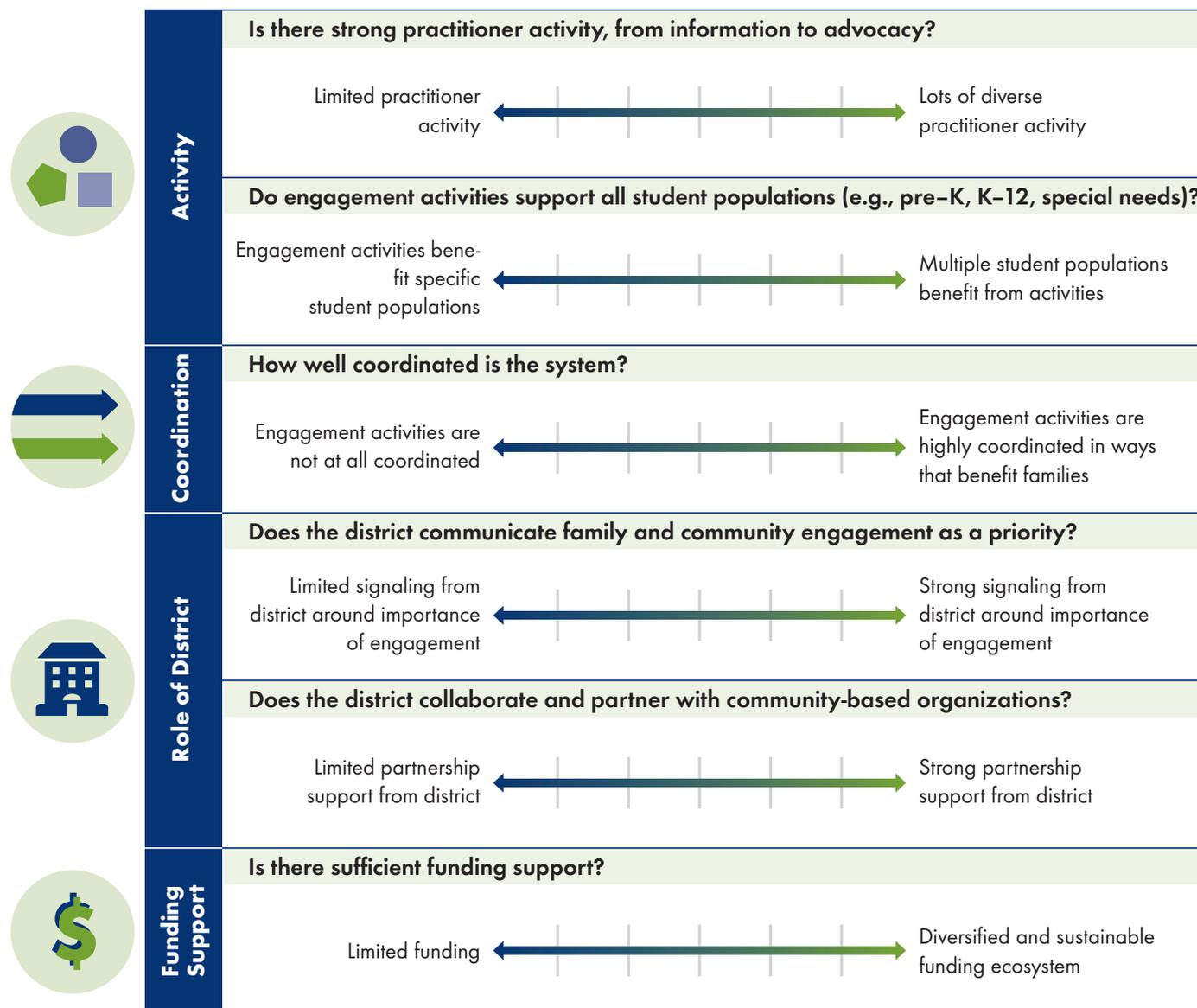
Analyzing an ecosystem in this way can inform a foundation’s due diligence when considering whether to invest in a new grantee. Understanding the local context in which a potential grantee operates may help in evaluating a program’s probability of success. The same questions also may help foundations and the organizations they support to find potentially high-impact ways to bolster family and community engagement in a particular region. Assessing the ecosystem may also suggest a useful entry point for grantmakers in a given region by identifying gaps in the landscape or opportunities to strengthen strategies that are working well. (For a summary of possible areas of investment, see “Four Areas of Opportunity for Grantmakers”).

Because multiple foundations typically invest in the same region, analyzing the ecosystem in a geographical area may also prompt new ideas for grantmaker collaboration. Given that foundations often differ in their goals and strategies, working together might help foster a more comprehensive approach, improving the chances that all of their investments are successful.

That said, we should acknowledge that foundations may differ in what they see as the most important qualities of an ecosystem for family and community engagement. For example, a foundation whose grantmaking primarily targets the preschool years might also want to consider the role of local health-care providers when evaluating an ecosystem, because families of preschool-age children interact with such providers more consistently than they do with their local schools. What matters is not that all foundations ask the same questions. What matters is that they think critically about the contexts in which they invest.

FIGURE 5

Questions for Assessing a Family and Community Engagement Ecosystem



See Appendix for a version of this tool that grantmakers may use to evaluate the conditions in a particular city or region.

FOUR AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR GRANTMAKERS

One challenge for grantmakers interested in supporting family and community engagement is that the concept encompasses an exceptionally wide array of activities and strategies. This complicates the task of prioritizing a set of projects to invest in. The table below is designed to help foundation officials

think about areas in which they might invest. Our Network identified these high-leverage areas based on a review of family and community engagement activities across the country. Although the areas listed below have the potential to affect widespread change, they by no means include all such possibilities.

Technology and Information

Relevance and Key Issues

Technology can play an important role in facilitating family engagement throughout a student's educational journey, from school enrollment to support for learning at home to college admissions.

Research has advanced understanding of effective modes of technology-facilitated engagement, but the field needs to know more about how to scale the use of those models and how to measure their impact.

Examples

- Automated messaging systems that alert families of missing assignments and excessive absences
- Online digital resources (e.g., webinars, blogs, wikis) that educate families on how to support student learning at home
- Information platforms that clarify school-choice options and enrollment processes

Gaps and Needs to Address

- Research and learning around effective practices
- Funding to support scaling and replication of effective models
- Support for development of technology solutions that can overcome common design challenges (e.g., parent utilization, hardware/software limitations)

Teacher Capacity

Relevance and Key Issues

Teachers are important and trusted messengers who can be enlisted to enhance family engagement in education.

There are multiple potential touch points where teachers and families interact, but teachers need professional development and incentives to do so effectively.

Responsibility for driving engagement cannot rest solely on teachers' shoulders; leadership must make it a priority.

Examples

- Innovative models for parent-teacher conferences
- Programs for home visits, in which teachers engage families by meeting them where they live
- Professional development aimed at changing educators' mind-set about the possibilities for family involvement in education
- Recognition of exemplary practice through evaluation and rewards

Gaps and Needs to Address

- Support for, and dissemination of, additional research on the effectiveness of teacher-led family engagement models
- More partnerships between family engagement groups and schools/districts aimed at building teacher capacity
- Resource allocations to encourage districts to make teacher capacity building and incentives a priority

Business Models

Relevance and Key Issues

Sustainable funding is essential for long-term success. Many organizations involved in family and community engagement rely on philanthropy to fund their efforts.

Organizations that have diversified their funding sources tend to emphasize the measurable short-term impact of their efforts. They also generally engage families to support students' learning or school choice, rather than focusing on system-level change.

Examples

- Local and national funder groups supporting area family and community engagement organizations and efforts
- Organizations charging schools or districts using a fee-for-service model
- Districts supporting the work of family engagement organizations, often using state or federal funds for targeted student populations (e.g., low-income families)

Gaps and Needs to Address

- Investment in intermediary organizations that can support and incubate organizations with innovative and sustainable business models
- Encouragement for grantees to seek sustainable funding sources — such as earned revenue — as they scale
- Broader field-building efforts to promote greater interest in innovative business models with more diversified funding sources

Advocacy

Relevance and Key Issues

Empowering families to lead and support change promotes sustainability for educational improvement efforts.

Organizations that focus on advocacy are increasingly building more sophisticated structures for increasing the capacity of families to lead change. This includes curricula and trainings, as well as data-driven tools to track results.

Examples

- Advocacy playbooks that educate families on their rights and how to exercise them — and on how to shape education policy and practice
- Training for parent leaders on how to use social media to build awareness of important issues
- Print and digital publications aimed at educating families and community leaders on key policy issues

Gaps and Needs to Address

- Encouragement for organizations to share effective practices, playbooks, and other resources for supporting parent advocacy
- Support for including more guidance on using social media in training sessions on advocacy
- Investment in tools for tracking impact (e.g., numbers of participants in campaigns) and in evaluations of the effectiveness of different strategies

CONCLUSION: A CALL FOR CONTINUED COLLABORATION

Researchers, policymakers, and educators have long recognized the value of family and community engagement in supporting better youth and student outcomes. But this area of focus represents a relatively new priority for many foundations. The philanthropic community has much to learn about how to effectively invest in family and community engagement. This is why the five foundations in our Network agreed to work together to better understand the landscape and possibilities for involving these critical stakeholders in the service of educational improvement.

Any new insights about investing in this area must be flexible and adaptive. Foundations that make grants in education hold a wide range of strategic priorities, such as school choice, early education in literacy, 21st-century teaching and learning, and so on. Moreover, some grant-making institutions focus on particular cities or regions of the country, while others are national in scope. These differences in orientation will necessarily call for different engagement strategies and activities as foundations seek to advance a particular set of reforms.

Differences in context will also suggest different priorities for investments. Educational improvement efforts in a city or region tend to follow a developmental trajectory. The activities that take place when energies are just coalescing around a reform are different from those that can build on a solid foundation of support. Indeed, this is true for national reforms as well. For this reason, different forms of family and community engagement may have greater impact at different stages of a reform.

Despite these differences, we are convinced that education grantmakers have much to gain by learning collaboratively in this area. The five foundations in our Network represent significant variations in educational focus and strategy. And yet, our work together has led each of us to think more deeply about how we can support family and community engagement to achieve better educational outcomes. The tools and frameworks in this resource, which resulted from that collaboration, have given us a set of helpful questions to consider as we assess our current and potential investments.

Many questions remain. Among them: What are appropriate metrics to use in measuring the success of efforts aimed at family and community engagement? How can foundations better support their grantees so they are more likely to have a positive impact? And how can different foundations coordinate their work to reduce redundancies, complement each other, and address important gaps? These are some of the additional areas of interest identified in discussions among the members of our Network.

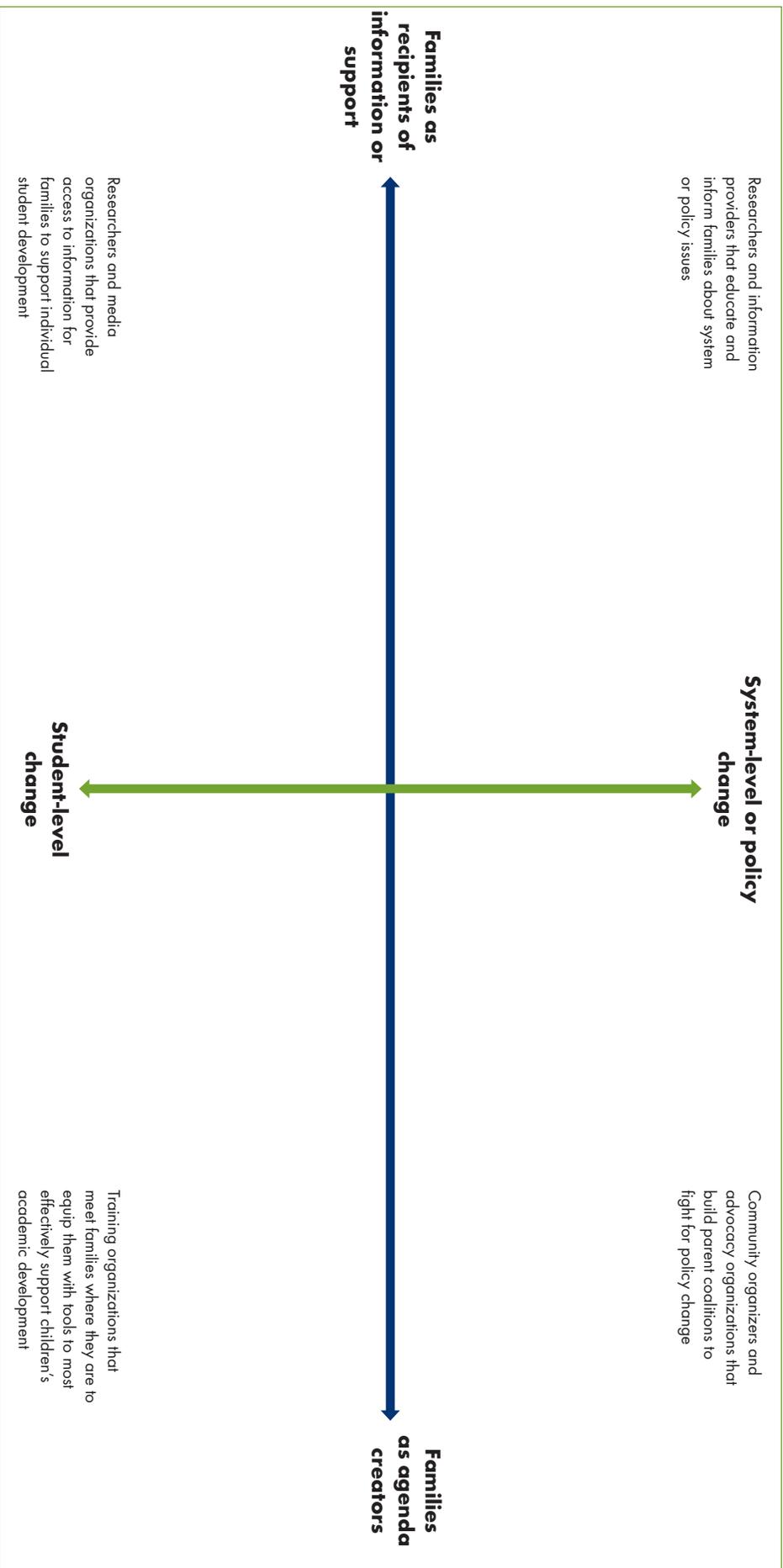
We encourage other grantmakers to work together to investigate such questions, and to share the resulting insights with us and with the larger foundation community. We hope to hear from more foundations that use the tools in this document. How did their use inform your thinking, and what might make them more useful? What other questions or aspects of family and community engagement are you considering as you develop and hone an investment strategy? This new area of focus for many foundations will advance further and faster if we commit to learning together.

Family and Community Engagement Investments Mapping Tool

This tool is designed to help foundations consider the extent to which their family and community engagement investments align with their theories of action for achieving educational improvement.

The tool is used to categorize each of a foundation's investments based on two criteria. One is the extent to which the initiative primarily aims to provide information versus cultivating advocates and changemakers. The other is the extent to

which the initiative is aimed at supporting system-level change versus helping families better assist individual students. Based on these criteria, an investment will fall within one of the four quadrants below. To map its engagement investments, a foundation should place each grant into one of the four quadrants. The notes in italics below are meant to clarify some of the types of grantees that might fall within each quadrant.

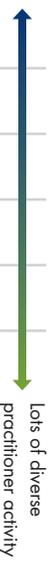


Family and Community Engagement Ecosystem Assessment Tool

Foundations can use this tool to assess the family and community engagement landscape within a city, region, or other geographic unit and evaluate the extent to which those activities are poised to support educational improvement.

To use this tool, consider each question below as it relates to the engagement activities in a particular geographic area. For each question, mark the line at the point that seems to best describe what is happening in the region. Use the space provided for notes to briefly explain why you marked the line where you did.

City, State, or Other Geographic Unit:

Activity		Notes
<p>Is there strong practitioner activity, from information to advocacy?</p> <p>Limited practitioner activity </p> <p>Do engagement activities support all student populations (e.g., pre-K, K-12, special needs)?</p> <p>Engagement activities benefit specific student populations </p>		<p>Notes</p>
<p>How well coordinated is the system?</p> <p>Engagement activities are not at all coordinated </p> <p>Does the district communicate family and community engagement as a priority?</p> <p>Limited signaling from district around importance of engagement </p> <p>Does the district collaborate and partner with community-based organizations?</p> <p>Limited partnership support from district </p>		<p>Notes</p>
<p>Funding Support</p> <p>Is there sufficient funding support?</p> <p>Limited funding </p>		<p>Notes</p>



Carnegie Corporation of New York was established by Andrew Carnegie in 1911 to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. In keeping with this mandate, the Corporation's agenda focuses on the issues that he considered of paramount importance: international peace, the advancement of education and knowledge, and the strength of our democracy.