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# From Harlem Children's Zone to Promise Neighborhoods: Creating the Tipping Point for Success

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From Harlem Children's Zone to Promise Neighborhoods: Creating the Tipping Point for Successful Children

The panel features the following speakers:

- Katherine Shoemaker, Director, Policy and Special Projects, Harlem Children's Zone

- Dr. Bill Gormley, Interim Dean, Georgetown Public Policy Institute

- Dr. Harry Holzer, Professor of Public Policy, Georgetown Public Policy Institute

- Dr. Steven Smith, Waldemar Nielsen Chair in Philanthropy, Visiting Professor from the University of Washington

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**Remarks of Barack Obama: Changing the Odds for Urban America**

**July 18, 2007**

*"We know Harlem Children's Zone works. And if we know it works, there's no reason this program should stop at the end of those blocks in Harlem. It's time to change the odds for neighborhoods all across America…the first part of my plan to combat urban poverty will be to replicate the Harlem Children's Zone in twenty cities across the country."*

# Introduction

In 2007, as a presidential candidate, President Obama outlined an initiative that was designed to help families in high-poverty, urban neighborhoods. As a part of the initiative, Obama proposed to fund a program based on the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) model developed by Geoffrey Canada. The rejuvenated neighborhoods in this program were to be called the Promise Neighborhoods.

In 2008, the Promise Neighborhoods program was included in President Obama's FY2010 Budget Proposal. It recommended that 20 cities receive planning money to develop a Promise Neighborhood in one of their communities. The program would receive $10 million dollars and would be dispersed through the Department of Education.

In 2009, legislation for Promise Neighborhoods began making its way through Congress as part of the FY 2010 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. Separate Senate and House bills were passed before a unified bill ultimately was passed in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 and became law on December 16, 2009. The Department of Education is currently working on a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the planning grants.

Now that Promise Neighborhoods has been funded, the question becomes how communities can best articulate and implement programs that build on the successes and learn from the struggles of HCZ.

This paper seeks to provide an overview of HCZ, background information on the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, and recommendations on how to design Promise Neighborhoods based on the successes and struggles HCZ experienced when scaling up its work.

# Harlem Children's Zone

Overview

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is a program designed to address the entire range of community needs with a focus on changing the outcomes for children growing up in poverty. The theory of action is that by having a pipeline of services to address children's needs at all times in life and a supportive neighborhood environment, with positive contagion effects, children will not have the opportunity to get lost in the system or drop out of school. Parents also participate in programs, in part to build a strong early-childhood foundation and in part to build expectations that every child in this community should and will go to college.

The Harlem's Children's Zone began as Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families. From 1970 until 1997, Rheedlen operated as a well-respected non-profit organization that offered afterschool drop-in centers, truancy prevention, and antiviolence training for youth in upper Manhattan. However, after Geoffrey Canada became its president in 1990, Rheedlen began shifting its focus and services. In the

1990s, Rheedlen ran a pilot program that offered a number of services to one block in order to address the full range of problems faced by poor families. In creating a ten-year business plan, the organization committed to evaluating and tracking every service and limiting provision of services to those that helped meet their mission of ending the cycle of generational poverty. By 1997, the program expanded to a 24-block area and was officially named the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). In 2007, it expanded again to nearly 100 blocks, serving even more children.[1]

The Pipeline

Today, HCZ is designed as a pipeline of programs for families and children of all ages with a focus on children's outcomes. By having entry points all along the pipeline, HCZ hopes that children will never get lost in the system. Early childhood programs include a parenting workshop called Baby College, the Three Year Old Journey which works with parents of future Promise Academy students, and Harlem Gems, a high-quality prekindergarten program which runs from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M and has a 4-to-1 child-to-adult ratio.[2]

When children reach school age, HCZ provides an array of academic and after-school programs. HCZ provides free schooling through its Promise Academy Charter Schools. The Promise Academies currently serve kindergarten through 10th grade and will continue to add a grade each year until all high school grades are represented. Unfortunately, not all children in the Children's Zone are able to attend the Promise Academy Charter Schools. However, HCZ has developed other programs open to all children and youth in the Zone to ensure that they are in the pipeline and receive services. For elementary school-aged children, there is the Harlem Peacemakers, which is partly funded through AmeriCorps and works with young people who are committed to make their neighborhoods safe; and the Fifth Grade Institute, which works with students who are in Harlem public schools to prepare them for middle school by improving their academic performance.[3]

For middle school-aged children, HCZ offers Academic Case Management for students who are not in the Promise Academy. This program assigns a staff member to each student to monitor the student's progress. In addition, the TRUCE Fitness offers free fitness, health, and nutrition classes to children, and A Cut Above provides after school programs to all middle-school children not in the Promise Academy offering both academic assistance and leadership development. Finally, Boys to Men and Girl Power offer separate activities such as reading material, discussions, workshops, trips, films and teambuilding work in order to prevent drug use, gang involvement, and school violence.[4]

For high school-aged youth, HCZ continues to offer academic case management. TRUCE Arts and Media provide youth development by focusing on media literacy and artistic ability. The Employment and Technology Center teaches computer and job skills to teens, while Learn to Earn helps

juniors and seniors improve their academic skills with a focus on college and job market skills. The College Preparatory Program provides enrichment to help all students seek out a college education by providing academic advisors, college counselors, and tutors. Once students have graduated from high school, the College Success Office is designed to provide support for students during their college years.[5]

Beyond academic and leadership development, HCZ offers health, family, and community services to target other problem areas for the Harlem residents, all in an effort to change outcomes for the children and create a population of adults that expects their children to attend college. Programs like Baby College provide services to parents to teach them proper ways to discipline children, how to enhance children's mental development, and how to read with their children. Community Pride helps renters convert the city-owned public housing to tenant-owned co-ops; Single Stop provides Harlem residents with legal services, advice about receiving public benefits, financial advice, debt counseling, and domestic crisis assistance; the HCZ Asthma initiative educates and assists families in learning more about managing and coping with the illness; and the Obesity Initiative is designed to reverse the trend toward obesity. There are a number of other programs that offer mental health services, crisis intervention and anger management, counseling, as well as support for living drug free, and preventing truancy.[6]

Although HCZ offers a full pipeline of services, HCZ emphasizes early intervention and its most ambitious goals of participation are at the younger ages. HCZ aspires to reach 80 percent of HCZ Project resident children ages 0 to 5, 70 percent of children ages 3-4, 60 percent of children ages 5-11, 40 percent of children ages 12-13, and 30 percent of children ages 14-18.[7]


Characteristics of HCZ

In addition to the quality of programming that is provided by HCZ, several characteristics which have been described as contributing to its success should be considered and, when possible, replicated in the Promise Neighborhoods. These features include a reputation of being dedicated to the families of Harlem, strong support from the private sector, strong backing from the mayor, an ability to design charter schools that meet the needs of the children, a commitment to evaluation and data collection, a charismatic leader, and a leader who has personal experience with the daily struggles faced by the people of Harlem strengthen HCZ.

As an organization that has been dedicated to serving the people of Harlem since the 1970s, HCZ has built up a reputation of dedication to the betterment of the people of New York City. When Rheedlen became HCZ and refocused all its activities on changing the outcomes of Harlem's children, the organization did not have to spend time proving its devotion to the people of the neighborhood. Often, people in poorer neighborhoods have seen organizations come in, make promises, and then leave before

those promises are fulfilled.[8] A history of service may decrease the community's wariness about the intentions of the organization.

HCZ also has the benefit of strong support from the private sector. Canada avoids endorsing politicians from either party, though he welcomes their support of the work of HCZ.[9] By not relying heavily on public money (in 2009, HCZ received 12% of its revenue – or $9 million – from government source[10]), HCZ may be relatively immune to political pressures that some other organizations – including Promise Neighborhoods – may face. The organization may also be less affected by elections and shifts in the political system. Additionally, the organizations that donate money also give HCZ substantial room to make decisions and time to try new ideas. For instance, when Stanley Druckenmiller and Kenneth Langone on the Board of Trustees wanted Canada to bring in KIPP to run the charter schools, Canada was able to convince them to give him more time to try out what he believed would be a successful charter school.[11]

Although HCZ does not rely substantially on public money, it does benefit from strong backing from Mayor Bloomberg. The mayor's takeover of the school system and the city's support of charter schools give HCZ the autonomy it needs in running its own charter schools. The charter schools are able to operate with longer school days and years, require more of the parents, offer afterschool activities, provide high-quality onsite health care for the children, and give prizes and rewards for good school performance.[12] The characteristics of these schools have been proven effective at raising student achievement.[13] Because HCZ has shown a strong commitment to evaluation during all steps of the process, HCZ is able to demonstrate to donors and the general public which programs show success. This is especially useful as some of the data – like passing rates on state tests – are also available on other children in New York City.[14]

Finally, HCZ has a strong, charismatic leader who can relate directly to the people served by HCZ. Canada, who grew up poor in New York City, benefited from the good education he received when his grandparents moved to the suburbs and from a scholarship to Bowdoin College. His ability to relate to the clients and his understanding of the role of education in escaping poverty give the organization even greater legitimacy in the neighborhood. His charisma has helped take the organization further by encouraging commitment from the community, garnering greater support from private organizations, and developing a positive relationship with the media.[15] While many community leaders eschew the limelight, Canada appears regularly on shows such as 60 minutes, The Daily Show, Oprah, The Today Show, and The Colbert Report.

Evaluations of Effectiveness

The Harlem's Children's Zone has been touted as a highly effective model for addressing the educational needs of poor urban children. Indeed, both self-evaluations and external evaluations have concluded that the HCZ program is highly successful in increasing student achievement and closing the achievement gap, although whether these gains persist over time, or heavily influence later academic achievement or earnings remain to be seen. Additionally, the reasons for the effectiveness are still being debated.

According to Canada, HCZ is successful because of its pipeline of programs that offers an intensive array of services to an entire neighborhood. HCZ reports that 100% of Harlem Gems pre-kindergarteners are on grade-level and prepared for school, 100% of third graders at Promise Academy are at or above grade level on the statewide math test, 87% of Promise Academy eighth graders are at or above grade level on the statewide math exam, and 90% of the high-school students who participated in the afterschool programs went onto college.[16] Canada attributes this to the entire range of services and said in a recent interview, "We get them in the pipeline; we seal it once you get in, and we don't let you out. You get out with a college degree, that's the point."[17]

In contrast, Dobbie and Fryer (2009) independently analyzed the HCZ outcomes and found similar results but came to a different conclusion. Specifically, they found that elementary and middle school children who receive the full range of services have closed the black-white achievement gap. However, the researchers concluded from their analyses that the success was due to the high quality of schooling rather than a result of the pipeline of community services.[18]

Dobbie and Fryer's conclusions, if correct, have important implications for the design of Promise Neighborhoods. In particular, it suggests that program designers might want to invest primarily in school support, rather than in the panoply of programs that constitute the HCZ pipeline. On the other hand, many other studies have shown that early childhood programs can be strikingly successful and are vitally important to later success in life, especially for disadvantaged children.[19] In thinking through these issues, the Department of Education will need to decide how much emphasis to place on schools and how much emphasis to place on earlier educational and social services.

# Promise Neighborhoods

Overview

Promise Neighborhoods is an initiative first outlined by President Obama as a campaign promise to help high-poverty, urban areas. Using the Harlem Children's Zone as a model, he summarized a plan in which 20 cities with high levels of poverty and crime and low levels of student achievement would be provided with funding to develop an achievement program. Sites would be required to develop a comprehensive, long-term business plan with input from neighborhood residents, local community

organizations, local business, school districts, city and state governments, and economic development researchers. In addition to focusing on high-quality, comprehensive educations goals such as extended day and year programs and after-school programming, sites would have to provide a continuum of services: counseling services for new parents, early childhood education, job training for youth, community health facilities, financial counseling for families and effective leadership development training.[20] The neighborhoods that receive funding will be the Promise Neighborhoods.

The campaign promise is close to becoming a reality, as the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 became law on December 16, 2009. Allocating $10 million to fund the program under the Department of Education, with $500,000 going to each community, the money will be awarded to "nonprofit, community-based organizations for the development of comprehensive neighborhood programs designed to combat the effects of poverty and improve educational and life outcomes for children and youth, from birth through college."[21] The communities that are awarded the money will have a year to develop their Promise Neighborhoods models. While Promise Neighborhoods will focus specifically on the educational problems in high-poverty urban areas, administration officials have confirmed that they expect the programs to address the entire continuum of services. Additionally, communities are expected to partner the Promise Neighborhood money with other federal programs, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhood program. Thus, as Promise Neighborhoods get off the ground, several different federal agencies are likely to be involved.

At the planning stage of the process, Promise Neighborhoods are proposed to be run as public-private partnerships. It has been presumed that half of their funding will be provided by the federal government and half through private sources, though the funding requirements have not yet been formally announced.[22]

# Recommendations: How to Design Promise Neighborhoods

Cities that are considering developing Promise Neighorhoods are likely to face many challenges. However, careful, thoughtful planning with a consideration of all the stakeholders will ensure that children and families will receive high quality programming. Below are some of the issues that stakeholders should consider when creating their proposals.

## General Considerations

*Flexibility versus fidelity to the HCZ model*

Each city that contemplates implementing a Promise Neighborhood has its own set of assets and challenges that dictate different goals. In order to meet those unique goals, cities need some flexibility to

allow for customization to a particular neighborhood's situation and to encourage experimentation. On the other hand, allowing huge variations in goals and services will make evaluations more difficult. It is important that there be some consistency among all twenty programs to allow for measurement and analysis and to learn from HCZ's successes. Having similar core characteristics will allow cities to learn from each other's efforts and successes.[23] This issue can be addressed by following the underlying principles of the HCZ model, setting a common set of entry points in the educational pipeline and choosing from established and promising evidence-based practices that can be adapted for local needs.[24] In this way, cities can address neighborhood-specific challenges that helps the community achieve the ultimate outcomes, while the measures of success in children's educational outcomes can be consistent.

*Public-Private Partnership (PPP)*

In order to receive funding, all cities interested in becoming a Promise Neighborhood must be prepared to work as a public-private partnership. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) allow the public and private sectors to work together by creating a contractual agreement where the skills and assets of each sector are shared.[25] The theory driving the partnership is that the private sector will be better equipped to deliver services in a timely and more efficient manner, while the public component ensures that the work is retaining its responsibility to provide services to the public.[26] The public partner is responsible for deciding between competing objectives, defining and determining how to measure the chosen objectives, setting, monitoring, and enforcing standards, and ensuring that the interests of the public are safeguarded.[27] The private sector brings the skills of maximizing efficiency, a customer-focused approach, managers skilled with service delivery, and innovative ideas.[28] In addition to sharing the skills and resources, both sectors also share the risks associated with scaling up projects and capital investments as well as the rewards of successfully serving a community in need.[29] Different types of partnerships can be built that allocate responsibilities between the public and private partners in different ways.[30] The different partnerships shift between having minimal private sector involvement and risk to having almost complete private control. Although some of these partnerships may sound like privatization, they are not because the public sector is still accountable for producing results.[31] The benefits of PPPs, as compared with purely public sector approaches, include better value due to cost savings and higher levels of service, access to capital that the public entity would not otherwise have, clearer defined costs, and increased innovation.[32]

However, PPPs also have substantial challenges that arise, especially if the projects are not fully thought-out in their design. For example, if the public partner turns over responsibility to the private partner without defining expectations fully or providing sufficient scrutiny, the desired services may not

be delivered. Poor communication, negligent planning, and unclear expectations will also inhibit a successful partnership.[33]

According to the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships, there are six key aspects to successful PPPs: statutory and political environment, organized structure, detailed business plan, guaranteed revenue stream, stakeholder support, and a carefully chosen partner. For the proper environment, both the leading political figure and the top administration officials must have the political will to change the current system by making a strong policy statement. The structure must be organized in such a way that there is a group dedicated to the goals of the partnership, personnel who are trained to monitor the implementation, and an open and fair procurement process. The detailed business plan must be performance goal oriented, and the contract should include specific goals, milestones, metrics and frequency of reporting, and a clear dispute resolution methodology. Both sectors must have sufficient funds or a guaranteed revenue stream to cover long-term financing -- such as tolls, fees, taxes, or other means.  All the important stakeholders must also be actively engaged. These stakeholders include public sector employees, private sector participants, labor unions, and recipients of the services; all will require open and honest communication, using a shared language, and basing decisions on facts -- not rumors or myths. Finally, the partner must be chosen carefully. The other sector's experience, financial abilities, and motivations must be understood before agreeing to enter a partnership.[34] As the Department of Education will be choosing their "partners" in the communities, officials should consider these qualities in the private organizations. In order for the private partners to be able to have sufficient funding, communities that win the proposal must be able to show evidence of relationships with funders who will be willing to provide sufficient money.

*Funding*

Finding a sufficient amount of funding to give the organization the autonomy to move ahead with the project will be a struggle for many of those who submit Promise Neighborhoods proposals. HCZ now has a dedicated stream of funding and donors who are willing to give the leadership considerable flexibility to work with the community – and even to have a few failures along with their successes.[35] Moreover, HCZ has been able to highlight the cost-savings of a successful program. In the entire range of services, Canada cites that HCZ costs $5000 annually per child.[36] Though that cost is high, he points out that it comes nowhere near the cost to society if we fail to educate children. In New York City, he states that jail costs close to $60,000 a year and juvenile detention can cost over $100,000 per year.[37] Obtaining this money in a tough economic climate will be difficult, although the high profile of the Promise Neighborhoods program and the success of HCZ may give this program an advantage over other fund-seekers.

Additionally, requiring that the organizations provide frequent reports, accessible and analyzed data, and evaluations that show the organizations are progressing on reaching the ultimate goals will help ensure the ability to track that the funding is being used wisely and may increase the likelihood that somewhat skeptical donors will provide funding.

## Organizational and Programmatic Choices

*Key Organizational Attributes*

Stakeholders who are developing their applications for Promise Neighborhoods will have to make difficult decisions about which organizations will be chosen to participate in the program. The organizations with the most capacity to submit an application may appear to be the organizations that are best qualified for this opportunity. However, organizations that have less capacity to raise funds or submit a weaker federal application but with strong community relations should not be immediately discounted. While the capacity to scale up their current work, implement data systems, or create a pipeline of services in the HCZ model are factors to be considered in determining whether they should be the organization to run the Promise Neighborhood program, the strengths and services they offer should be considered and used to inform the decision-making process.

In addition to their capacity to run Promise Neighborhoods, stakeholders must also look for organizations with a "long-term" view – those that express the importance of the long-term results over quick success. Though this program has great potential to rejuvenate communities around the country, it will likely not produce earth-shattering results right away. In the U.S., we frequently want immediate results, and these immediate results sometimes come at the expense of having better long-term outcomes.

The first years of the charter schools were not as successful as everyone had hoped they would be.[38] During its first years, the Promise Academy produced test results lower than other schools in the city with similar demographics. There was a fine line that was not being properly addressed: a balancing of the high expectations of the school to the community and the high expectations about what children will accomplish at home and parents' responsibilities. Ultimately, HCZ decided it needed to bring in a different principal who agreed with Canada as to how the schools should function, including more disciplinary rigor, longer school days, shorter summers, careful evaluation of student attendance, and an earlier start to test-preparation.[39]

HCZ also concluded that it had been a mistake initially to start middle school recruitment in sixth grade – recruitment needed to start in fifth grade in order to allow both for better discipline systems and enough time for those students to be on level when they were tested as middle-school students. Organizers were daunted to learn that the community's middle school students coming into sixth grade were reading three or four years below grade level. Though the Academy's first years were not

successes, these performance shortfalls reinforced the belief in the importance of having an entire pipeline of programs, starting ting at an early age and focusing on longer-term, rather than short-term goals.[40]

As with HCZ, some of the most striking results for Promise Neighborhoods may not be seen for years. Though short-term goals are important, the focus should be on whether those steps are taking the organization and community towards better long-term outcomes for the children living in that community. Even with HCZ, we do not know what the long-term outcomes will be or whether participants will have better college graduation rates, better careers, lower rates of incarceration, or shorter stretches of joblessness. However, we do know that HCZ is working with long-term plans, thinking beyond the smaller daily problems to address the systemic problems faced by the community. The long-term outcome of ending generational poverty will be the most important determinants of whether money is spent wisely.

Effective leadership will be a vitally important function in the implementation of Promise Neighborhoods. Many people leading the organizations will not have a background similar to Geoffrey Canada's – a background that gives him both a sense of urgency and a different kind of empathy with the community he serves. The community also knows that he can relate to the needs and struggles of people raising children in poverty. Although Canada's skills and background have proven very effective, successful organizations do not need leaders with that same background or the charisma for which Canada is known. However, they do need leaders who are able to communicate effectively with their team members, with community members, and with their partners in the Department of Education. In addition to displaying strong communication skills, the leaders of these organizations should lead by example, be dedicated to the children they serve, focus on evaluation and results, and be role models. These leadership characteristics are important to consider when choosing an organization that will serve the communities that become Promise Neighborhoods.

## Core Program Principles

*A Pipeline of Services*

The HCZ model argues that a multi-program pipeline of services creates an environment where parents and their children enter at birth and are supported through college. Research on other programs – including studies by James Heckman and David Olds – demonstrate that high quality early childhood experiences have substantial positive impacts on the future outcomes of the children.[41] Dobbie and Fryer's evaluation found that that the critical change agent of HCZ is the high quality schools.[42] These different pieces of evidence together suggest that the combination of early childhood services with proven effectiveness and high-quality schools – preschool, primary, middle and high schools -- should be potent and effective at changing children's outcomes.

Realistically, it takes time to create and implement an entire pipeline of services. Organizations will find creating an entire pipeline of services from scratch nearly impossible. Even if the organizations had the money, people, and skills to build such a pipeline immediately, the effort it would take would likely surpass the organization's capacity to manage and coordinate the entire collection of services.[43] Thus, it will be important for the Promise Neighborhoods initially to focus on the most important high-leverage areas of intervention and build the program from there.[44] By successfully implementing these initial programs in key areas, and documenting the nature of the programs and the outcomes, the organizations will likely help build up their legitimacy within the neighborhood, making an expansion easier and more successful. In this vein, offering high-quality schools is crucial. As charter schools will be subject to state regulations, it is likely that – similar to the Promise Academy – not all children who want to attend the schools will be able. This will help further answer the question about the effectiveness of universally available programs. It is possible that in Harlem, the universally available programs are not the ones that matter, and, like Dobbie and Fryer found, the programs that matter are not universally available. The Promise Neighborhoods may shed further light on whether schooling alone leads to greater success or whether participation in other parts of the pipeline can also improve children's outcomes.

There is sometimes a temptation to start a service or program because it seems like it should work or anecdotal evidence leads the workers to believe that the work is effective and important. While anecdotes can enrich a story, every program implemented in the Promise Neighborhoods should be grounded in evidence and research. Innovation is useful and necessary as neighborhoods have different needs, but one advantage of using Harlem Children's Zone as a model is to encourage a degree of consistency. Though not necessary to mirror HCZ programs exactly, creative use of programs and services whose effectiveness is already confirmed may yield a more productive use of resources and better outcomes for the children in Promise Neighborhoods.

*Targeting Services in Specific Neighborhoods*

Another characteristic of HCZ is the implementation of services in a concentrated neighborhood. Only a subset of the community's children are able to attend the charter schools, but the other services are available to everyone. HCZ began small and has made targeted expansions to incorporate larger portions of the neighborhood. These expansions in both area and in the number of services offered were done thoughtfully, with the use of a growth plan.[45] HCZ works to provide an intensive amount of these services to create a tipping point by surrounding the children of Harlem with role models and people who tell them that success and college are in their future.[46]

In order to have the largest impact using the available money, services should be targeted to people with the greatest needs. Leaders are often tempted to spread money evenly across a spectrum of

communities and age groups, but thinly spread resources often lead to a lack of focus.[47] This may also lead to mission drift, and organizations may lose their ability to meet their primary goals.[48] Even with targeted funding, organizations that become Promise Neighborhoods may be forced to make painful cuts to the other services that they provide, as HCZ had to do when it decided to end its homelessness program in other parts of the city in order to sharpen its focus on education. With such large programs and demands already be placed on the organizations, political leaders must restrain themselves from placing unhelpful – or even harmful – external demands on the organizations.

**Data Collection and Evaluation**

*Data-Driven and Results Orientation*

When HCZ began shifting the outcomes that it measured, some people in upper management initially were resistant. Rheedlen had always been focused on outcomes, but as HCZ expanded, Canada committed the agency to an even greater focus on evaluation. The long-term plan established specific goals and metrics for each program, committed the organization to design a measurement and evaluation system, and forced the organization to look more systematically at children's attendance of the various programs and lining those data up with their report cards. Getting all of these systems up to speed was not a seamless process. Some of the managers of the various programs felt that requests for data got in the way of the programs. Additionally, the database had duplicate entries for some children, giving them false information and making simple requests for information a process that could take hours to fulfill.[49] However, after about a year, many of these managers found that the various data they had collected were quite useful and showed to them that the frequency and intensity of services did make a difference to children's outcomes. These were important findings in helping managers think about next steps.[50]

As HCZ did in scaling up its work, Promise Neighborhood sites should carefully consider their data collection strategies and outcome measurements. Child Trends has developed a list of 21 measures that can be used to determine the pre- and post-intervention outcomes for children and can be used to inform the Promise Neighborhoods organizations about their effectiveness in addressing the factors that influence those outcomes.[51] Not all of these data are currently easily accessible, and some will place a heavy data collection burden on the Promise Neighborhoods. These 21 measures fall into the following categories: children are healthy and prepared for school entry, children and youth are healthy and succeed in school, youth graduate from high school and college, and families and neighborhoods support the healthy development, academic success, and well-being of their children.[52] Measuring results in these concrete areas may be able to enhance productive collaboration, particularly because the desired outcomes are described by measures determined by people external to the organizations. The goals in a

particular community can be agreed upon by the parties prior to starting collaboration and may be useful in providing external pressure.

An important aspect of having results-oriented goals is encouraging the use of data in all decision-making processes. Not only should the ultimate goals have clear metrics, but the intermediate steps should be informed by data. The organizations that are to receive funding need clear data systems designed and structured to gather and to further the use of data. Rather than having each organization create its own data system, however, we see an opportunity to have experts create one system that can be implemented and expanded in different communities.

Because of the importance of making information-based decisions, specific efforts must focus on making the data practical and useful. For example, data should be user-friendly to pull and each organization should have people who know how to analyze and use the data to inform decisions. Implementing constant data checking from the beginning may help ensure that unnecessary work is not done and that the work is targeted in the areas and on the people who will most benefit. This focus on outcomes rather than just efforts will ensure that performance is judged rather than good efforts. Coupled with evaluations performed by external organization and common metrics, Promise Neighborhood communities will not only be able to use their own data to gauge their effectiveness and adjust where necessary, but they will also be able to use knowledge learned from other communities who have experiences similar issues and successes.

## Conclusions

The Obama Administration's expansion of Harlem Children's Zone through Promise Neighborhoods is a bold experiment. If successful, Promise Neighborhoods will force funders, politicians and community members to not only look at yearly test scores in a neighborhood, but also look at how many children in that neighborhood attend and complete college. If unsuccessful, Promise Neighborhoods may be seen as another example of failed, expensive federal meddling – another administration trying to replicate what cannot be duplicated. Still, HCZ has been shown to be effective and has rejuvenated parts of New York City many people had written off long ago. There may not be consensus on the exact causes of its success. However, we think that if done thoughtfully, the Promise Neighborhoods will lead to similar positive outcomes for many children currently living in high-poverty areas.

In replicating the HCZ model around the country, much attention should be paid to the details. Developing a plan for how the Promise Neighborhoods should function, what should be required of them, what data will be required, the frequency and duration of evaluations, how success will be measured and the type of relationship they will have with the Department of Education officials will be complicated. Department officials will be funding twenty different public-private partnerships, each with different

strengths and challenges. While encouraging some uniformity among the twenty different Promise Neighborhoods may ease some of those problems and allow the communities to learn from each other, differences in proposals will be inevitable. However, Department officials should have very clear instructions on what will be required and what aspects will be nonnegotiable so that avoidable difficulties do not arise.

This work will be time-consuming, difficult, expensive and, at times, frustrating, as partners seek to reach consensus about how to effectively serve the children in their cities. However, if the cities around the country are able to produce results, document the factors that contributed to the better results, and close the achievement gaps that currently exist and hold our country back, the efforts to overcome these challenges will be worthwhile.

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