INTRODUCTION

MBK Community Action Resource Guide

PURPOSE

In September 2014, President Obama issued a challenge to cities, towns, counties, and tribes across the country to join the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Community Challenge as "MBK Communities." The Challenge encourages communities (cities, rural municipalities, and tribal nations) to implement a coherent cradle-to-college-and-career strategy for improving the life outcomes of all young people to ensure that they can reach their full potential.

As an MBK Community leader, you have accepted this call to action indicating your commitment to enacting sustainable change in your community across some or all of the following key milestone areas identified by the May 2014 MBK Task Force Report[1]:

1. Entering school ready to learn

2. Reading at grade level by third grade

3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career

4. Completing post-secondary education or training

5. Successfully entering the workforce

6. Reducing violence and providing a second chance

This guide is intended as an informational resource to support your MBK Community Challenge efforts. It introduces an illustrative sample of key principles, practices, and resources to consider in building your local initiatives. These materials are not meant as requirements and are not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. Ideas and resources may not apply equally in every community as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to these complex issues. Our hope is that you will build on the illustrative examples highlighted in this resource guide, adapting them to create tailored solutions for your community.

The MBK Community Action Resource Guide series is a project of the National Convening Council, with support and technical assistance from the White House and a number of Federal agencies. In preparing this guide, the National Convening Council is also grateful for the expertise and experience shared by National League of Cities, StriveTogether, United Way, PolicyLink, Urban Institute, and Deloitte. These groups comprise a wide variety of nongovernmental organizations, philanthropies, and academics that have studied and provided ongoing support to communities implementing cradle-to-college-and-career approaches.

These resource guides include information and examples from nongovernmental sources. These resource guides are provided for informational purposes only. Inclusion of nongovernmental information and resources does not indicate endorsement by the White House or the U.S. government of entities, their products or services, and the *information contained at referenced sites does not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. government.*

OBJECTIVES

After reading this guide, you should:

• Build a high-level understanding of milestone-specific issues, critical players to engage, and key considerations in activating your community around this issue

• Recognize evidence-based practices and examples of programmatic success that can be adapted to meet local community needs

• Conduct a detailed needs assessment benchmarking current performance on the critical metrics for each of the six milestones

• Begin to understand institutional resources available for use in launching local initiatives

• Identify outstanding questions to address when developing local solutions

• Feel empowered to drive systemic change in your community

CONTENT OVERVIEW

This guide is designed to support your planning and execution process through a series of three core steps: first, it helps you (1) **build an understanding** of the milestone-specific issue area; then it (2) **identifies several illustrative leading practices** to help inspire your approach; and finally, it provides a selection of (3) **key resources** to help guide you as you begin to take action.

(1) Build Understanding

• **Milestone Overview:** an introduction to the key drivers affecting the milestone issue area, as outlined in the MBK Task Force Report published in May 2014

• **Engaging Your Community Ecosystem:** initial thoughts on how to mobilize key stakeholders within your community to create joint accountability and a shared vision

• **Key Principles:** milestone-specific thought leadership to help provide a trusted foundation for local action

(2) Identify Leading Practices

• **Evidence-Based Practices:** illustrative set of effective milestone-specific practices included to help inspire policy and program development in your community

• **Programmatic Success from the Field:** sample of strategies and programs communities have used to improve outcomes on this milestone - demonstrating how to apply and adapt leading practices to meet local needs

(3) Take Action

• **Turning Theory Into Action – Institutional Resources:** examples of resources to help you begin to create change, organized by key drivers outlined within the milestone overview

[1] *Access the MBK Task Force Report here:* **http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/053014_mbk_report.pdf**

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER
Community Challenge

Completing Post-Secondary Education or Training

STEP 1:
Build Understanding

MILESTONE OVERVIEW

All Americans should receive the education and training needed for quality jobs of today and tomorrow.

By 2020, an estimated 65 percent of jobs will require post-secondary education. It has been well-documented that higher levels of education lead to higher wages for individuals and, in turn, higher tax revenues for federal, state, and local governments. Additionally, more education leads to increased public engagement of Americans in the life of their communities, regions, and states. The economic and civic health of the nation depends on a well-educated citizenry, and ensuring that all citizens are able to participate and successfully leverage educational opportunities is critical for the nation's future.

To drive real change in our community, we must seek opportunities to:

- Improve College Advising Services and Support Tools
- Aim Higher in High School by Encouraging FAFSA Completion and Post-Secondary Applications
- Expand Access to Early College, Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement / International Baccalaureate Courses, and Rigorous College Prep
- Increase Development and Adoption of Promising and Proven College Completion and Transfer Strategies
- Support Young People To and Through College

For a more detailed explanation of these drivers, see the My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report, May 2014,
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/053014_mbk_report.pdf

ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEM

A key next step toward driving change involves assessing community needs, with a focus on engaging and connecting key stakeholder groups,* including:

Align **college access programs and community-based organizations** to improve coverage and outcomes

Engage **youth** to focus aspirations and improve mindsets

Encourage **K-12** and **post-secondary leaders** to increase alignment and dual enrollment

LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIAL

Leverage **employers** for internships, mentors, and other supports

Partner with local **community colleges** and **universities** to increase awareness, access, and completion

Connect with **DoE** and **DoL** to discuss available grant funding to scale strong evidence-based programs

These key stakeholder groups are meant to serve as an illustrative sampling, to be validated and adapted as relevant to your specific community

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Cities that are globally competitive **attract businesses and families** when more residents pursue and successfully obtain post-secondary degrees and credentials.

2. **Successful post-secondary enrollment and completion** begins much earlier with strong student aspirations, mindsets and preparation.

3. **Systems to track progress and provide early, consistent, and aligned supports** on the journey thru K-12 and higher education increase the odds of success, especially for vulnerable students.

4. **Connections to employers and jobs** increase both the quality and relevance of post-secondary learning opportunities.

5. Through **coordination and cooperation across institutions**, alignment of financial aid according to need can significantly increase access and completion.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER
Community Challenge

Completing Post-secondary Education or Training

STEP 2:
Identify Leading Practices

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

This section is intended as an informational resource to support your MBK Community Challenge efforts. It introduces an illustrative sample of principles, practices, and resources to consider in building your local initiatives. Ideas and resources may not apply equally in every community as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to these complex issues.

Practice 1: Early College High Schools
Early college high schools replace remediation with engaging instruction and individualized supports to prepare all students – and particularly those traditionally underserved – for college and careers. Early College Designs are based on the bold idea that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money toward a post-secondary credential, are powerful motivators for students to work hard and meet intellectual challenges.

Practice 2: Accelerated Study Programs
Accelerated study programs are designed to increase graduation rates by helping motivated students earn their degrees as quickly as possible. These programs provide peer support, financial assistance, and intensive counseling and advisement. Participants are more likely to stay in school, earn credit, and graduate within three years.

Practice 3: GED Bridge Programs
Those who obtain GEDs don't typically move on to college or training programs. GED bridge programs offer intensive career-contextualized instruction that aims to better prepare students to not only pass the GED exam, but pursue additional education and development opportunities.

Practice 4: Improving Access to Financial Aid Information
This comprehensive strategy involves improving access to information about financial aid and enhanced student advisement linked to the workforce.

PROGRAMMATIC SUCCESS IN THE FIELD

The following programs are highlights received from organizations participating in the MBK Community Challenge. Their efforts are not sponsored, supervised, or independently evaluated by the U.S. Government.

Snapshot 1: Success Boston - Boston, MA

In November 2008, former Mayor Thomas Menino launched Success Boston, designed to double the college completion rate for the Boston Public Schools (BPS) class of 2011 and beyond. Key collaborating partners include the City of Boston, BPS, the Boston Foundation, numerous nonprofits, and nearly 40 Massachusetts colleges and universities.

Key Takeaways

- Boston established a citywide goal of having a 50 percent increase in the college graduation rate for college enrollees from BPS
- The city's current mayor, Martin Walsh, has continued to support the initiative

Snapshot 2: CUNY Start – New York, NY

CUNY Start helps low-income students bypass college developmental coursework. The program involves intensive instruction focused on building academic skills and preparing for success in college, combined with formal guidance / advisement support.

Key Takeaways

- In the first semester of a degree program, participants attempted and earned more credits, and had higher GPAs than non-CUNY Start students
- For the first six full-time cohorts, 75 percent of students requiring writing remediation achieved proficiency, 70 percent of those requiring reading remediation achieved proficiency, 68 percent requiring Math 1 remediation achieved proficiency, and 67 percent requiring Math 2 remediation achieved proficiency

Snapshot 3: Uplift – Dallas / Fort Worth, TX

Uplift is a public charter school focused on intensely and programmatically supporting students from 6th grade through college enrollment and eventual graduation. Uplift has identified a broad spectrum of best practices through its ongoing "Road to College" efforts that have led to its success, collecting data from alumni who are currently enrolled in college to more fully understand how future graduates can be better prepared.

Key Takeaways

- Uplift's "Road to College" participants have a 100 percent college acceptance rate for its seniors (more than half of whom represented first-generation college enrollees) and a 94 percent persistence rate of 2012 graduates who continue on to their second year of post-secondary education

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER
Community Challenge

Completing Post-secondary Education or Training

STEP 3:
Take Action

TURNING THEORY INTO ACTION: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Now is the time to drive impact in promoting post-secondary education or training completion by expanding access to rigorous college preparation, improving college advising services and tools, and encouraging FAFSA completion and post-secondary applications.

Here are some helpful resources to get you started. *These resources include information and examples from nongovernmental sources. These resources are provided for informational purposes only. Inclusion of nongovernmental information and resources does not indicate endorsement by the White House or the U.S. government of entities, their products or services, and the **information contained at referenced sites does not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. government.***

Increase College Opportunity for Low-Income Students

Promising Models and a Call to Action (2014): This White House report categorizes the major barriers facing low-income students and introduces promising interventions in four areas: (1) Connecting more low-income students to colleges where they can succeed; (2) Increasing the pool of students preparing for college; (3) Reducing inequalities in college advising and test preparation; and (4) Seeking breakthroughs in remedial education.

Access the report here:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/increasing_college_opportunity_for_low-income_students_report.pdf

Improve College Advising Services and Support Tools

Municipal Leadership for Post-Secondary Success: Getting Started (2012): This guide from National League of Cities outlines a set of action steps for city leaders who are concerned about low college completion rates and want to identify and advance solutions. Local officials can convene leaders from community and technical colleges, public and private universities, school districts, community organizations, workforce boards, and chambers of commerce to develop a more coordinated strategy to provide students with the supports and services they need to graduate with a post-secondary credential. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the guide here:
http://www.nlc.org/Documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/IYEF/Education/municipal-leadership-for-post-secondary-success-getting-started-oct-2012.pdf

Increase Development and Adoption of Promising and Proven College Completion and Transfer Strategies

The Interstate Passport Initiative: The Passport is a new framework from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education to accelerate and streamline a transfer student's pathway to a credential by relying on learning outcomes and transfer-level proficiency. Students who earn a Passport at one participating institution and transfer to another will have their learning achievement recognized; they will not be required to repeat courses at the receiving institution to meet lower-division general education requirements. With its focus on quality and streamlining the transfer process, the Passport will be of particular benefit to many minority and low-income students who can least afford to repeat learning already achieved. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the resource here:
http://www.wiche.edu/passport

Support Young People To and Through College

Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) Community Partnership for Attainment: The IHEP Community Partnership for Attainment is a community mobilization initiative designed to dramatically increase the number of local residents with post-secondary credentials. Through this collaborative effort, funded by Lumina Foundation, IHEP has created a centralized library of resources that cities will be able to use to support their work, consisting of research and practice-focused materials from community partners and beyond. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the resource here:
http://www.ihep.org/research/initiatives/community-partnership-attainment

Aim Higher in High School by Encouraging FAFSA Completion and Post-Secondary Applications

FAFSA Completion Tool: In March 2012, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) announced the release of an innovative FAFSA Completion Tool to help guidance professionals, school administrators, and practitioners both track and subsequently increase FAFSA completions at high schools across the country. Building on recent enhancements, the 2014 FAFSA Completion Tool – updated biweekly during the peak application period – now provides every high school in the United States whose students have completed five or more FAFSAs with information about how many applications were submitted and completed for the 2014–15 application year as well as comparison data from the 2013–14 FAFSA application year.

Access the complete tool here:
https://studentaid.ed.gov/about/data-center/student/application-volume/fafsa-completion-high-school

Expand Access to Early College, Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement / International Baccalaureate Courses and Rigorous College Prep

Preparing Youth for College and Career - A Process Evaluation of Urban Alliance: This report presents baseline and process study findings of an evaluation of the Urban Alliance high school internship program, which provides training, mentoring, and work experience to high school seniors from low-income communities in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Northern Virginia, and Chicago. The report explains the internship program model and its various components, describes the characteristics of youth participants, and presents findings from dozens of interviews and focus groups with program staff, youth, job mentors, and other stakeholders. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the resource here:
http://www.urban.org/publications/413233.html

Unlocking the Gate: This MDRC article offers a taxonomy of strategies (with associated levels of evidence in support of each kind of strategy) for improving developmental education outcomes, a commonly faced and major barrier to success. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the article here:
http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Unlocking%20The%20Gate%20ES.pdf

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