FIRST 2OOO DAYS NETWORK

CASE STUDY

Establishing the pre-conditions for systems-level change

in Early Childhood Development

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GROWING UP IN ALBERTA

Never before have we had such a clear picture of how the youngest members of our society are faring. According to results released by the Government in April 2014,53.4% of Alberta's kindergarten-aged children are not developing appropriately in all five key areas of development. What's more, a higher percentage of young children in Alberta are experiencing developmental difficulties compared to the Canadian norm[1].

SHOULD WE CARE?

Alberta's early childhood development (ECD) trails the Canadian norm, but does it really matter? Yes. Resoundingly, yes. A large body of scientific research shows that "children's early experiences are "biologically embedded" in their rapidly developing brain and nervous systems and have lifelong consequences on learning, health, productivity and well-being."[2]

Investing in early childhood development is also an act of prevention: prevention of investing in additional supports in schools, prevention of drop-out rates, prevention of future crime rates. If even a fraction of the current investments in those areas were made in early childhood development, we could save billions of dollars over time.[3]

Given the importance of ECD, the Alberta Government asked: How are our young people doing? To answer that question, the Government launched the first population-based study of kindergarten-aged children across the entire province[4]. The Early Child Development Mapping Project (ECMap) emerged as part of contracted services by Alberta Education to conduct research on early childhood development in Alberta and build community coalitions to respond to local needs. The Canadian-designed Early Development Instrument (EDI) was selected as the tool for collecting data on early childhood development. A total of 87,724 questionnaires were completed in five waves of data collection from 2009 to 2013.[5]

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[1] ECMap Final Report (2014), p.9
[2] ECMap Final Report (2014), p.2
[3] As an illustration of this point, it is estimated that by just improving the high-school completion rate in Canada by 1% would save $7.7 Billion annually in social assistance, costs of crime, lost earnings, tax revenues, employment insurance and other public expenditures. Park, D.E. (2010). Economic Aspects of Development and Prevention of Criminality Among Children and Youth.
[4] ECMap Final Report (2014), p.2
[5] ECMap Final Report, p.7

WHO IS WORKING FOR BETTER RESULTS?

Part of ECMap was the development of nearly 100 community coalitions across the province[6]. While each coalition was unique to its community, certain sectors were represented more often, including: health, schools, parents and community members, libraries, and Parent Link centres.[7]

A NEW APPROACH EMERGES

The United Way of Calgary's "Early Years" Action Teams, local ECMap coalitions and Calgary Reads were all working on a variety of ECD initiatives independently and began to see there was a need to work together differently in a densely populated, urban space like Calgary. In October 2012, they got together to build a citywide ECD network. This marked the beginning of the First 2000 Days Network. It was Calgary Reads, a childhood literacy organization, that took an early leadership role in making the Network a reality. Calgary Reads incubated the Network for the first year of its existence and continues to provide a stewardship role today.

The First 2000 Days Network's interest in making the shift from thinking as individual actors to thinking like a network is significant. Where the ECMap coalitions shared information on what organizations were doing, the network approach moves further and imagines a *collective response* to improving outcomes for children. The First 2000 Days Network is not satisfied to know only *what organizations are doing* to address ECD, it is also focused on *how organizations work together* to improve ECD outcomes.

The powerful idea behind of the Network is a deep and abiding understanding that individual programs and services alone will never lead to better early development outcomes for children. The Network recognizes the need to see the totality of all programs and services across Calgary (and beyond) as a system. The seemingly simple recognition that the plethora of ECD programs and services are actually a system dramatically shifts the possibilities for finding a pathway towards improved ECD outcomes.

REACHING BEYOND COLLABORATION

Since the provision of ECD programs and services alone will not be enough to improve ECD outcomes, the Network is drawing on emerging fields of thought that support systems-level change. The Network is drawing on two main frameworks to guide its approach to improving ECD outcomes through systems-level change: collective impact and network theory.

Collective impact is the "commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem."[8] Collective impact is not just another word for collaboration.

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[6] http://www.ecmpa.ca
[7] ECMap Final Report, p.26
[8] http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

"Unlike most collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants."[9]

Networks are simply people connected by relationships. Network Theory is a framework for understanding how to cultivate a network mindset to effectively build the capacity of networks to support social change.[10]

Challenge	Traditional Approach	Network Approach
Build community assets	Administer social services	Weave social ties
Develop better designs and decisions	Gather input from people you know	Access new and diverse perspectives
Spread what works	Disseminate white papers	Openly build and share knowledge
Mobilize action	Organize tightly coordinated campaigns	Create infrastructure for widespread engagement
Overcome fragmentation	Bring players and programs under a single umbrella	Coordinate resources and action

[9] http://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact
[10] Catalyzing Networks for Social Change, 2011

DESGINING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE SUCCESS

The purpose of the First 2000 Days Network is to increase coordination and collaboration between parties involved with ECD in order to ensure that children aged zero to five meet their optimal development before they enter kindergarten. The Network is neither a funder nor offers its own programs. The Network's aim is to focus on *how* participants work together to improve ECD outcomes, as much as on *what* participants are doing.

Unlike other organizations or initiatives, the Network is striving to impact the way that people work together and to support the behaviour change that emerges from collective work. This stands in contrast to most organizations that are funded to impact a specific area within the ECD system. Often, these organizations end up competing with each other for funding, which leads to seeing their work as competitive rather than complementary. Because the First 2000 Days Network functions with neutrality and is focused on a unique aspect of the sector, it is less likely that it will be viewed as an organization competing for funding or a role in the system.

The strength of the Network is that it relies entirely on the people in the ECD sector who self-select to participate in different ways. The result is a network that has developed organically as opposed to one that has been mandated. This voluntary participation built around transparency, authenticity, collaboration and participation has implications for the structure, governance and functions of the network. Without Network participation from people across the ECD sector, the Network could not exist.

The "First 2000 Days Network" is an initiative that is striving to create systems change in the Early Childhood (ECD) sector in Calgary and Area. Network participants include provincial and municipal government, non-profit agencies, private sector organizations, individuals, and community members, all with an interest in creating more effective ways to improve the ECD learning outcomes of children.

More specifically, the efforts of the First 2000 Days Network performs two distinct functions:

1. The First 2000 Days Network as Backbone
2. The First 2000 Days Network as Network

Based on a collective impact approach, the First 2000 Days Network uses a "Backbone" structure. As a Backbone, specific individuals from the First 2000 Days Network perform the key functions of:

- Guiding vision and strategy
- Supporting alignment and leveraging of activities
- Establishing shared measurement practices
- Facilitating communication and engagement

As a Network, the First 2000 Days Network, refers to the all the individuals who have self-selected to be part of the First 2000 Days Network in some capacity. It is also important to note that participants in the First 2000 Days "Network" represent a subset of people who work in the broader Early Childhood Development (ECD) "network" or "sector". While participation in the First 2000 Days Network is open, some people in the ECD network/sector may be unaware of the First 2000 Days Network or determine participating in the Network isn't a strategic fit for their organization.

NETWORK STRATEGY

The First 2000 Days Network has identified four strategies focused on influencing social change within the ECD system through collective impact. These include:

1. **Behaviour Change**: Build relationships and trust among network participants by convening participants on a regular basis in meaningful ways.

2. **Collective Action**: Provide a framework through which network participants can start to understand their work in a common way and to have a larger view of what is happening across the city so that intentional alignment can be supported.

3. **Systems Change**: Increase understanding and collaboration with provincial-level activities related to ECD in order to inform local action.

4. **Adaptive Learning**: Continuously learn what is working and what can be improved so that the best practice emerging from the field can be leveraged

DESIGNED WITH PROCESS IN MIND

The Network acts as a catalyst for learning, connecting, and collaborative action. Through its work linking, aligning and leveraging work in the ECD system, the network is able to engage and build capacity with participants to increase their capacity for collective action. The Network recognizes that each individual and organization has something unique to contribute to the system. As such, the Network's role becomes finding ways to align those unique contributions in a way that drives more cohesively toward improving outcomes for kids.

The engagement and capacity building strategy of the Network has an important focus on supporting and building key quality process outcomes. The Network takes an active role in coaching organizations on how to collaborate and align their work. It is a deliberate approach to assess what is currently being done in the ECD sector, seeing what improvements could be made, and providing guidance, coaching and ways of aligning existing programs and services in order to not only improve the quality of the work, but also to improve the quality of *how* those organizations work together. Research shows a network's ability to achieve its outcomes depends on the quality of the *processes* it uses to achieve those outcomes. The importance of processes perceived as transparent, trustworthy and authentic are linked to the ability to successfully achieve system-level outcomes.

The Network's guiding principles reflect the importance of supporting quality processes that in turn support positive outcomes.

1. Trusting: a focus on building trusting relationships
2. Collaborative: shared responsibilities amongst the group to lead and contribute
3. Participatory: many voices heard & opportunities to engage
4. Authentic: planning, process and implementation are in-line with vision and purpose
5. Transparent: access to information is shared, decision-making processes are known, status of actions is visible
6. Adaptive: Revisions are encouraged based on learning, changes in the environment and people involved.

7. Innovative: demonstration of leadership, perseverance and courage to push against conventional barriers to achieving progress.

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL NETWORK

Functioning as a successful network and creating collective impact doesn't happen just because you call yourself a network. In fact, building a network to affect systems change takes time. Fundamental to the First 2000 Days Network is the recognition that it needed to first build the foundation on which the Network would operate in order to create collective impact. That foundation included at least three key factors considered pre-conditions for successful systems change: influential champions, adequate funding and a sense of urgency, as well as a strong backbone organization and 'intangibles' such as trust building, leadership and a culture of learning[11].

What makes the First 2000 Days Network unique is how it designed its approach to creating these pre-conditions. From the outset, the Network intentionally designed a culture of learning so that it could respond quickly to changes and differences in context and/or capacities. Because the Network as an entity was essentially a "start-up", the process of building a culture of learning was as important as anything else so it could be nimble, embrace its mistakes and adapt quickly. Thinking through a lens of adaptive learning, the Network also sought to be innovators *how* it would engage influential champions and *how* it would source funding.

This culture of learning is integral to the current strategy and has an impact on the way learning is integrated, but it is also tied to the importance of the culture of a well-functioning network, generally. A culture of learning is imperative if the Network is to fulfill its commitment to continuous quality improvement. The importance of openness, transparency, inclusion, trust and respect are not only important to support a learning process but are also important to support a successful, strong network of people. In fact, trust is a key indicator of a high-quality network.

The First 2000 Days Network has also worked hard to source "patient capital" from donors that understood it would take time to build the pre-conditions for the much desired collective impact outcomes. The patience to fund the engagement and capacity development of the Network required to generate systems change has been critical.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED MEASUREMENT

As a network trying to develop the pre-conditions for a successful collective impact approach, identifying shared measures was an important milestone for the First 2000 Days Network. The task of identifying a

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[11] http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work, http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_2, and in the First 2000 Days Network Collective Impact Maturity Scorecard 2015

suitable shared measurement per the collective impact approach was the responsibility of the First 2000 Days Network's Backbone (see Sidebar for Backbone responsibilities).

Since the EDI was used to measure early childhood development in Alberta and is what gave rise to the First 2000 Days Network, it was considered as a shared measurement. Ultimately, the EDI did not meet the needs of the Network at the time. What was required was the ability for the Network to assess what changes it could support to improve early childhood development outcomes in a relatively short time frame.

It became clear early on that the Network had to identify more proximate measures that reliably and strongly linked groups' actions to population-level change. Ideally, the shared approach would be a mid-level measure, something less than a population-level measure but more than a program-level measure. The Network's preference was a measure that was already researched, established and evidence-based that could function as a synthesizing mechanism for local efforts in making progress towards impact by the collective.

The First 2000 Days Network Backbone identified the Strengthening Families approach as the shared measure that best suited the Network's desire to measure collective impact. The five Protective Factors[12] identified in the Strengthening Families literature are broad enough that they could conceivably include most Network participants and specific enough that they could actually drive a shift in people's perspectives and approach to supporting families and children that they interacted with. The Protective Factors include:

- Parental Resilience
- Social and Emotional Competence of children
- Knowledge of Parenting and Childhood Development
- Social Connections
- Concrete Support in Times of Need

While the Strengthening Families approach has the potential to measure outcomes, at its current state of maturity, the Network is using it as an approach to organize engagement and capacity building opportunities. In fact, a key aspect of the Network's engagement and capacity development activities are built around the framework. The Network recognizes that the first step in creating the conditions for developing a shared measure is to support people's ability to think about their work according to the

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[12] Center for the Study of Social Policy also uses the label "promotive" to describe the factors but indicates they must be used in conjunction, as in "protective and promotive". Email correspondence, Charlyn Harper Browne, PhD, Senior Associate, Center for the Study of Social Policy, February 22, 2016.

Framework and to build individual and organizational capacity to begin to understand and, in some cases, work towards supporting one or more of the factors outlined by the approach.

The First 2000 Days Network has taken a very different approach to shared measurement. Instead of seeing it as everyone sharing a measure, or even the same measurement tool, the Network is using the shared measurement component of collective impact as a quality standard: to guide *who* and *how* it engages participants in the Network, and to guide and assess *what* and *how* Network participants do their work. This gives the Network the opportunity to build capacity in the sector using the shared measurement approach. Since the Network is building capacity using a specific quality standard, it is also able to drive change in a specific direction.

BUILDING ENGAGEMENT TO CREATE SYSTEMS CHANGE

The strength of the Network relies entirely on self-selected participants from the ECD sector. The engagement strategy therefore has to include a process for identifying key stakeholders and a particular relationship between Network participants and the Backbone. In order for the Backbone to function properly, there has to be a clear line of communication between groups that are aligned around different subject areas and the coordinating Backbone. The ability to articulate the potential roles participants can play in the Network and to engage them in a way where they see giving their time to the Network actually improves their own work and the sector, generally, is a process that takes time, relationship building and maturity.
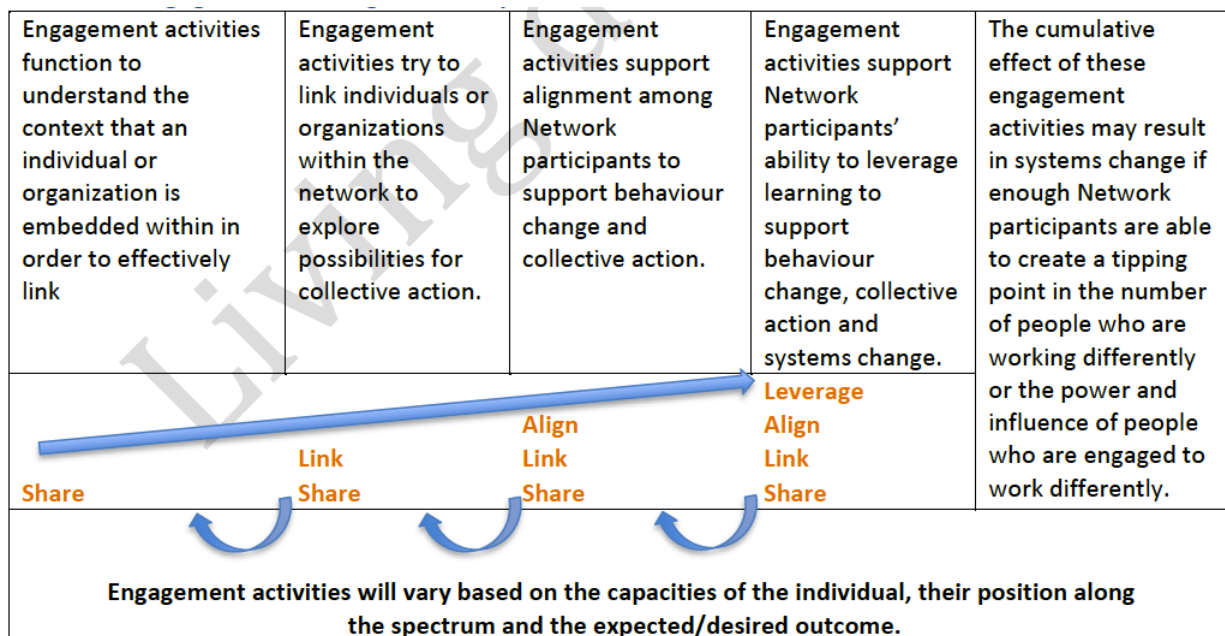
For the First 2000 Days Network, the ability to make judgments about what the Network needed to achieve success was not obvious at the outset. The ability to discern what was needed came as a result of the Network's culture of adaptive learning. In the early days, the Backbone was unable to identify and articulate potential roles because it could not provide them or sometimes, even see them. The challenge of developing a strong Network is that success depends on relationships and trust which, at the beginning, are are their lowest levels.

As important as engagement is, simply more participants in the Network is not always better. In fact, research shows that it is the *way* the connections relate to one another that is the most important in determining quality connections.

To that end, The First 2000 Days Network defines engagement along a spectrum of increasingly deeper forms of engagement. The goal is neither to get as many Network participants as possible nor to move every Network participant along the spectrum. Rather, the spectrum functions as a means to identify the context of an individual and provide the most effective and efficient means to provide quality engagement. The spectrum includes engagement between the broad collection of participants of the Network and the Backbone of the Network, a subset of Network participants playing a leadership role. The Backbone has identified a spectrum of engagement described as: sharing, linking, aligning and leveraging. While moving from sharing to linking, to aligning, to leveraging is not a completely linear process, in many ways some

levels of engagement must precede others. Embedded in the First 2000 Days Network's theory of change is that the cumulative effect of engagement with the Network may result in systems change over time.

Figure 1 - Engagement Spectrum

Engagement activities function to understand the context that an individual or organization is embedded within in order to effectively link	Engagement activities try to link individuals or organizations within the network to explore possibilities for collective action.	Engagement activities support alignment among Network participants to support behaviour change and collective action.	Engagement activities support Network participants' ability to leverage learning to support behaviour change, collective action and systems change.	The cumulative effect of these engagement activities may result in systems change if enough Network participants are able to create a tipping point in the number of people who are working differently or the power and influence of people who are engaged to work differently.

Leverage

Align — Align

Link — Link — Link

Share — **Share** — **Share** — **Share**

Engagement activities will vary based on the capacities of the individual, their position along the spectrum and the expected/desired outcome.

Engagement in Practice: Case Example

A key role of the First 2000 Days Network is to have a deep and broad understanding of the context in which it works. As the Network learns about various emerging threats or opportunities, different stakeholders are engaged to different degrees. When the government decided to collect the EDI data again in 2016, the Backbone of the First 2000 Days Network seized the opportunity to engage local school boards through Calgary and area coalitions to gain an understanding of the best way to support strategic work. This is an example of reactive engagement. Importantly, because the First 2000 Days Network could frame the school system as a component of the ECD system, it could recognize the importance of building an awareness of *how* the First 2000 Days Network could work with the school system to eventually improve the ECD system. To capitalize on this opportunity, the First 2000 Days Network produced an informational video[13] targeted at kindergarten teachers. Nearly 400 teachers from four different school systems were reported to have watched the video along with an unreported number from an additional three school systems. The video was also featured on Offord's website, the organization that developed the EDI.[14]

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[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zT-OCg0SV1M
[14] https://edi.offordcentre.com/?s=video

Reactive engagement changes the interactions between the Backbone and the Network (see sidebar). In the case of the EDI, the Backbone (not the entire Network) interacted with the school boards around a very specific issue. This engagement helped to deepen existing relationships between individuals on the Backbone and individuals within the school system but there was no intentional conversation about the school boards taking a 'formal' role in the Network.

The First 2000 Days Network also employs proactive engagement. The Network has a number of people sitting on the Backbone team who are tasked with intentionally engaging people across the ECD sector. The Backbone also hosts a number of activities or events that are intended to proactively engage with stakeholders. Engagement opportunities are prioritized in a number of different ways:

- Identifying and selecting individuals who are interested and excited about being part of the Network is a key part of the Backbone's proactive strategy and build on momentum;
- Building on existing relationships in order to identify potential engagement opportunities;
- Identifying key leverage points (including people with power to create large-scale change and/or organizations that hold key information) in the ECD system is critical in the effort to address systems change;
- Identifying the most effective engagement strategy with the recognition that the First 2000 Days Network's own capacity to engage and resources create limitations for the Backbone.

Each participant's engagement in the Network is based on their current involvement in the ECD sector along with their existing capacity and interests. The First 2000 Days Network's Backbone has designed a range of engagement and capacity building activities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Engagement and Capacity Building Opportunities & Outcomes	
ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY	**DESIRED OUTCOME**
One-on-one conversations	Share: Informal and formal conversations between Backbone members (or other Network participant) and a Network Participant or individual is an opportunity to learn about one another and identify how that individual would like to be involved moving forward.
Monthly Webinars Capacity Building Sessions (every second Thursday) Network Nights Other one-time events or workshops	Share and Link: These are primarily opportunities to share and learn about the Network as well as about other Network Participants. There is an opportunity of linking, through self-selection on the part of the Network Participant.
Alignment Groups (around Strengthening Families Framework)	Share, Link, and Align: Convening individuals who are working in various areas of the Strengthening Families framework is an opportunity for further alignment and collaboration. This requires a proactive strategy of

	engaging interested Network Participants who have the time and interest to participate in this opportunity. Through the process of trying to align around a common vision, participants will have to go through an intensive sharing and linking stage.
Self-selected work groups (EDI working group, Network Analysis, etc.)	Share, Link, Leverage: Other working groups or communities of learning may come about depending on opportunities or threats that arise in the landscape or based on individuals' interests. These groups may be tactical, short term or long term, and involve sharing, linking, or leveraging activity.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO CREATE SYSTEMS CHANGE

Movement along the engagement spectrum is dependent on the individual's context and capacity. While the Network has limited opportunity to change an individual's context, it can provide capacity building supports. This necessarily requires that any engagement efforts go through a process of assessing and determining what capacities need to be built and how that could best be supported by the Network. This engagement approach also supports building the capacity required for people to work collectively to shift their current behaviour.

Identifying what capacities need to be built is a combination of understanding the need of the individual(s) or organization(s) that the Network is working with but also matching those needs with the needs in the larger context. This process is active and will require thinking through how best to understand capacities that exist, and those that may be needed, at the system, organizational, programmatic, and individual levels.

Thanks to the Network's unique approach to using shared measurement as a quality standard for its capacity building efforts, it is able to evaluate its performance and adjust performance accordingly.

Capacity Assessment: What can we ask to get a sense of the current capacities of:
Organizations?
How does your organization currently learn about whether it is progressing towards its goals?
Does your organization currently share this learning with others? How?
Does your organization try to understand where it fits within the ECD landscape? Does it have a good understanding of the potential threats and opportunities available to it within the ECD landscape? How does it do this?
Programs?
How does your program currently learn about whether it is progressing towards its goals?
Does your program currently share this learning with others? How? How does your program monitor and respond to changing circumstances within the ECD sector?
What sort of information do you currently use to understand the impact that your program is having? What sort of process do you have in place to respond to the findings around the impact that your program is having?

Individuals?
What existing, trusting relationships do you have within the ECD sector?
Do you have a good understanding of how your program or organization is setting out to achieve its goals? Does your environment support your ability to communicate what you learn in your position in this program or organization and adapt as needed?
What does collaboration mean to you? What do you think the role of collaboration is in achieving impact within the ECD sector?

RESULTS

The fundamental philosophy that guides the Network is a commitment to continuous improvement, fostered by a culture of adaptive learning. While the First 2000 Days Network uses the Strengthening Families framework as a shared measure for Network participants, it also required a tool to evaluate its performance as a network.

"A major challenge facing organizations today is how to partner with other organizations, agencies, and groups to collaboratively address social and political goals while effectively maximizing resource sharing of the partners involved."[15] To address this challenge, the First 2000 Days Network used the PARTNER (Program to Analyze, Record, and Track Networks to Enhance Relationships) tool to evaluate its performance and sought the support of a team from the University of Colorado, Denver which have proved crucial in informing the Network's development.

EVALUATING NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

One of the key preconditions for a successful collaborative initiative is how clear members feel about their role in the Network.[16] It is believed that clarity leads to confidence which leads to commitment[17]

In 2015, the Network used the PARTNER tool to assess the levels of collaboration, trust and engagement with Network Participants as well as the Network Backbone[18]. Baseline data was also collected in terms of the outcomes that Network participants are working towards. These outcomes were structured according the Protective Factors and can be tracked moving forward. In addition, data from the

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[15] http://partnertool.net/tools-and-training/partner-tool/

[16] Darrin Hicks, University of Denver Colorado. Presentation to the First 2000 Days Network (November 2015)

[17] Darrin Hicks, University of Denver Colorado. Presentation to the First 2000 Days Network (November 2015)

[18] PARTNER is a social network analysis tool designed to measure and monitor collaboration among people/organizations. The tool is designed to demonstrate how networks are connected, how resources are leveraged and exchanged, the levels of trust, and to link outcomes to the process of collaboration.

PARTNER tool in terms of people's focus' can help inform an engagement strategy that can help to support further alignment around these outcomes.

The survey was sent to 50 respondents, with a 98% response rate. Those that responded reported that they collectively had 809 partnerships. The average number of partnerships per member of the Network was 16 (out of a possible 49).

Evaluation using the PARTNER tool allows the First 2000 Days Network to measure trust, a key quality indicator in measuring the strength of a network. The trust results for the First 2000 Days Network showed a high degree of trust among members. In almost every category along all dimensions, the perceptions of one another are very high. The high degree of trust indicates that the Network has strong members who work well together, has established clear and open communication, developed mutual respect, and works toward a shared mission and goals. The Network's high level of trust is a strongly positive indicator of success during its first three years.

The Network's results were in process-related results fell short of target. The PARTNER tool tests process quality to understand the functioning of a collaborative process. For the First 2000 Days Network, its process quality results in authenticity – an indicator of openness and credibility – did not achieve a level to be considered "good" by the PARTNER tool. The ability to detect this area of underperformance gives the Network the ability to course correct and drive better results.

LEARNING AS STRATEGIES

A strategic thrust for the Network is to continuously learn what is working and what can be improved so that best practice emerging from the field can be leveraged. This focus on adaptive learning has provided the following insights into the Network's work to date which, in turn, have also developed into key strategies:

- Sharing and Linking Create opportunities to build relationships, trust, and meaningful linkages among Network participants through connecting and networking on a regular basis.
- Aligning: Align what they are doing in their own work with those around them. This alignment may take place based on the guiding principles identified by the research on Strengthening Families developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- Leverage: Learn what is working and leverage existing approaches or interventions in order to enhance, improve, create value, build on, strengthen what one another are doing.
- Continuously learn what is working and what can be improved so that the best practice emerging from the field can be leveraged.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Notwithstanding the Network's intention to construct the means to affect change at the ECD systems-level, it faces potential barriers to success. These barriers include:

- A lack of commitment to change, particularly from existing, influential organizations who haven't yet chosen to participate in the Network;
- The absence of provincial ECD governance model and overall ECD strategy may, over time, lead to a disconnect between what the Network is doing and what a provincial ECD strategy would support;
- If the appropriate, dedicated resources are not in place to deliver or do not have time to support the work of the Network (exacerbated by lower oil prices and a difficult economic environment)
- If the scope and complexity of social change, which can be difficult, messy, confusing and, ultimately disengaging.
- Funder mindsets related to collaboration: is it wanted/possible within the social sector, the assumption that the competencies for collaboration already exist, a focus on short-term funding cycles, a focus on program-level outputs and conventional change models to define 'success'

MOVING FORWARD

The focus of the First 2000 Days Network will be to continue to build on its capacity building efforts, using the Strengthening Families approach as a quality standard for ECD to test the Network's theory of change. To do this, the Network will evaluate its efforts to determine if linking, aligning and leveraging Network participants using a shared measurement approach will improve individual, organizational and systems-level capacity to generate better ECD outcomes.

The challenge for the First 2000 Days Network, the test moving forward is its ability to test its theory of change comprehensively and consistently over time.