Road Map District Consortium

Race to the Top: Nature and Quality of Partnerships Formative Evaluation Report

Contents

Executive Summary

In 2012, the Auburn School District, Federal Way Public Schools, Highline Public Schools, Kent School District, Renton School District, Seattle Public Schools, Tukwila School District, and the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) were awarded federal funding in the form of the Road Map Region Race to the Top District Grant (RTT-D)[1] in order to reduce the achievement gap in schools and build a strong college-going culture across the region. The RTT-D is driven by the principles outlined in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*'s 2011 "Collective Impact" article, which emphasizes the importance of "abandoning individual agendas in favor of a collective approach to improving student achievement" (Kania & Kramer, 2011). As such, all seven districts are working with numerous community based organizations (CBOs) and with PSESD as the fiscal and management agent, in order to ensure the most effective and innovative approaches are used to close the achievement and opportunity gaps.

The goal of the current evaluation study was to examine the nature and quality of RTT-D partnerships since the grant was awarded in 2012. This is one of two reports that focus primarily on the nature and quality of partnerships, which is an integral piece of RTT-D's Collective Impact efforts. Three additional reports are forthcoming: one containing a social network analysis; one containing the quantitative outcomes analysis; and the other containing a cost-benefit analysis.

Data for this report include that which were collected through 28 interviews and focus groups and the "Nature and Quality of Partnerships" online survey, which was administered to individuals in all seven districts, all CBOs, PSESD, and members of the Executive Committee. A total of 124 individuals responded, reflecting a response rate of approximately 55 percent. All survey and interview data are presented by organization type (henceforth referred to as "groups" or "constituencies") to better highlight similarities or differences in the feedback about the nature of the partnership from the perspective of the four primary constituencies. The discussion of preliminary evaluation findings is organized thematically, focusing on major themes that have emerged as a result of RTI International's analyses of survey and interview/focus group data.

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[1] The Road Map Region is a reference to the district's concurrent participation in the Road Map Project. The Race to the Top funding and projects are in service of the goals of the Road Map Project, which is an effort to dramatically improve student achievement from "cradle to college and career" in South King County and South Seattle. For more information, please visit http://www.roadmapproject.org/.

Impact of RTT-D Funds on Partnerships and Collaboration Highlights

- All four groups have a shared vision for closing the achievement gap and creating systems across organizations to better serve students (see page 17).

  o The majority of interviewees mentioned "increasing student achievement," "closing the achievement gap," or "closing the opportunity gap" as the primary goals for the RTT-D work. Several of those who mentioned increasing student achievement spoke of doing so "particularly for low income students," "underrepresented students," or "students of color."

  o The next most frequent response about the overall goals of RTT-D was to "improve collaboration within the region" and, as a result, create a sustainable system or set of systems that will allow districts and CBOs to more effectively serve students.

- On average, all groups feel positively about the time and commitment of all partners involved in RTT-D (see table 3).

  o On average, respondents agreed that the partners they worked with were "highly committed" to the work they were doing, with school districts and those who classified themselves as "other" feeling most positively overall.

  o On the whole, groups, especially PSESD and CBOs, feel there is some room for improvement in collaboration efforts.

- All groups feel that the other groups are focused on creating equitable outcomes for students and their families (see page 20).

- Districts and CBOs value each other's contributions, but both have concerns about the capacity of the other to engage in partnerships.

- On average, all groups "agree[d] that what [everyone] is trying to accomplish together with the RTT-D grant would be difficult for any single organization to accomplish on its own." The PSESD and CBOs assigned this statement the highest rating (close to "strongly agree").

- Some groups are not yet convinced that all the organizations who should be involved in RTT-D are involved (see page 20).

  o Some groups suggested creating a way for parents to have a formalized way of providing feedback as well as the addition of more ethnically based or cultural CBOs, organizations with STEM business partnerships, someone who has ex-

perience in reaching families in an early learning capacity, and an organization with college and career readiness expertise.

- Many CBOs and some school district staff feel that the structure of the Executive Committee and the way funding is distributed heavily favor schools, and CBOs do not feel they have a strong voice under the current structure. Others note that parents and family are not directly represented (see page 22).

- Survey data show all groups "somewhat agree" that their expertise is appreciated by others in RTT-D (see table 9).

  o On average, all groups at least "somewhat agreed" that their organization's or district's expertise was recognized and appreciated, that people were willing to compromise with one another to accomplish the goals of the grant, and that the various groups involved trusted one another.

  o Overall, school districts seemed to agree more strongly with items relating to trust and appreciation, while CBOs and PSESD assigned the lowest average ratings to this group of statements.

Systems Change Highlights

- District staff noted a number of federal- and state-wide initiatives that are impacting their work in RTT-D. District staff felt stretched thin by these larger policy factors, including the new state-wide assessment system, the implementation of Common Core, and the new state-wide principal and teacher evaluation system (see page 33).

- On average, all groups at least "somewhat agreed" that their organization/district/school collected sufficient quantitative data and effectively used qualitative data to improve their ability to reach the grant goals (see table 10).

- RTT-D has had some significant success in developing regional practices and removing barriers to access and opportunity at both ends of the K–12 system (see page 34).

  o The region has moved to a common kindergarten registration date, alleviating confusion in the community and allowing the region to advertise together on TV and radio to increase enrollment.

  o The region has also supported students taking College Board exams by removing barriers and increasing opportunity (e.g., paying for the tests, administering them at the school during the school day) and has reported a large increase in participation.

Sustainability Highlights

- The majority of groups feel mostly positive about the capacity they are building with RTT-D grant funds (see page 37).

- All groups indicate confidence in their ability to keep up with grant work on the survey, but the interview and focus group data reveal struggles with organizational capacity (see table 11).

  - During interviews and focus groups, nearly equal numbers of respondents from districts, CBOs, and PSESD cited capacity and time limitations as two of the biggest barriers to their work or issues that they anticipated would cause challenges down the road.

- All groups have already begun thinking about sustainability and see alternate sources of funding as the best way to ensure work persists (see page 39).

Conclusion and Recommendations Highlights

RTT-D has had significant success in developing regional practices and removing barriers to access and opportunity. Many aspects of the partnership have gone very well, as indicated above. Other partnership dimensions/system changes are not yet as well evolved or as effective as they could be. The following recommendations speak to these areas which have been identified as areas for growth. The key recommendations focus on helping partnerships increase collaboration and mutual learning, participation and the representation of all stakeholders, and equity among students and their families in the RTT-D region.

- Recommendation: Deepen the work of the partnership as a Learning Community (see page 44).

  - Many of the strategies in the RTT-D proposal were based on effective practices from some of the districts in order to help scale those strengths throughout the region. However, stakeholders have found that lack of time and resources for staff to attend meetings is a challenge. Stakeholders could think about how they could come together as a group to better collaborate.

- Recommendation: Sustain a common vision and continue conversations about equity (see page 44).

  - RTT-D stakeholders often had differing perspectives on the roles, expectations, and strategies of cross-organizational partnerships. Systems change and collective impact requires an alignment of vision. RTT-D is encouraged to continue

to engage in conversations about developing and leveraging authentic partnerships using Ishimaru's (2014) partnership framework.

- Recommendation: Develop system-wide supports for authentic CBO–school district partnerships (see page 45).

  - Stakeholders should have conversations focused on what they might need to support authentic CBO-school district partnerships across the region, as the ways that school districts select, work with, and support relationships is not uniform across all seven districts. It would be helpful to systematically identify best practices in order to strengthen partnership structures.

- Recommendation: Balance power dynamics through equitable representation of stakeholders (see page 46).

  - Stakeholders highlighted the make-up of the Executive Committee and that funding is given to districts and not directly to CBOs. Both structures were written into the funded proposal in this manner, and while groups have expressed interest in changing these dynamics, making structural changes has proven to be difficult.

  - RTT-D could involve CBOs and stakeholders in wider governance and leadership. Although the Executive Committee is set by the bylaws of the grant, RTT-D could think about developing a broader advisory group that includes a wider representation of stakeholders, including an increased number of CBOs, families and community members, and students.

Section 1: Introduction

In 2012, the Auburn School District, Federal Way Public Schools, Highline Public Schools, Kent School District, Renton School District, Seattle Public Schools, Tukwila School District, and the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) were awarded federal funding in the form of the Road Map Region Race to the Top District Grant (RTT-D)[2] in order to reduce the achievement gap and build a strong college-going culture across the region. The RTT-D is driven by the principles outlined in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*'s 2011 "Collective Impact" article, which emphasizes the importance of "abandoning individual agendas in favor of a collective approach to improving student achievement" (Kania & Kramer, 2011). As such, all seven districts are working with numerous community based organizations (CBOs) and with the PSESD as the fiscal and management agent in order to ensure the most effective and innovative approaches are used to close the achievement gap.

The RTT-D grant comprises 12 projects, including three "Deep Dives", which span from Pre-K through college and career.[3] The projects and commitments are housed under four primary strands—Foundational Elements, Start Strong, STEM Strong, and Stay Strong:

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[2] The Road Map Region is a reference to the district's concurrent participation in the Road Map Project. The Race to the Top funding and projects are in service of the goals of the Road Map Project, which is an effort to dramatically improve student achievement from "cradle to college and career" in South King County and South Seattle. For more information, please visit http://www.roadmapproject.org/.
[3] "Deep Dives" are projects in very high-poverty settings that can benefit from strong community partnerships that support students during and outside of the school day throughout the entire year.

Figure 1. RTT-D Commitments, projects, and Deep Dives

START STRONG				STAY STRONG
Cradle	*Elementary school*	*Middle school*	*High school*	*College/Career*

Foundational Elements

Commitment 6: Robust teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluations
Project 1: Investment fund for teaching and leading
Project 2: Develop a regional data portal and data sharing agreements
Deep Dive 3: Investment fund to develop additional community-school partnerships

Start Strong

Commitment 1: Summer reading program
Project 3: Adopt a robust pre-K–3rd approach system wide
Deep Dive 1: Intensive school and community partnerships to turn around academic performance in high-needs elementary schools (Kent Hill Partnership)
Deep Dive 2: Intensive school and community partnerships to turn around academic performance in high-needs elementary schools (White Center Partnership)

STEM Strong

Commitment 2: Common Core implementation
Commitment 3: Next Generation Science Standards
Project 4: Expand the effective use of digital STEM tools
Project 5: Create a regional system for career awareness and exploration

Stay Strong: Achieve College and Career Readiness

	Commitment 4: Double completion of Algebra or higher in 8th grade
	Commitment 5: Full integration of the High School and Beyond Plan
	Project 6: Create an integrated system of middle and high school advising
	Project 7: Adopt the College Board College and Career Readiness Pathway
	Project 8: Investment fund for College and Career Ready Course selection

SOURCE: Figure 1 was adapted from The Road Map District Consortium's Proposal: Start Strong/STEM Strong/Stay Strong Plan, p.6, and the most recent Projects and Performance Measures Internal Document.

Focus of This Report

Although each RTT-D project has an extensive set of outcomes that accompany the scope of work, this report is not intended to cover the status of each project's work to date or the outcome analysis tied to each project. The RTI evaluation team intends to submit three additional reports to PSESD in coming months. The first additional report will be a write-up of the social network analysis that was conducted as part of the online survey; the second will be an outcomes report, which will highlight the status of quantitative outcomes of interest for each project; and the third will be a fiscal analysis report, which will include a cost-benefit analysis of the work to date. This report focuses primarily on the nature and quality of partnerships, which is an integral piece of RTT-D's Collective Impact efforts. As such, this report should not be considered a comprehensive report of all aspects of RTT-D work; rather, this report will provide preliminary feedback about how the partnerships are working, how different groups involved in RTT-D perceive the nature and quality of the partnerships, and recommendations about how different groups might further strengthen partnerships moving forward.

Section 2: Methods

The RTI evaluation is designed to answer questions about the nature and quality of the RTT-D partnerships that are intended to facilitate the achievement of performance outcomes (the outcomes report is separate and forthcoming). To conduct this portion of the evaluation, a research design was developed that included interviews and focus groups with a subset of grantees as well as a survey of all individuals involved in RTT-D as identified by the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) and project leads. The RTI evaluation team presented the research plan and nature of partnership data collection instruments to an external evaluation advisory group, comprising representatives from various RTT-D stakeholder groups.

The evaluation data presented here reflect feedback about the partnership as it functioned from the beginning of the evaluation in February 2014 through January 28, 2015. It should be noted that the data presented in this report are only preliminary. The evaluation team will work closely with PSESD to continue to collect and report on data that will expand upon the evaluation findings as the project progresses.

Interviews and Focus Groups

From November 3, 2014, through January 28, 2015, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups designed to collect information on the following constructs:

- Current project or role

- Project goals

- Alignment of activities/projects with each other

- Current work/activities

- Collaboration across organization types (community-based organizations [CBO], districts, PSESD, and the Executive Committee)

  o Membership

  o Resources and support with partners and families

  o Learning from collaboration/lessons learned about collaboration efforts

  o Impact of RTT-D's collaboration efforts

    o   Sustainability

    o   Lessons learned to date/accomplishments and challenges

A total of 27 interviews or focus groups were held with CBOs, all seven districts, project leads from PSESD, and members of the RTT-D Executive Committee (table 1). The interviews were conducted in person or on the phone and lasted from 30 to 75 minutes. The interview protocol was tailored to reflect the varying roles of each type of organization.

Table 1. Interviews and/or focus groups conducted

Organization type	Individual interviews	Focus groups
CBOs	10*	
Districts		7
PSESD staff	1	4
Executive Committee members	6**	

NOTES: * The 10 individuals represented 10 CBOs. ** Only six of the nine Executive Committee members were interviewed before the end of the data collection period. One CBO representative was interviewed as a CBO representative and a member of the Executive Committee. The evaluation team will continue to conduct interviews and integrate those data in the next report.

Nature and Quality of Partnerships Online Survey

Because conducting interviews with every organization involved with RTT-D is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the evaluation team instead created a 24-item partnership survey administered to all possible stakeholders that asked respondents to rate various components of the partnership, including the below constructs:

- Mutual respect/trust

- Appropriate membership

- Ability to compromise

- Membership investment in project

- Clarity of roles/responsibilities

- Adaptability

- Quality of communication

- Shared vision

- Quality of collaboration

- Capacity/capacity building

- Communication among and between partners

The survey was administered to all individual members of CBOs, districts, PSESD, and the Executive Committee to ensure that each individual could have the chance to provide feedback regardless of whether he or she had been formally interviewed. The survey was open from December 2014 through January 2015 and was sent to a total of 239 individuals involved with RTT-D. As of January 28, 2015, the response rate was approximately 55 percent (see table 2 for a full breakdown of survey respondents). Survey responses are presented as averages to most accurately reflect the overall responses within and between groups. Overall averages were calculated using individual responses and are not averages of averages.
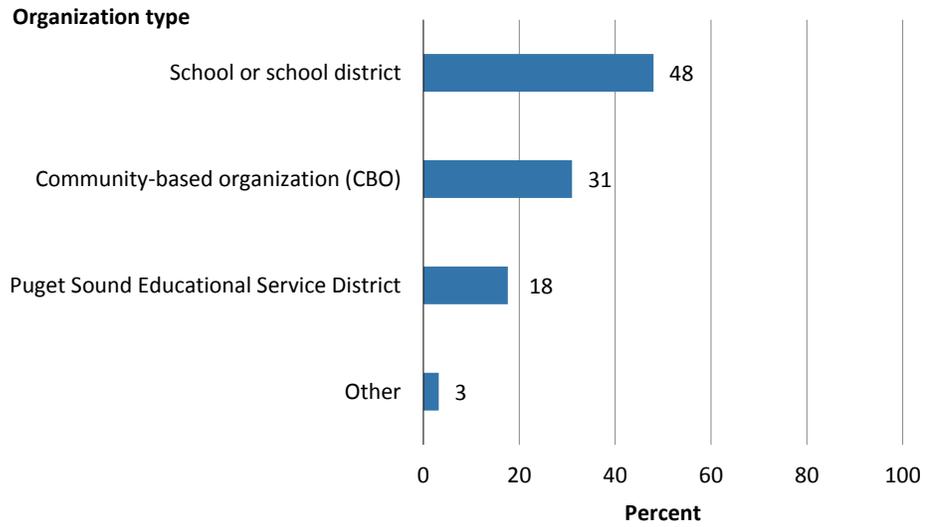
Table 2. Summary of survey responses

Response type	Number
Individuals invited to complete survey	**239**
Inactive individuals*	-9
Unsubscribed individuals**	-3
Total active	227
Total responses	124 (55 percent of active individuals)

NOTES: *Respondents were coded as inactive if their email was no longer functioning due to job transition or district email firewalls. ** Respondents were coded as unsubscribed if they clicked this option in the emailed survey request. It is unknown if they are no longer involved in RTT-D or did not want to complete the survey for another reason.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of organization that most accurately reflected their organization or institution (figure 1). Nearly half of survey respondents indicated that they were from a school or school district (48 percent), while 31 percent indicated they were from a CBO, and 18 percent indicated they were from PSESD. Three percent classified themselves as "other," a category made up primarily of union representatives.

Figure 2. Percent of survey respondents by organization type (N=124)

Organization type

Organization type	Percent
School or school district	48
Community-based organization (CBO)	31
Puget Sound Educational Service District	18
Other	3

Percent

Structure of This Formative Report

The goal of this current study was to examine the nature and quality of RTT-D partnerships since the grant was awarded in 2012. The collective impact portion of the evaluation is guided by seven evaluation questions, listed below, agreed upon by PSESD and the evaluation team, with input from the external evaluation advisory group. All subsequent survey and interview data are presented by organization type to better highlight similarities or differences in the feedback about the nature of the partnership from the perspective of the four primary constituencies. In the process of analyzing and reporting the data from evaluation activities, findings were triangulated wherever possible. For example, when the evaluation team synthesized interview and focus group data on a topic on which RTI also surveyed participants, those data are integrated with the discussion of survey findings.

The discussion of preliminary evaluation findings is organized thematically, focusing on major themes that have emerged as a result of RTI's analyses of survey and interview/focus group data. The mapping of the themes to the research questions developed at the beginning of the evaluation are outlined below. This formative report addresses the following themes and evaluation questions:

Report Sections and Corresponding Evaluation Questions

Section 3: Impact of RTT-D Funds on Partnerships and Collaboration

Evaluation Question 1: How have RTT-D consortium partners engaged in collective efforts to help close achievement gaps and to help students in the region gain ground? How did RTT-D investment funds impact the efforts?

Evaluation Question 4: How well are/were partnerships appreciated in the districts? In the region?

Section 4: Systems Change

Evaluation Question 2: What events (e.g., standards roll-out, new assessment systems) impacted RTT-D efforts and how well did partners tackle challenges they presented?

Evaluation Question 6: How has RTT-D work impacted the development of systems in and across the region? What systems were created? What systems were impacted by a project?[4]

Evaluation Question 7: Have the RTT-D partnership efforts helped stimulate district, regional, or state policy development conversations? How?

Section 5: Sustainability

Evaluation Question 3: How have RTT-D partnerships helped build capacity in the individual districts?

Evaluation Question 5: How have the RTT-D partners prepared for sustainability of RTT-D efforts and gains achieved?

Section 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

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[4] These questions have been added to the original questions outlined in the proposal as a response to stakeholder feedback. While they are addressed within the other questions, it seemed appropriate to highlight and explicitly ask such questions.

Section 3: Impact of RTT-D Funds on Partnerships and Collaboration

Evaluation Question 1: How have RTT-D consortium partners engaged in collective efforts to help close achievement gaps and to help students in the region gain ground? How did RTT-D investment funds impact the efforts?

Shared vision for closing the achievement gap and creating systems across organizations to better serve students

During the interviews and focus groups, all groups were asked to describe the goals of the entire RTT-D grant in their own words. While there is substantial documentation of the various outcome measures and goals of the grant, it is important to get a sense of how those implementing the grant would describe the goals now that everyone is approximately one year into implementation. The majority of interviewees mentioned "increasing student achievement," "closing the achievement gap," or "closing the opportunity gap" as the primary goals for the RTT-D work. Several of those who mentioned increasing student achievement spoke of doing so "particularly for low income students," "underrepresented students," or "students of color."

The next most frequent response about the overall goals of RTT-D was to "improve collaboration within the region" and, as a result, create a sustainable system or set of systems that will allow districts and CBOs to more effectively serve students. For example, one district representative said, "the goal of RTT-D is to bring together districts around collaborative projects that should have impact on [the region] and to start something that could be sustainable in terms of increasing student achievement in the district." A CBO representative expressed enthusiasm for the potential that better collaborations could have on the districts and CBOs: "When a student transfers from one district to another…and data need to be transferred over, it gets really complicated because different districts use different systems. [Work happening] in RTT-D with the data transferring system can help solve this problem." A different district representative related, "The whole purpose is to increase student achievement, particularly for students in the achievement gap. [Another goal] is working with partnerships: school districts, [CBOs], for wrap-around services to make learning happen for students."

On average, all groups feel positively about the time and commitment of all partners involved in RTT-D

Survey respondents were asked a group of questions about the time and commitment invested by other partners involved in RTT-D efforts (table 3). On average, respondents agreed that the partners they worked with were "highly committed" to the work they were doing (average overall rating of 5.1), with school districts and those who classified themselves as "other" feeling most positively overall. However, on the whole, groups felt slightly less positive about the investment of time in collaborative efforts (average overall rating of 3.8 or between "somewhat disagree" and "somewhat agree"). Specifically, average response scores from PSESD and CBOs indicated that both groups feel there is some room for improvement in collaboration efforts.

Table 3. Average rating of survey items about commitment (N =124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

The organizations or institutions (e.g., PSESD, school districts, and CBOs) that I work with on RTT-D grant activities…	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
are highly committed to the work that we are doing	4.9	5.1	4.7	5.5	**5.1**
invest the right amount of time in collaborative efforts	*3.7*	4.4	*3.5*	*3.8*	**3.8**
Average within group across statements	**4.3**	**4.8**	**4.1**	**4.6**	

NOTES: Italicized values indicate an overall rating that is or is close to disagreement.
SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015

Data from interviews and focus groups support the finding that groups overall feel very positively about the commitment of each partnership to achieving the goals of the grant. One district representative noted, "The goals between the districts have been very in-sync. RTT-D is unique in its collaboration and commitment to the same focused outcomes and goals. This reinforces what [we] already believed. The districts share a lot of the same students so collaborating helps [us] save time in learning how to serve particular students." A different district representative reflected, "Collaboration with other districts has grown because of the positive, collaborative conversations. [We] have dedicated time to address issues, and that has also led to the ability to talk about different issues that everyone is facing together." A CBO representative commented on the positive impact of shared vision and stronger partnerships: "[We] have more awareness of what the district does, why they do it, and what the CBOs do. We are working more together. Collaboration has made targeted support and interventions much more effective."

CBOs feel that there are still improvements to be made to enhance quality collaboration

While all groups feel that the majority of those involved in RTT-D are very committed to the work, there are still challenges in finding ways for groups to effectively and efficiently collaborate with one another. During the interviews and focus groups, nearly all districts and CBOs said that figuring out how to best form effective and equitable partnerships with one another was the greatest collaboration challenge. As a result, many districts and CBOs reported that the majority of partnerships functioning under RTT-D were between districts and CBOs that had worked together before. District respondents indicated that the primary reasons for working with familiar groups were the limited time to develop new relationships and concern about the capacity of some of the smaller grassroots CBOs. One CBO representative explained, "It's been a good process of trying to figure out how to fit [CBO] models with the school system and vice versa. People involved are willing to try things that are new and different to them, and [CBOs] are trying to respond in kind to their expertise. [There] is some challenge in the districts making connections to other CBOs that have been working in the community for a long time toward similar goals…That has been challenging for other organizations…They are so grassroots; they don't have a lot of staff capacity to do a lot of new things."

Despite the challenges, even those who felt that the collaboration between districts and CBOs could be stronger said that what RTT-D funding has accomplished is bringing the district and CBOs into conversations about serving students better. As one district representative summarized, "[The collaboration] efforts have really pushed other districts to think about how to align services and partnerships with CBOs to better support students. We would not have gone out and shared [what we've learned so far] on our own, but it's great that [we have been able to] through [RTT-D]." Further, both CBOs and districts reported that they were slowly learning to better understand how the other operates. One CBO representative related his/her experience of the partnership process: "We are coming from -10, so even if we are at -9 we are progressing. Prior to [RTT-D], we did not have meaningful relationships with [our] school district. We are at the beginning of understanding each other." A different CBO representative acknowledged, "[We] are learning about the kinds of pressures that school districts are under for achievement and data and the constrictions they have to work with in reaching families…There is a demand for things that are extraneous to classroom time or which preclude more family engagement activities…[That's where we can help]."

All groups feel that others are focused on creating equitable outcomes for students and their families

On average, all groups at least "somewhat agreed" that RTT-D was focused on creating equitable outcomes for students and their families in King County, though the average rating for the four survey items about equitable outcomes was lowest from PSESD and CBOs (table 4; average of 4.4 and 4.5, respectively, versus an average rating of 4.9 for the school districts, or almost "agree").

Table 4. Average rating of survey items about focus on equity (N =124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

The organizations or institutions (e.g., PSESD, school districts, and CBOs) that I work with on RTT-D grant activities…	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
engage in dialogue that is focused on supporting students, families, and/or student outcomes	4.7	5.1	4.6	5.0	**4.8**
make decisions with the goal of eliminating the opportunity gap and for creating equitable outcomes for students	4.4	5.0	4.3	4.8	**4.6**
are dedicated to the idea that we can achieve the goals the projects were intended to accomplish	4.7	4.9	4.3	4.8	**4.6**
take actions that involve a focus on equity for King County students	4.4	4.8	4.5	5.0	**4.7**
Average within group across statements	**4.5**	**4.9**	**4.4**	**4.9**	

SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015.

Groups not yet convinced that all the organizations who should be involved in RTT-D are involved

All groups were asked on the survey and during the interviews/focus groups whether they felt that the right organizations were currently involved in RTT-D project work (table 5). Survey data show that CBOs, PSESD, and the group labeled "other" "somewhat disagreed" that all the organizations/districts/schools needed to accomplish RTT-D goals were currently involved (average rating of 3.4 across these three groups). Respondents from school districts "somewhat agreed" that all the organizations needed were involved (average rating of 4.4).

During the interview/focus groups, responses to this question fell into one of two categories: either interviewees suggested a type of organization with a particular expertise that would be helpful or expressed concern about the time and effort it actually takes to develop

new partnerships, particularly with smaller organizations. The groups that offered thoughts about areas of expertise to add to RTT-D work suggested formalizing processes for parents to provide feedback as well as adding more ethnically based or cultural CBOs, organizations with STEM business partnerships, someone who has experience in reaching families in an early learning capacity; and an organization with college and career readiness expertise.

Table 5. Average rating for survey item about partnership membership (N=124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
All the organizations/districts/schools that we need to accomplish the goals of the RTT-D grant are currently involved	*3.7*	4.4	*3.5*	*3.0*	*3.6*

NOTES: Italicized values indicate an overall rating that is or is close to disagreement.
SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015.

All groups would like to better understand how to form partnerships between districts and CBOs

A significant part of RTT-Ds' strategy is to develop authentic partnerships between schools, districts, and CBOs. Such partnerships are an explicit expectation of the Deep Dives and Projects 3A and 3B. Data from interviews, focus groups, and the survey indicated a number of challenges and successes regarding these partnerships, including the following:

- The leadership structure of the Executive Committee is heavily weighted to school and district representatives.

- The funding structure of the grant provides funds directly to schools and not CBOs, creating a potential negative power dynamic between the organizations.

- Districts value the contributions of CBOs but have concerns about some CBOs' capacities to partner effectively (e.g., small organizations' capacities).

- CBOs have concerns that school districts do not know how to develop authentic partnerships.

- Districts and CBOs feel positively about the success of recent family engagement activities implemented as part of RTT-D.

- Although RTT-D has worked to be inclusive, there are challenges to certain CBOs to have equal access and opportunity.

The average ratings by CBO partners was higher than that of school district staff in only two of the 23 survey questions. One of the two statements where CBOs assigned higher average ratings than school districts (see table 11 for the other statement) was in that CBOs were more likely than school district staff to agree that "what we are trying to accomplish together with the RTT-D grant would be difficult for any single organization/district/school to accomplish by itself" (table 6). PSESD assigned this statement the highest rating of all four groups (average rating of 5.7 or close to "strongly agree"), closely followed by CBOs with an average rating of 5.6. School districts and "other" assigned this statement average ratings of 5.1 and 5.0, respectively.

Table 6. Average rating of statements about capacity by organization type (N=124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
What we are trying to accomplish together with the RTT-D grant would be difficult for any single organization/district/school to accomplish by itself	5.6	5.1	5.7	5.0	**5.4**

SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015

The leadership structure of the Executive Committee is heavily weighted to school and district representatives

Written into the grant proposal was the creation of an Executive Committee of RTT-D that included three district leadership representatives, three union leadership representatives, two at-large community partner representatives, and the superintendent of PSESD. This structure, consequently, includes seven representatives of schools and districts and two community members. Many CBOs, and some school district staff, have noted that this representation is heavily slanted to schools, it is difficult for CBOs to feel they have a voice, few people of color are represented, and parents and families are not directly represented. For CBOs who hoped for a different partnership with the school district, the make-up of this committee has continued to highlight the power differential between the two groups. As one representative stated, "There needs to be more diversity in the leadership itself. Especially when dealing with closing the achievement gap, there needs to be people of color in leadership. The problem is that there just aren't that many people of color in these leadership positions (like union leaders and superintendents). [Perhaps] there could be a change made to the bylaws to help get more people of color in more prominent positions." Another CBO representative noted that "people on that committee are not representative of the people. It should be making sure that there are diverse perspectives, which isn't only having people on the ground." To that extent, this collaboration is institutionally led and not community led,

which would mean that "parents—or people whom the parents trust—are actively engaged in this process, actively making decisions, or at least providing input."

This differential has been acknowledged by the Executive Committee and the RTT-D Leadership at PSESD. They note, however, that without an amendment from the U.S. Department of Education, the membership structure of the Executive Committee has to conform with what was written in the region's winning Race to the Top Award proposal.

The funding structure of the grant provides funds directly to schools and not CBOs, creating a potential negative power dynamic between the organizations

A second, yet similar, dynamic to the one described above is the funding structure of the grant. All grant money is given to districts or schools who then use a portion of the overall funding work with CBOs. It should be noted that not all grant money disbursed to districts is intended for use in partnerships; building partnerships with CBOs may only be one aspect of RTT-D district work. Having funds go directly to the schools, according to one CBO, "puts way too much power and focus on the schools and the school district, instead of on the partnerships. It allows the school districts to exclude partners instead of working with them." This barrier has also been acknowledged by the Executive Committee and the RTT-D Leadership at PSESD. The use of the Technical Assistance provider to help districts select CBOs to partner with for Deep Dive 3 is, in part, an attempt to form a collaboration without such dynamics coming into play.

One CBO believed that "one of the great outcomes of RTT-D has been more collaboration between CBOs and with schools. For example, getting different CBOs together for writing the grant proposal is a good way for CBOs to collaborate and figure out what needs to be done and who needs to play what parts. Generally, there seem to be new, more inclusive partnerships between CBOs that are working together that hadn't before; for example, working together in determining the RFP processes. These new partnerships have allowed different CBOs to get to know each other and has created the potential for new opportunities to work together down the road."

Districts value the contributions of CBOs but have concerns about some CBOs' capacities to partner effectively

Districts do value CBOs highly. As one school district staff member said, "One of the things we have learned is that their expertise is not the same that we have. It's important to acknowledge and recognize the connections they have with the community; value and celebrate what they do well and then try to combine with the things we do which is affect student outcomes."

Student outcomes, though, is a driving force for school and district staff, and often a barrier to community partnerships. As one school district staff member explained, "My goals are to

support a subset of students and move them in certain academic and engagement areas." Another district school staff member stated, "We have a history of partnering with other organizations but we don't have a great track record of raising student achievement through partnerships." School districts are highly accountable for academic outcomes for their students, and they are focused on this task. As one principal said, "I'm charged with delivering results for my school, I don't want to wait for my community."

Many school district staff noted that they are looking for CBOs that can support instruction and that can reach community members that are harder for schools to reach, which district staff believe CBOS are highly effective at doing. They also felt that it was harder to find partners who had the capacity to support instruction as well as schools, though they noted that CBOs were willing and able to learn different instructional delivery systems.

In addition to CBO capacity to provide academic support, school district staff reported that the infrastructure of some CBOs, particularly small and midsize organizations, often couldn't support partnerships with the district. Some CBOs did not understand what a "school district expects of community partners." For example, one district representative suggested that all CBOs, regardless of size, have an organizational chart to better indicate to those outside the organization the CBO's structure and the staff's roles and responsibilities. Conversely, larger CBOs have a "nice succinct platform to get things done. You don't have to figure out what is going on to get things done. Everyone knows their part. You don't have to worry about nitpicky detail—it's already done for us." To some extent, "knowing what to expect" may be another reason that districts return to CBOs that they have worked with before.

CBOs have concerns that school districts do not know how to develop authentic partnerships

For their part, many CBOs do not think that districts know how to, nor do they want to, enter into authentic partnerships. According to some CBOs, schools think they know best and only want to work with CBOs that the schools think have the infrastructure to support the partnership. As one CBO staff member said,

> Schools have historically, in this community, been their own silos, where they think they know how to do everything best—which they do in some areas—and have seen outside partners as if, you won't do it my way I can't work with you. They don't understand our perspective. [I had a long conversation] about power dynamics and strengths and challenges [with a school district staff member]; if you are saying that you need data, what capacity do they really have, what support could you provide, or could you lower your expectations. How much do you value their strengths—do you just want them to get the word out when you have a community event or do you want to work hand in hand. Do you understand the needs of the CBOs—districts always tell us their needs but it has to go both ways. The state and

> the feds are also constantly coming at schools and districts about what they need to do and what they should do. We CBOs get that and want to support that, but we don't want the schools to be in charge because they have requirements. We have requirements, too, often quite similar. We speak different languages.

Facilitating conversations about the assumptions held by both sides is critical; as one CBO member related, "Schools don't want to partner. On the district side they don't know how. They don't know who is really out there. For me, that's a really deep principle about how you build a partnership as a way of formalizing a much stronger connection between organizations." In addition, it was suggested by a CBO representative that the PSESD facilitate these conversations creating a "framework and guidelines and supports for open conversations around truly understanding the power dynamics that happen, [and] the funding on both sides of the issue. Such facilitated conversations would allow organizations to "truly work toward shared understanding of the mission and vision and what [the organizations] are trying to do together." Further, this is an opportunity to require the conversations and incorporate race and equity, but it has not happened yet. Partners need to be unafraid to have difficult conversations. "Building a partnership is about building alliances and sharing power across difference. That difference may be racial, organizational, geographical," but it involves talking and learning.

As stated in the previous section, many school district staff felt that it was harder to find partners who had the capacity to support instruction as well as schools do, though they noted that CBOs were willing and able to learn different instructional delivery systems. One CBO believed,

> [School districts need to] get over their thinking that certified teachers have more qualifications than anyone else. And to stop thinking that CBOs don't have anyone with those skills as well. Try to understand that people who don't look like them can still have an understanding—sometimes better—of how their children learn. So much work that the systems need to do to understand how they play into how different races and cultures are doing in their classrooms. They have biases they don't realize. Color-blindness is not equity. If they do see differences, we've encountered a lot of schools, school staff saying we're trying to work with families and they discuss the worst case scenarios and equating it with all people of that culture.

Another CBO staff member reported,

> We do have a good relationship [with the district], but we are not here for recognition or appreciation. We are here to gets kids ready, keep parents informed. We do have expertise that other organizations can benefit from. There is a stigma that we are a small non-profit, run by immigrants, so that we may not know what we are do-

ing. You can see that with the funding. We can provide more things for the amount of money, and they are big organizations with experts and they get much more money, and it's because of that perception. That perception is general—once they know what we are really doing, that perception changes. Once people know us, know our passion, they understand that we are experts in our area; that we make things happen. But it is a little hard when you start the partnership.

Districts and CBOs feel positively about the success of recent family engagement activities implemented as part of RTT-D

According to the school districts, CBOs have been very effective in (1) helping them to reach families; (2) providing wraparound services; and (3) offering programs that schools might not normally offer (like summer programs). School districts have particularly learned the most about how to reach families. As one school district stated, "We have learned how to create access points for students because it is often when you send info home that it is communicated with parents. CBOs have helped us in that 'no, you have to knock on doors to get a response. They need to see a familiar face.' Just because you make a call, have info on the website or send anything home, you haven't communicated unless you see a face. CBOs serve as access points to parents."

Although RTT-D has worked to be inclusive, there are still some challenges. As has been discussed, CBOs have raised questions about their access and opportunity to fully enter into authentic partnerships through RTT-D and hope to change the way school districts have historically partnered with CBOs. As one CBO member stated, "One of [the] major inequities that keeps coming up is access. Access for small and midsize CBOs to partner with schools and/or school districts. Overall business of school or district seems to not keep them on a radar or first tier of considerations." Another CBO commented on "the capacity of the smaller nonprofits; they are underfunded, but they are the ones that have the strongest connection to the communities (versus larger nonprofits). This prevents these smaller nonprofits from growing and from becoming even more effective."

Another challenge is that certain ethnic group organizations do not have the capacity to be involved at the levels required for RTT-D. They do not have the staffing because they are volunteer-based. There has to be more support to get these organizations to the table. One CBO representative noted, "But this is not necessarily a priority for RTT-D nor should it have to be; there should be other funders and organizations willing to step up to support these smaller organizations."

There have been efforts to build a better system. The project has "started trying to bring more of grassroots organizations to the table. These organizations can contribute ideas about how these systems and organizations could be incorporated into Deep Dive projects."

Another place of opportunity to build new relationships is in early literacy. As one CBO member stated, "If we are serious about our Kindergarten readiness for schools, then we have to start before Kindergarten. It all needs to happen before the students step through the [school] door; thinking about how they engage with families before Kindergarten. I think you're seeing that a little bit, but not on a large scale…It would take a large amount of money for that power dynamic to change."

Survey data indicate that all groups feel they are somewhat informed about project work, though interview data highlight challenges in keeping everyone as informed as groups would like

On average, all groups at least "somewhat agreed" that they felt as informed as often as they should be about work happening in other RTT-D projects, though the average rating for the two survey items about project communication was lowest from CBOs (table 7; average of 4.2 or "somewhat agree" versus an average rating of 4.6 for the three other groups, or between "somewhat agree" and "agree").

Table 7. Average rating of survey items about project communication by organization type (N=124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
I am informed as often as I should be about what goes on in RTT-D projects	4.2	4.6	4.6	4.5	**4.5**
I receive communication with enough detailed information to keep me informed about projects funded by the RTT-D grant	4.1	4.6	4.6	4.8	**4.5**
Average within groups across statements	**4.2**	**4.6**	**4.6**	**4.6**	

SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that communication under RTT-D was efficient and transparent (table 8). On average, all four groups indicated that they at least "somewhat agreed" that disagreements are resolved as quickly as possible (average rating of 4.4) and that groups make transparent decisions based on group dialogue (average rating of 4.1).

Table 8. Average rating of nature and quality of communication by organization type (N=123)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

The organizations or institutions (e.g., PSESD, school districts, and community-based organizations) that I work with on RTT-D grant activities…	CBO	School or school district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
resolve disagreements immediately (or as close to immediately as possible)	4.1	4.5	4.1	4.8	**4.4**
make transparent decisions which are informed by group dialogue	*3.9*	**4.4**	*3.9*	**4**	**4.1**
Average within groups across statements	**4.0**	**4.5**	**4.0**	**4.4**	

NOTES: Italicized values indicate an overall rating that is or is close to disagreement.
SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015

In-person meetings cited as the best way to learn about other project work, but inability to consistently attend meetings can create a barrier to communication

Data from interviews generally supported the findings that districts and PSESD felt good about the reasonable communication of project work across groups and provided insight as to why others, particularly those working in smaller organizations/districts, might not have agreed that communication was strong. For example, during the interview, all groups were asked whether lessons learned and/or project information was effectively shared across projects and organizations. Of those who indicated that they felt lessons were being shared effectively, these interviewees cited the in-person project meetings as the primary place to exchange this sort of information. As one district interviewee related, "The centralized training [for our project] has helped tremendously in maximizing resources through efficiency but also collaboration because of communication between these districts…There are always opportunities at meetings to talk about what is going on in the district."

CBOs similarly noted that in-person meetings were extremely beneficial when they were able to attend them. One CBO representative acknowledged the usefulness of the meeting she was able to attend: "It's hard to bring together partnerships from so many different places… [But a few weeks ago] we had a meeting at PSESD and discussed the partnership aspect. It was really smart of them to bring the group together…I like to go—I don't have to, but I enjoy it."

However, a small staff coupled with insufficient funding to pay for CBO staff time at the meetings makes consistent attendance difficult. A different CBO representative explained, "While RTT-D has made real efforts to be inclusive, there are still some challenges. For example, certain…organizations don't have the capacity to be involved at these [intensive] levels. They don't have the staffing because everything is volunteer-based. There has to be

more support to get their organizations to the table." A district representative reiterated the challenge with staffing time: "Part of the problem is not having a dedicated project manager. [There will be] monthly meetings at PSESD for project leads, but our capacity to attend those meetings is almost zero because we don't have that dedicated person."

When asked whether the newsletter was a useful way to get RTT-D information when attending meetings was impossible, nearly all CBO respondents indicated that the newsletter, while a great idea in theory, was too general to be a reliable source of detailed information. One CBO representative echoed that the newsletter had not been as helpful as her organization would have liked but suggested that efforts to get "all the folks" together in a room for a short period of time would be invaluable. She thought that an end-of-the-year symposium that included all CBOs, districts, and project leads would be a great opportunity "for everyone to come together and share successes with data or anecdotal evidence as well as present challenges."

Evaluation Question 4: How well are/were partnerships appreciated in the districts? In the region?

Survey data show all groups "somewhat agree" that their expertise is appreciated by others

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the level of trust and appreciation within the partnerships formed under RTT-D (table 9). On average, all groups at least "somewhat agreed" that their organization's or district's expertise was recognized and appreciated (average overall score of 4.5), that people were willing to compromise with one another to accomplish the goals of the grant (average score of 4.4), and that the various groups involved trusted one another (average score of 4.3). Overall, CBOs and PSESD assigned the lowest average rating to items relating to trust and appreciation (average scores across statements of 4.2 and 4.1, respectively), while school districts seemed to agree more strongly with this group of statements (average score of 4.7 across statements).

Table 9. Average ratings of survey items about partnerships by organization (N=124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

The organizations or institutions that I work with on RTT-D grant activities…	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
recognize and appreciate my organization/district/school's expertise*	4.3	4.8	4.3	4.3	**4.5**
are willing to compromise with one another to accomplish the goals of the of the RTT-D grant	4.1	4.6	4.1	4.8	**4.4**
trust one another	4.1	4.7	4.0	4.5	**4.3**
Average within groups across statements	**4.2**	**4.7**	**4.1**	**4.5**	

SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015
NOTE: *Item has been changed for enhanced readability in this table. The original survey item read, "My organization/district/school's expertise is recognized and appreciated by the organizations that I work with on RTT-D grant activities."

Interview/focus group data highlight CBOs' challenges with trust and appreciation in the partnership

Responses from the interviews and focus groups with CBOs highlight reasons why they might not feel as positively about trust and appreciation within the partnerships. As previously noted in this report, districts and CBOs have experienced challenges in finding the best ways to form equitable partnerships with one another; districts sometimes expressed frustration that CBOs did not seem to understand the accountability pressures they were under and CBOs felt that districts did not always appreciate the type of expertise they are able to provide and did not feel like equal partners. For example, one CBO representative expressed disappointment that districts did not seem to think CBOs were qualified to help their students learn and that credentials were valued above all else.

Most districts, on the other hand, acknowledged that CBOs have substantial expertise but wanted to make sure they were forming partnerships with CBOs that fit the particular type of expertise they thought was most important to achieve the grant goals: "We need to look at the need of our community, [which] CBO can meet that need? We have a diverse community, so can organizations provide the services we need with the level of trust required for families to actually use the services? Is it the right people mix, the right personalities?"

Closely related to the issues of appreciation and compromise is the issue of trust among the partnerships. Namely, in order for groups to work well together, both constituencies must trust that the other group will function with the shared vision in mind. One member of the Executive Committee discussed the progression of the various members' roles. This Committee member explained that "over time, the executive team has come a long way to free themselves from their specific roles/camps and become a bunch of people in leadership

roles that are focused in improving outcomes for their students" and attributes this progress to increased trust in the group. "There is no tradition of having this crazy group of people come together; multiple unions, multiple management representatives, districts, CBOs…It's a much different dynamic that we've had before…We've done some tough stuff together, [there have been major successes]. [The accomplishments] will endure; we build relationships and see things in a different way. [We] start to trust each other a little more and things will endure."

Section 4: Systems Change

Evaluation Question 2: What events (e.g., standards roll-out; new assessment systems) impacted RTT-D efforts and how well did partners tackle challenges they presented?

District staff members noted a number of federal- and state-wide initiatives that are impacting their work in RTT-D. They felt stretched thin by these larger policy factors, including the new state-wide assessment system, the implementation of Common Core, and the new state-wide principal and teacher evaluation system. Although many felt that these efforts could be integrated into the RTT-D work, not everyone agreed. Likewise, while districts believed that the RTT-D work could be integrated into their district strategic plan, many still noted that the RTT-D work was "on top" of other responsibilities, not instead of those responsibilities.

In addition to these external events, a few districts noted that their staff had changed, with many people leaving the district. In one district, all of the main project leads for RTT-D work had left and had been replaced by new staff. Only two of the seven district superintendents remain from the group that was involved at the beginning. While new staff have been able to "hit the ground running," the turnover has slowed the work down. High turnover impacts the institutional memory of the work and requires building new relationships and trust, which takes substantial valuable time.

Evaluation Question 6: How has RTT-D work impacted the development of systems in and across the region? What systems were created? What systems were impacted by a project?

Evaluation Question 7: Have the RTT-D partnership efforts helped stimulate district, regional, or state policy development conversations? How?

Evaluation questions 6 and 7 were developed prior to data collection. Data collected for these evaluation questions were very similar in their scope and, as such, will be discussed together.

In an effort to better understand the perception of data collection and use under RTT-D, the evaluation team posed a series of survey questions about both quantitative and qualitative data collection and use (table 10). On average, all groups at least "somewhat agreed" (average ratings of 4.2) that their organization/district/school collected sufficient quantitative data and effectively used quantitative data (average rating of 4.2) and qualitative data (average rating of 4.1) to improve their ability to reach the grant goals. However, groups "somewhat disagreed" that organizations/districts/schools collected sufficient qualitative data about equity (average score of 3.8), which indicates that when organizations/districts/schools do collect qualitative data, groups feel slightly better about the effectiveness of qualitative than quantitative data use to address grant goals. PSESD respondents felt least positively about data collection and use (average score of 3.6 across statements) and reported a stronger disagreement about the collection and use of qualitative than quantitative data about equity.

Table 10. Average rating of survey items about data collection by organization type (N=124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

My organization/district/school...	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average
effectively uses quantitative data about equity to improve our ability to reach our RTT-D goals	4.1	4.4	*3.7*	4.1	4.2
collects sufficient quantitative data about equity	4.0	4.4	4.3	4.0	4.2
effectively uses qualitative data about equity to improve our ability to reach our RTT-D goals	4.2	4.3	*3.3*	*3.6*	4.1
My organization/district/school collects sufficient qualitative data about equity	4.0	4.3	*3.3*	*3.6*	*3.8*
Average within groups across statements	4.1	4.4	*3.6*	*3.8*	

NOTES: Italicized value indicate an overall rating that is or is close to disagreement.
SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015.

As stated earlier, there is a recognition that a goal of RTT-D is to leverage strengths to create a regional system to support the achievement and opportunities for youth. To that end, according to several district staff, the grant itself was written to highlight best practices from some of the districts in order to help scale those strengths throughout the region. As one district staff stated, "Rather than having pockets of excellence in all of the districts, [the goal is] to have a more 'even' experience across the region, recognizing that we should all be pursuing best practices and that our children might be [in each other's districts the next year due to high mobility in the region]."

RTT-D has had some significant success in developing regional practices and removing barriers to access and opportunity, at both the beginning and the end of the K–12 system. The region has moved to a common kindergarten registration date, alleviating confusion in the community and allowing the region to advertise together on TV and radio to increase en-

rollment. The region has also supported students taking College Board exams by removing barriers and increasing opportunity (e.g., paying for the tests, administering them at the school during the school day) and has reported a large increase in participation.

District staff hope to implement a common data portal and develop a regional early warning system and work together to support their students in ways that they would be less likely to do as individual districts.

Districts also reported increased collaboration with each other. In some projects there were monthly meetings and staff noted that conversations are happening that would not have happened otherwise. Districts also appreciated PSESD's attempts to help them share learning across the region, noting that they facilitate opportunities for leaders to "get together with other leaders and talk about concerns, challenges, successes, and what our models look like." One district staffer noted that the "RTT coach has been particularly helpful. She understands the work we have been doing so when she works with another district, she can put me in touch with the right people when something comes up." However, one district noted that its representatives could only attend a few meetings because they do not receive any project management money to do so.

Two challenges arose in terms of district collaboration. First, two districts felt that they were sharing their practices but not learning from other districts in return. Second, some districts reported that the process for the Investment Funds increased competition and noted that one district hired a grant writer to ensure that it received RTT-D funds.

Section 5: Sustainability

Evaluation Question 3: How have RTT-D partnerships helped build capacity in the individual districts?

The majority of groups feel mostly positive about the capacity building happening as part of RTT-D

Respondents were asked a series of questions about capacity and capacity building within their organization and across projects (table 11). The statement that received the highest average rating across groups was the one asking respondents to assess whether their own organization had been able to keep up with the work necessary to coordinate all people, organizations, and activities related to RTT-D (average rating of 4.4 or "somewhat agree"). The statement with the lowest average rating across the board (overall rating of 4.1 or "somewhat agree") was "The organizations or institutions (e.g. PSESD, school districts, and CBOs) that I work with on RTT-D grant activities have a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities." While all statements about capacity received an average rating over 4, some respondents rated the statements towards the lower end of the agreement scale, indicating that there is still room for improvement in these areas.

Respondents indicate confidence in their ability to keep up with grant work on the survey, but the interview and focus group data reveal struggles with organizational capacity

In addition to the goals of closing the opportunity and achievement gaps in the seven RTT-D districts, a large goal of the partnership and collaborative work is to build "strong sustainable systems to personalize learning for all students."[5] In order to ensure that this work is not only successful, but sustainable, interview and focus group respondents indicated how important it will be to find ways to "build capacity" within districts, across districts, and within CBO-district partnerships. When asked about capacity in the survey and during the interviews/focus groups, it became clear that capacity was interpreted by some to mean the "advancement or acquisition of new skills or knowledge" and by others to mean "the availability of staff to do the work." As one CBO representative explained, "The goal of RTT-D is to enhance outcomes for students in the region with systems that enhance cooperation, enhance capacity for making data-driven decisions as well as bring investments that would result in programming for administrators, students, and teachers, to 'move the needle' [with

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[5] Source: http://roadmapracetothetop.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/b_Executive_Summary_Form.RTTConsortium1.pdf

regard to academic outcomes]." In contrast, a different CBO representative defined capacity building: "[Our organization] doesn't have capacity yet…We want to have a quality program; 2–3 staff people instead of 1 to create [program quality]."

Table 11. Average rating of statements about capacity by organization type (N=124)

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Somewhat Disagree=3; Somewhat Agree=4; Agree=5; Strongly Agree=6

	CBO	School district	PSESD	Other	Average across groups
My organization/district/school is currently able to keep up with the work necessary to coordinate all the people, organizations, and activities related to our involvement in the RTT-D grant	4.6	4.1	4.7	4.0	**4.4**
The organizations or institutions (e.g., PSESD, school districts, and CBOs) that I work with on RTT-D grant activities are able to adapt to changing conditions (e g , funding reductions, changing political climate, or change in leadership)	4.0	4.5	4.2	4.3	**4.2**
The organizations or institutions (e.g., PSESD, school districts, and CBOs) that I work with on RTT-D grant activities have a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities	*3.7*	4.3	4.0	4.5	**4.1**
Average within groups across statements	**4.1**	**4.3**	**4.3**	**4.3**	

NOTES: Italicized values indicate an overall rating that is or is close to disagreement.
SOURCE: Collective Impact Survey, winter 2015

While the results from the survey indicate that all groups feel able to keep up with the work necessary to coordinate grant activities, the results from the interviews/focus groups tell a different story. Nearly equal numbers of respondents from districts, CBOs, and PSESD cited capacity and/or time limitations as two of the biggest barriers to their work or issues that they anticipated would cause challenges down the road. One CBO representative explained, "This work takes staffing…You can't do more without more people. Technology doesn't solve everything. We need more adults in kids' lives, and they need to be physically present. And that takes staffing." A district representative expressed similar concerns about capacity issues within districts: "[Our staff] is great, but [they] are doing this on top of [their] other jobs. Human capital is stretched to do more with less. Even though we have a ton of money, the work and overseeing the work is asking small [organizations/districts] to stretch people who are already being asked to do multiple jobs [to stretch] further."

Nearly all districts related to the evaluation team during their focus groups that they were experiencing similar capacity and time constraints as the CBOs. However, many districts explained that the biggest challenge in handling all of the work required for RTT-D activities was that RTT-D was only one of many substantial education reforms occurring in the dis-

trict and state as a whole. A district representative related, "In [our district], RTT-D staff have regular jobs and then carve out time for RTT-D. They don't have the luxury of focusing exclusively on grant activities. Instead, they 'overlay' on top of their normal activities." A representative from a different district explained, "There is a lack of flexibility—[RTT-D] is another effort—and when people hear that, we get pushback that too much is happening all at once. [RTT-D] requires time and intensity of work at a time when there has never been more change than right now…nationally we are at the peak of reforms…RTT-D added to full-time jobs that we could spend 12 hours a day on anyway."

Evaluation Question 5: How have the RTT-D partners prepared for sustainability of RTT-D efforts and gains achieved?

All groups have already begun thinking about sustainability and see alternate sources of funding as the best way to ensure work persists

While the issue of sustainability was not a construct on the survey, the evaluation team asked each group to discuss the extent to which projects and project staff had discussed sustainability at this point in the implementation process. All interviewees indicated that his or her group or project had already begun thinking about sustainability. One district representative related the types of questions his/her district had begun asking: "How do we create those systems that will live on past the money? How do we sustain the product?… [We want to make sure] what we sustain is realistic." A different district representative agreed, "We need to look at other support we can get; from board members and others in leadership positions. In that process we can create systems to make the work sustainable." Some districts and CBOs mentioned K–12 policy shifts that would help bring more money into Washington State's education system, which would in turn support the work they hope to continue. For example, one CBO representative mentioned that the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship had become a part of the governor's STEM strategy and that participation within this scholarship will be seen as an index of STEM interest among high school graduates. A member of the Executive Committee related that school funding was going to be much better because of the Supreme Court case in Washington; specifically: "There is going to be more money coming into the districts at the exact time that RTT-D is ending. For the things that have worked…the odds are much higher that the districts will pick up the expenditures."

The majority of districts feel that the alignment of RTT-D and their strategic plans will help ensure sustainability

When asked about project initiation and sustainability, districts mentioned that because RTT-D work was strategically aligned with some district strategic plans, continuing the work would be less of a challenge than it might be otherwise. One district representative explained, "The RTT-D work fit well in [our] district with the strategic plan, so the work will keep going after the grant goes away. This makes it much easier to sustain because it was part of the existing trajectory. [We] did not try to do much outside of the existing work and instead used [the grant work] to jumpstart existing work that was in the pipeline." This representative also noted that one of the district strategies was to focus the grant funds on training as opposed to hiring additional staff to ensure that positions would not be lost once the grant ends. A representative from a different district echoed, "Definitely a jump start of the work that has been underway…to bring alignment to a number of strategies we have been using in other schools…[The grant funds] are a catalyst to accelerating to the work."

CBOs report more concern about funding after the end of the grant, but all groups feel positively about the relationships that could persist

As previously mentioned in this report, the funding structure of the grant is such that money is given directly to districts, so CBOs get a part of those funds should districts decide to partner with them. While there have certainly been successful partnerships created under this model, a potentially unintended consequence of such a structure is that CBOs do not feel they have as much control over sustainability as districts might. One CBO representative explained, "The hard thing for us—all CBOs—is increasingly there is less and less funding that is less restricted. Funding is restricted at every turn. Sustainability is totally challenging. There's only so much you can do. We're trying to keep our core afloat, much less continue a whole new bank of programs afloat." A different CBO representative noted, "We are trying to figure out sustainability for [the major portion] of our [RTT-D] work. It's the same time frame for when the grant ends, and we'd like to make that a main focus. Whether it's [another grant for RTT-D] and we'd get a chunk of that, or the other extreme: PSESD says, 'Great job, but it's your job to fundraise,' which I hope they wouldn't do. But we are planning for that and hoping for the former."

The majority of respondents within the various groups felt that the relationships that have been formed and strengthened as a result of the grant work would persist beyond the funding. As one CBO said, "[The relationships] are going to continue, I just know it. It will continue more seamlessly. [This grant has] helped us lay the groundwork…We have a point person [now], [we have] done some referrals. Easier communication and more effective referrals…Communication was generated from the project and we can sustain that." A district representative agreed, "We won't just stop connecting with them because the grant ends." A

different district representative explained, "Nobody who has been a part of this work will be able to go back to the way things used to be…RTT-D has been a really great momentum builder."

Section 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the main goals of RTT-D, stated by stakeholders, is to create a sustainable system or set of systems that will allow districts and CBOs in the region to more effectively serve students. With these systems in place, both student achievement would be increased and the opportunity and achievement gap for low-income students and students of color would be closed. Systems change efforts, such as that undertaken by RTT-D, that work to change underlying system dynamics, structures, and conditions are complex and challenging (Wheatley, 2001; Eoyang, 2007). Systems change requires (1) understanding different perspectives concerning the problem or situation; (2) locating root causes to systemic problems by identifying system parts and their patterns of interdependency that explain the status quo; and (3) using this information to identify leverage points that will cultivate second-order change (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, & Yang, 2007).

RTT-D was born out of the Road Map Project (RMP), a region-wide effort aimed at improving education "from cradle to college and career in South King County and South Seattle" (from the Road Map Project website, http://www.roadmapproject.org/). Like RMP, RTT-D's approach to system-wide change is to implement a Collective Impact approach, which requires a commitment of groups from different sectors to come together with a common agenda for solving a complex social problem. A key strategy for RTT-D is to develop and leverage partnerships between schools and districts with CBOs. These partnerships bring together diverse perspectives to identify the problem and to work together to bring about change.

There have been numerous successes in the early stages of RTT-D implementation. Stakeholders feel that all groups (school districts, CBOs, and PSESD) are focused on creating equitable outcomes for students and their families and that they value each other's contributions. The majority of groups feel mostly positive about the capacity they are building under RTT-D grant funds, are generally confident in their ability to keep up with grant work, and have already begun thinking about sustainability, seeing alternate sources of funding as the best way to ensure work persists.

RTT-D has had significant success in developing regional practices and removing barriers to access and opportunity. The region has moved to a common kindergarten registration date. It has also supported students taking College Board exams by removing the potentially prohibitive cost of the exams and giving students the opportunity to take the exams when they otherwise would not have been able to. Thus far, stakeholders have reported a large spike in

participation. RTT-D also continues to create other systems, including data sharing among and between districts and CBOs and the development of an early warning system.

Many aspects of the partnership have gone very well, as indicated above. Other partnership dimensions/system changes are not yet as well evolved or as effective as they could be. The following recommendations speak to these areas which we have identified as areas for growth. The key recommendations in this section focus on helping partnerships increase collaboration and mutual learning, participation and the representation of all stakeholders, and equity among students and their families in the RTT-D region.

Recommendation: Deepen the Work of the Partnership as a Learning Community

Many of the strategies in the RTT-D proposal are based on effective practices from some of the districts in order to help scale those strengths throughout the region. Collaboration and sharing of best practices across organizations is at the core of this project. Stakeholders have praised the efforts of PSESD in facilitating such sharing but also highlighted a number of challenges. The key challenge is the lack of time and resources for staff to attend meetings.

In *The Role of Grantmakers in Collective Impact,* Bartczak (2014) asked how grantmakers were "covering the time and expenses this collaboration requires." Although PSESD is not a grantmaker, this question is pertinent to the ability of stakeholders in RTT-D to engage in effective collaboration. Such collaboration is necessary for collective impact initiatives to take shape. RTI does not purport to have an answer, but contends that the question needs to be addressed systemically. Stakeholders could reflect on this as a first challenge and think about how they could come together as a group in order to better collaborate. While this discussion may seem like pausing the work or even moving backwards, addressing this challenge could catalyze participating organizations to be better able to learn from one another and provide a solid content for moving forward.

Recommendation: Sustain a Common Vision and Continue Conversations About Equity

As noted in this report, RTT-D stakeholders often had differing perspectives on the roles, expectations, and strategies of cross-organizational partnerships. Systems change requires an alignment of vision. RTT-D is encouraged to continue to engage in conversations about developing and leveraging authentic partnerships.

Previous research has discussed how, in traditional partnership approaches, the expertise resides with the school's district or other professional organizations and the parents, families, and community members are seen as clients (Henig & Stone, 2008; Honig, 2004). Similarly, in discussing school and CBO partnerships, schools and districts have mechanisms to identify needs and to select and work with CBOs as vendors to meet the particular need.

Ishimaru's (2014) ethnographic case study of district-community collaboration in Salem-Keizer school district in Oregon offers a framework for thinking about authentic partnerships that can deepen the RTT-D conversation. Ishimaru identified differences between traditional partnerships and authentic collaborations, as seen in figure 3. This conceptual model provides a framework for RTT-D stakeholders to engage in conversation to create a shared vision of authentic collaboration.

Figure 3. Traditional Partnerships and Authentic Collaborations (Ishimaru)

Traditional partnerships	Collaborations
Goals: Material resources and discrete aims within a culture of denial or implicit blame	*Goals:* Systemic change within a culture of shared responsibility
Strategies: Reliance on technical change such as scaling existing practices or leveraging existing relationships	*Strategies:* Adaptive changes to build capacity and relationships of a broader range of stakeholders
Process: Apolitical approach focused on the work of schools in isolation from broader issues in the community	*Process:* Reform as a political process that addresses broader issues in the community
Parent Role: Nondominant parents are seen as clients and beneficiaries; professionals set the agenda	*Parent Role:* Nondominant parents are seen as educational leaders who contribute and help shape the agenda

Recommendation: Develop System-Wide Supports for Authentic CBO–School District Partnerships

A third recommendation for RTT-D stakeholders is to have conversations focused on what they might need to support authentic CBO–school district partnerships across the region. The ways that school districts select, work with, and support relationships is not uniform across the seven districts. For a systemic effort which is focused on developing CBO–school district partnerships as a key strategy, devoting time and other resources to identify and scale best practices and create systemic structures to support these partnerships is vital.

Many districts, both within and without the RTT-D region, typically employ a community liaison. Unfortunately, often CBOs develop relationships with this person, only to have to start a relationship with the district again when that person leaves. It would be better for dis-

tricts to create policies supporting collaborations between CBOs and school districts. Examples of such systemic policies may include those on sharing space, on the data that is necessary and possible to collect for each group, and even how to create contracts and invoices. RTI recommends the development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines the kinds of conversations that school districts and CBOs need to have in order to develop authentic partnerships. The MOU could include the information above, as well as specify the liaisons from each organization (where to go when certain information is required) and the time needed to attend the required meetings for the collaborations (not just for the direct service). Each of these issues was mentioned by an RTT-D stakeholder as being a barrier to partnerships. Creating such an MOU provides an opportunity for the partnering organizations to discuss and determine shared accountability and will help partners have the discussions they need before beginning work.

Recommendation: Balance Power Dynamics Through Equitable Representation of Stakeholders

During the interviews and focus groups, representatives from all groups noted two aspects of RTT-D that seemed to reinforce current perception that it is a district-driven and district-focused venture. Specifically, these stakeholders highlighted the make-up of the Executive Committee and that funding is given to schools and not directly to CBOs. Both structures were written into the funded proposal in this way. While groups have expressed interest in changing these dynamics, making structural changes has proven to be quite difficult. Yet, RTT-D has begun to address the funding dynamic by leveraging the Investment Fund process to require school districts and CBOs to work together to apply for funding and in the selection of CBOs, rather than having schools alone be responsible for writing the proposal and then distributing money to the CBOs.

RTT-D could also involve CBOs and stakeholders in wider governance and leadership. Although the Executive Committee membership is set by the bylaws of the grant, RTT-D could think about either developing a broader advisory group that includes a more representative section of stakeholders, including increased numbers of CBOs, families and community members, and students. This committee could have advisory responsibilities only, but represent a formal structure to increase the voice of those who are most affected by the grant. Alternatively, such advisory members could also be added to the Executive Committee although, again, they would not have voting privileges due to the grant's by-laws. Such actions would provide multiple perspectives to the work, help develop alliances across difference, and contribute to relationships and partnerships that could be sustained after the end of RTT-D funding.

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