COMMUNITY SCHOOL READINESS PLAYBOOK:

LEAD PARTNER AGENCY READINESS RUBRIC

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OFFICE OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Lead Partner Agency Readiness Rubric is a diagnostic tool grounded in the Essentials for Community School Transformation framework.[1] Rather than assessing agencies for compliance, this tool helps Readiness Teams inventory existing assets and identify growth opportunities across two core sections:

1. Enabling Conditions (Self-Reflective Foundation)

Evaluates the relational and cultural readiness of the agency: Trusting Relationships, Actionable Data, Shared Vision, and Inclusive Decision-Making.

2. Supportive Infrastructure (Systems Audit)

Examines institutional scaffolding requiring deeper artifact review: Shared Governance Structures, Continuous Improvement, Data Systems, Strategic Partnerships, Professional Learning, and Sustainable Resources.

> 💡 **Benchmarking Guidance:** Descriptive criteria in this rubric represent high-level, exemplar practice. Lead partner agencies are not expected to meet top-tier performance across every area. Use the descriptions to identify current alignment along the continuum and inform future Exploration activities.

[1] Community Schools Forward. (2023). Framework: Essentials for community school transformation. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/project/community-schools-forward

Enabling Conditions

The four Enabling Conditions—**Trusting Relationships**, **Actionable Data**, **Shared Vision**, and **Inclusive Decision-Making**—form the core ecosystem of the *Essentials for Community School Transformation* framework. Functioning as a self-reinforcing system rather than separate silos, these conditions shift agencies from rigid institutions into responsive, collaborative partners.

Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships are formed through social interactions within communities and environments. Agency-level trusting relationships create communitywide alignment through transparent communication, equity-focused data sharing, and shared governance. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Authentic Co-Creation:** Asks youth and families what they need to succeed and co-designs tailored solution pathways.
- **Single Liaison Structure:** Provides a dedicated single point of contact to streamline administrative communications and program delivery.
- **Operational Relief:** Identifies unfunded needs and aligns external resources to eliminate gaps without overburdening school staff.
- **Complementary Networks:** Connects schools to community partner networks that districts may not independently hold.
- **Neighborhood Immersion:** Organizes community learning walks to ground educators in the lived experiences and strengths of local neighborhoods.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***trusting relationships*** between your agency and local school districts/schools?

What are some areas where strong trusting relationships currently exist, and what are the opportunities where trusting relationships can be or need to be built?

Existing Trusting Relationships:

Opportunities for Building Trusting Relationships:

Actionable Data

Actionable data is defined as information that is clear, specific, and timely enough to lead directly to a decision. Lead partner agencies leverage actionable data to bridge school performance with community context, driving transparent, privacy-protected continuous improvement. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Outcome-Driven Backwards Design:** Begins with targeted community outcomes to collect evidence that proves partnership return on investment.
- **Shared Data Protocols & MOUs:** Co-creates data plans with district leaders, establishing MOUs that define shared metrics and privacy protections.
- **Quantitative & Qualitative Synergy:** Integrates real-time academic/attendance metrics with family empathy interviews and home visit feedback.
- **Community Data Layering & GIS:** Utilizes interactive dashboards and maps to layer school metrics over community variables (e.g., transit, housing) and asset locations.
- **Targeted Disaggregation:** Disaggregates data to expose equity gaps and channel resources to families with the highest need.
- **PII Protection:** Deploys record-linking techniques that connect cross-system datasets without disclosing personally identifiable information.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***actionable data*** for your agency?

What are some areas where strong actionable data currently exists, and what are the opportunities where strong actionable data is needed?

Existing Actionable Data:

Needed Actionable Data:

Shared Vision

A shared vision is a collective agreement outlining a lead partner agency's image of a desired future, articulating core values and long-term goals for the local community. It serves as an operational anchor to align organizational strategy with community priorities. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **District & Policy Integration:** Harmonizes agency goals with district strategic plans, embedding shared commitments into organizational policies and communications.
- **Co-Designed Foundation:** Drafts and refines the vision through collaborative workshops with families, youth, educators, and community partners.
- **Decision-Making Compass:** Evaluates prospective programs, grant proposals, and resource investments against the shared vision.
- **Cross-System Synergy:** Eliminates initiative overlap and ensures partner-led interventions reinforce districtwide goals.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***a shared vision*** within your agency?

How does the agency's shared vision align with the local school district's vision? How do they differ?

Shared Vision Alignment:

Shared Vision Difference:

Inclusive Decision-Making

Lead partner agencies establish inclusive decision-making infrastructure by codifying community voices–particularly from underrepresented groups–into grantmaking, strategic governance, and policy co-design. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Formal Charters:** Implements written organizational charters that delegate authority to front-line experts, youth, and family advocates.
- **Demographic & Lived-Experience Representation:** Aligns agency leadership demographics with local neighborhoods and supports residents in holding board and committee roles.
- **Community-Led Grant Reviews:** Engages local residents and subject-matter experts as primary reviewers for community program grant allocations.
- **Joint District Steering:** Co-chairs resource allocation committees alongside district leaders and out-of-school providers to align funding with authentic community priorities.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***inclusive decision-making*** within your agency?

What are some areas where inclusive decision-making currently exists, and where are the opportunities for integrating stronger inclusive decision-making?

Existing Inclusive-Decision Making:

Opportunities to Integrate Inclusive Decision-Making:

Supportive Infrastructure

A supportive infrastructure establishes the organizational framework necessary to transition lead partner agencies from isolated service vendors into fully integrated strategic partners in whole-child transformation. Aligning with the *Essentials for Community School Transformation* framework, this infrastructure connects central office departments, school sites, and partner organizations across six core elements: *shared governance*, *data systems*, *strategic partnerships*, *continuous improvement*, *professional learning*, and *sustainable resources*. Together, these elements provide the operational scaffolding needed to sustain all four Enabling Conditions and drive systemwide institutional change.

Shared Governance Structures

Lead partner agencies establish multi-tiered shared governance infrastructure to redistribute decision-making authority and ensure authentic community co-leadership across all levels of operation. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Systems Governance Councils:** Convenes multi-stakeholder councils to guide high-level agency policy, fiscal allocations, and strategic direction.
- **Standing Committees & Advisory Groups:** Structures standing committees (policy, programming) and advisory panels to integrate community expertise and non-board representatives into agency governance.
- **Neighborhood & Focus Councils:** Embeds representative neighborhood councils to ensure residents, youth, and families directly shape local programming.
- **Task Forces & Implementation Workgroups:** Establishes time-bound task forces and frontline implementation workgroups to translate governance decisions into daily operational execution.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***shared governance structures*** within your agency? Do school and district representatives show up in any of these structures within your agency?

What are some areas where shared governance structures currently exist, and what are the opportunities where shared governance structures can be or need to be built?

Existing Shared Governance Structures

Opportunities for Building Shared Governance Structures

Continuous Improvement

Lead partner agencies embed continuous improvement methodologies into daily operations to drive proactive adaptation, co-designed programming, and measurable community impact. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Systematic Inquiry Framework:** Utilizes a formal, structured improvement framework—such as the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle—to guide ongoing program refinement and operational optimization.
- **Proactive Operational Cycles:** Transitions beyond passive, one-time evaluations toward continuous, routine cycles of assessing, learning, and adapting agency practices.
- **Inclusive Community Co-Design:** Involves program participants, youth, families, neighborhood residents, and school/district staff directly in co-creating and evaluating initiatives to ensure alignment with authentic needs.
- **Technology-Driven KPI Tracking:** Leverages technology and software platforms to track key performance indicators (KPIs), including participant satisfaction, volunteer retention, and overall program efficacy.
- **Multi-Channel Qualitative Engagement:** Routinely conducts surveys, focus groups, and community forums to gather diverse stakeholder perspectives and directly inform strategic adaptations.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***continuous improvement*** within your agency? Do school and district representatives show up in any of these processes within your agency?

What are the strengths of the continuous improvement processes in your agency? What opportunities are there to strengthen these processes?

Existing Strengths:

Opportunities to Strengthen:

Data Systems

Lead partner agencies build data systems that connect community needs assessments, real-time service tracking, and visual analytics within privacy-protected district governance frameworks. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Root Cause Analysis:** Analyzes system trends to diagnose root causes before launching community or school-based interventions.
- **Referral & Engagement Infrastructure:** Tracks youth and family engagement, support referrals, and service completion across partner networks in real time.
- **Formative & Summative Dashboards:** Utilizes visual data dashboards that layer real-time progress metrics with end-of-year outcome evaluations.
- **Secure District Data Sharing:** Governs cross-system data exchanges through formal MOUs that safeguard individual family and student privacy.

Self-Reflection

Refer to your Data Snapshot *(Phase 3)* and review the data systems in place in your agency. Consider:

What is not currently being tracked or collected that you feel is important?

To what extent are the data systems in place accessible to key stakeholders beyond agency staff?

What processes are in place to communicate local data to the community?

Professional Learning Opportunities

Lead partner agencies establish job-embedded professional development systems that align staff skill growth with student/family outcomes, psychological safety, and employee retention. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Outcome-Linked Capacity Building:** Delivers targeted professional learning that explicitly connects staff skill development to positive youth, family, and community outcomes.
- **Psychologically Safe Culture:** Trains staff collectively to establish a supportive, collaborative workplace culture where team members comfortably address challenges, inquire deeply, and share lessons learned—creating safer environments for youth and families.
- **Relational Practice & Trust Building:** Provides specialized training focused on developing authentic, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive relationships between agency staff, youth, and families.
- **Impactful Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** Facilitates job-embedded PLCs that foster shared commitment to organizational goals, improve performance, and mitigate professional isolation and burnout.
- **Strategic Workforce Investment:** Invests in ongoing professional learning as a core strategy to strengthen organizational culture, attracting and retaining mission-aligned staff dedicated to long-term community success.

Self-Reflection

Does the agency offer professional learning opportunities focused on:

☐ Collaborative leadership:

☐ Restorative practices:

☐ Community engagement:

☐ Positive youth development:

☐ Education systems:

If available, provide 2 examples.

Strategic Partnerships

Lead partner agencies structure strategic partnerships through formal agreements, shared performance metrics, and co-located operational infrastructure. Partners align unique assets, operational tools, and expertise to solve complex community challenges and sustain transformational systems. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Mutually Beneficial Governance & Pooled Resources:** Establishes formal, long-term alliances characterized by shared governance structures, pooled fiscal/human resources, and mutual institutional commitment.
- **Shared Vision & Alignment:** Grounds all strategic alliances in a co-created vision that explicitly articulates why collective action yields superior community outcomes compared to isolated efforts.
- **Formalized MOUs & Conflict Resolution:** Codifies roles, operational responsibilities, decision-making protocols, and dispute resolution mechanisms through formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).
- **Joint Performance Metrics & Shared Data:** Co-develops shared performance metrics and data-tracking protocols to evaluate collective impact and monitor whole-child outcomes transparently.
- **Programmatic & Infrastructure Synergy:** Fosters both programmatic alliances (pooling specialized expertise to execute specific initiatives) and resource-based partnerships (sharing physical infrastructure, IT platforms, and administrative capacity).
- **Culture of Shared Responsibility:** Cultivates a deep organizational culture of shared accountability across all partner entities, ensuring collective ownership of successes and challenges.

Self-Reflection

Are there **formal partnerships** in place between your agency and the local school districts? What identified student and family needs do these partnership agreements address?

What are some examples of formal partnerships that currently exist, and what are the opportunities where formal partnerships can be or need to be built?

Existing Formal Partnerships

Opportunities to Build Formal Partnerships

Sustainable Resources

Lead partner agencies establish sustainable resource models by braiding funding streams, demonstrating return-on-investment (ROI) through data, and codifying practices into long-term policy. Sustainable resources establish stable funding streams and structural capacity to maintain initiatives across leadership transitions without overextending personnel or organizational budgets. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for agency-level self-assessment:

- **Braided and Blended Fiscal Models:** Implements sophisticated fiscal strategies—such as braiding and blending public, private, and philanthropic funding streams—to maximize resource flexibility and financial resilience.
- **Long-Term Formalized District MOUs:** Secures multi-year formal agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with school districts to lock in long-term operational and financial commitments.
- **ROI-Driven Data Proof Points:** Utilizes robust data systems to demonstrate a clear return on investment (ROI) to district leaders, funders, and community stakeholders, securing ongoing financial backing.
- **Human Capital Development & Sustainability:** Invests in workforce capacity, succession planning, and staff well-being to maintain high-quality service delivery without causing personnel burnout.
- **Institutionalized Systemic Continuity:** Structures operational frameworks, knowledge repositories, and governance roles so that partner supports remain seamless and intact during leadership transitions.

Self-Reflection

How are initiatives launched, maintained, and sustained within your district? What common barriers tend to show up?

How are grant funds designated through your agency?

What are the sources of grant funding for your agency and what are the allowable uses for those funds?

Does the agency employ community engagement staff?

What are some examples of sustainable resources that currently exist in your agency, and what opportunities are there to expand and add to the sustainable resources?

Existing Sustainable Resources:

Opportunities to Expand and/or Add Sustainable Resources:

Agency Readiness Rubric Summary

Consolidate your ratings and reflections from the self-assessment rubrics into the summary matrix below to establish your agency's overall readiness baseline.

Enabling Conditions	
Trusting Relationships: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding trusting relationships for your agency?	**How might you elevate trusting relationships to align with the community school strategy?**
Actionable Data: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding actionable data within your agency?	**How might you elevate your school's approach to actionable data to align with the community school strategy?**
Shared Vision: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding shared vision practices for your agency?	**How might you elevate your school's approach to a shared vision to align with the community school strategy?**
Inclusive Decision-Making: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding inclusive decision-making practices within your agency?	**How might you elevate inclusive decision-making practices to align with the community school strategy?**

Supportive Infrastructure	
Shared Governance Structures: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding shared governance structures for your agency?	**How can you elevate your shared governance structures to align with the community school strategy?**
Continuous Improvement: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding continuous improvement practices within your agency?	**How can you elevate your continuous improvement processes to align with the community school strategy?**
Data Systems: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding data systems within your agency?	**How can you elevate your school's data systems to align with the community school strategy?**

Professional Learning Opportunities: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding professional learning opportunities within your agency?	**How can you elevate professional learning opportunities to align with the community school strategy?**
Strategic Partnerships: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding strategic partnership practices for your agency?	**How can you elevate your school's strategic partnerships to align with the community school strategy?**
Sustainable Resources: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding sustainable resources for your agency?	**How can you elevate your school's sustainable resources to align with the community school strategy?**

Recommendations for Next Steps

Upon finalizing your site readiness rubrics, select the appropriate next steps based on your team's baseline results:

1. Internal Capacity & Foundational Learning

- **Assess Foundational Knowledge:** Pause to determine if team members need additional grounding in the strategy, returning to *Phase 2*.
- **Re-engage Stakeholders:** Re-administer rubrics with newly onboarded agency, school, and community partners.
- **Charter Internal Governance:** Establish a formal agency committee to direct local community school implementation.
- **Leverage Technical Assistance:** Connect with expert providers to expand agency consulting and technical capacity.

2. Strategic Planning & Policy Definition

- **Develop Gap Improvement Plans:** Formulate an action plan targeting specific gaps identified through the rubric.
- **Define Partner Criteria & Duration:** Determine eligibility requirements for potential school/district partners and clarify if partnership structures will be time-limited.
- **Build Data & Progress Tracking Systems:** Institute data tracking and monitoring systems dedicated to the agency's community school strategy.

3. Stakeholder Outreach & Expansion

- **Advance Playbook Sections:** Move forward to *Phase 5: Considering All Stakeholders* and *Phase 6: Building Awareness*.
- **Initiate District Outreach:** Contact local school district leadership to gauge interest in collaborative partnership.