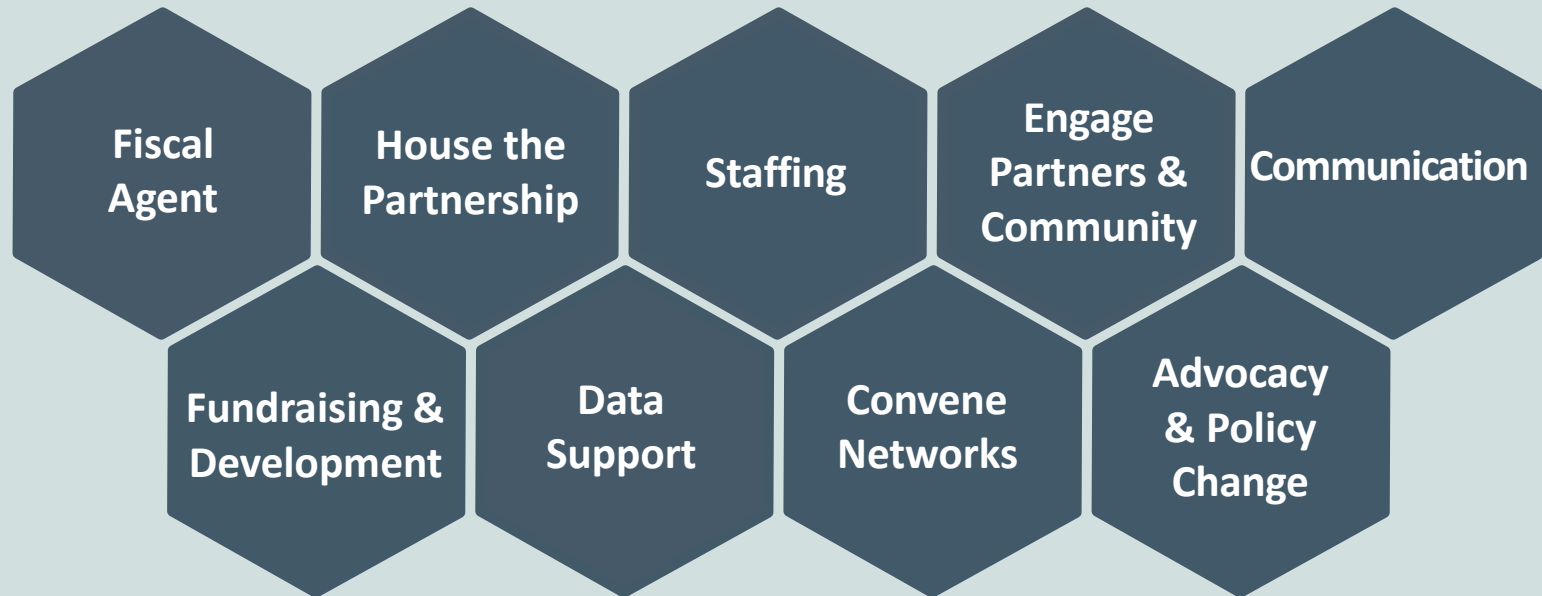


What is a Backbone?

The backbone of a partnership is not one single entity, but a set of functions that one or more entities can play a role in fulfilling. These functions are the essential on-going roles related to sustaining the infrastructure of a cradle to career partnership. Backbone functions are necessary to support the data-driven action of the partnership and continue to move the work forward. While the way a partnership fulfills these roles will look different depending on local context and assets, the set of backbone functions remain rather consistent across cradle to career partnerships.

Backbone Functions



Role of the Partnership

The different roles your partnership is responsible for playing in supporting each student, from cradle to career impacts the different tables that will be necessary to include in your accountability structure.

ROLES:

Change practice on ground

Convene partners

Data access

Data analysis

Data coaching

Development/fundraising

Communication

Eliminating disparities

House the partnership staff

Implement strategies to impact outcomes

Personnel Support

Remove financial & operational barriers

Remove political barriers

Advocate for policy change

Represent/engage community voice

Resource support for data-driven action

Strategic decision making

Backbone Function Roles



Fiscal Agent

Provide limited financial and legal oversight like overseeing grants and budgeting for the partnership. The fiscal agent typically needs to be a 501(c)3 organization to receive tax-free donations, including grants.

House the Partnership

Provide office and meeting space as well as technology needs for partnership staff. This is typically the mailing address of the partnership and recognized as the partnership's main location.

Staffing

Support the salaries of new employees or loan existing employees to staff the partnership. Employees of the partnership, whose time is not donated as in-kind support, are often supported by the fiscal agent.

The key partnership staff positions are:

- **Partnership Director**- A full-time dedicated staff person that provides leadership and management to ensure the mission and values of the partnership are put into practice
- **Facilitator**- Supports continuous improvement action planning
- **Data Manager**- Supports analysis, management, integration, and reporting of data
- **Communication/Community Engagement Manager**- Supports internal and external communications and engagement of the broader community

Backbone Function Roles

Engage Partners & Community

Bring together the necessary community partners to support the work, including engagement of the broader community as well as executive-level individuals for the leadership table.

Communications

Develop a set of key messages about the partnership and communicate them regularly to internal partners and the broad community. Establish the necessary mechanisms for communicating about the partnership (newsletter, website, etc.). Release an annual report card to the community that effectively communicates the importance and meaning of the data for each of the partnership's community-level outcomes. Enable the flow of information between the different groups within the partnership.

Fundraising & Development

Develop and implement a plan for securing funding and resources to advance the partnership's work. Tap into existing relationships to build financial support for the partnership.

Data Support

Enable the access, analysis, and utilization of data to support the partnership.

- Data Access- enables necessary data that is crucial to advancing the work of the partnership to be accessed and used for data-driven decision making.
- Data Analysis- analyzes data according to the partnership's needs.
- Data Coaching- trains and supports partnership and network members in the process of using data for continuous improvement.

How are These Roles Filled?

Centralized Backbone



A partnership with a centralized backbone structure will find the anchor entity (fiscal agent) fulfills most, and in a few cases all, of the backbone functions.

Most Partnerships



Blended Backbone



A partnership with a blended backbone will have multiple partners, in addition to the anchor entity, filling the backbone functions.

Most backbone structures of cradle to career partnerships fall somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, and tend to move towards one end or the other as a partnership evolves.

Backbone Functions in the Theory of Action

Not all of the backbone functions need to be fulfilled when a partnership is forming; as the work of the partnership evolves and matures, the functions of the backbone will also evolve. Some functions are not necessary to have in place until partnerships enter the Emerging or Sustaining Gateways of the StriveTogether Theory of Action. The diagram to the right maps the backbone functions according to what Gateway they need to be in place by.

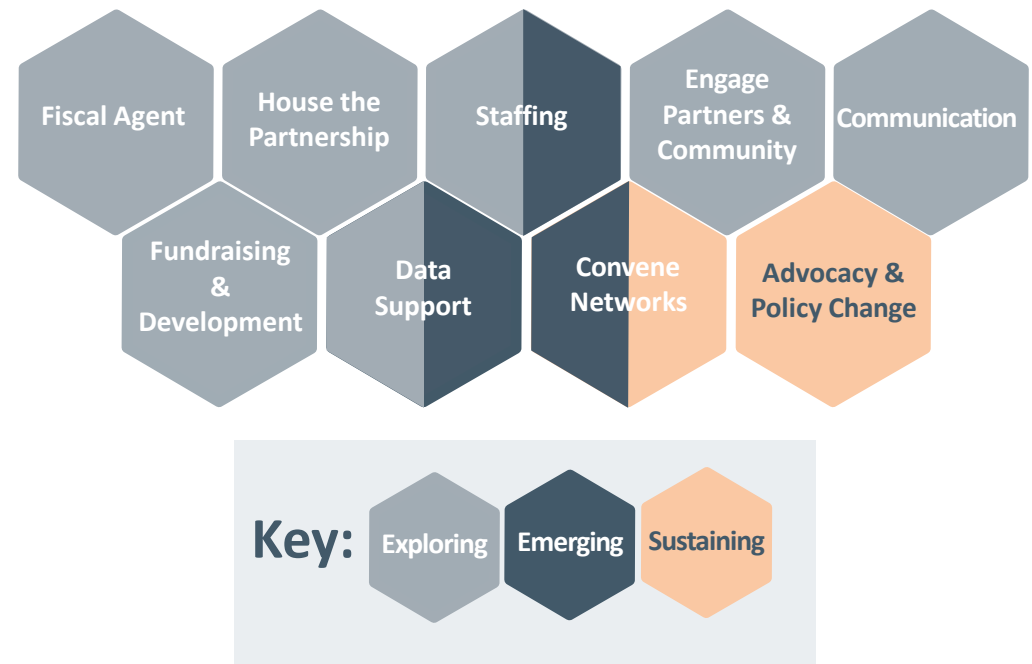
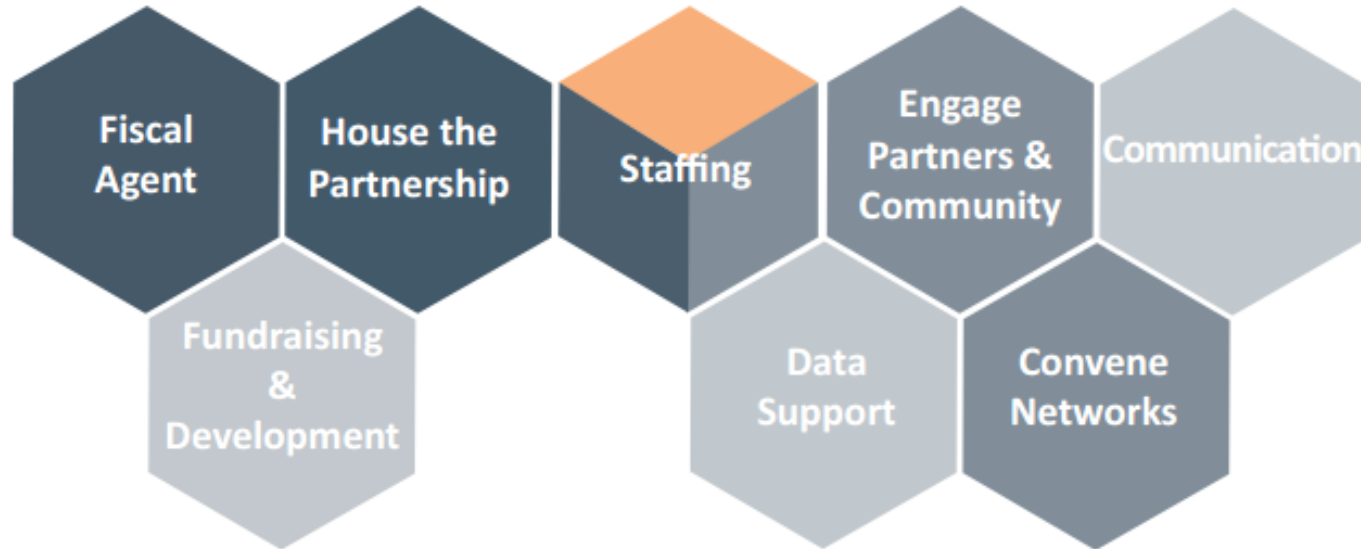


Diagram of Every Hand Joined's Backbone Structure



Jones Family Foundation



Every Hand Joined Staff

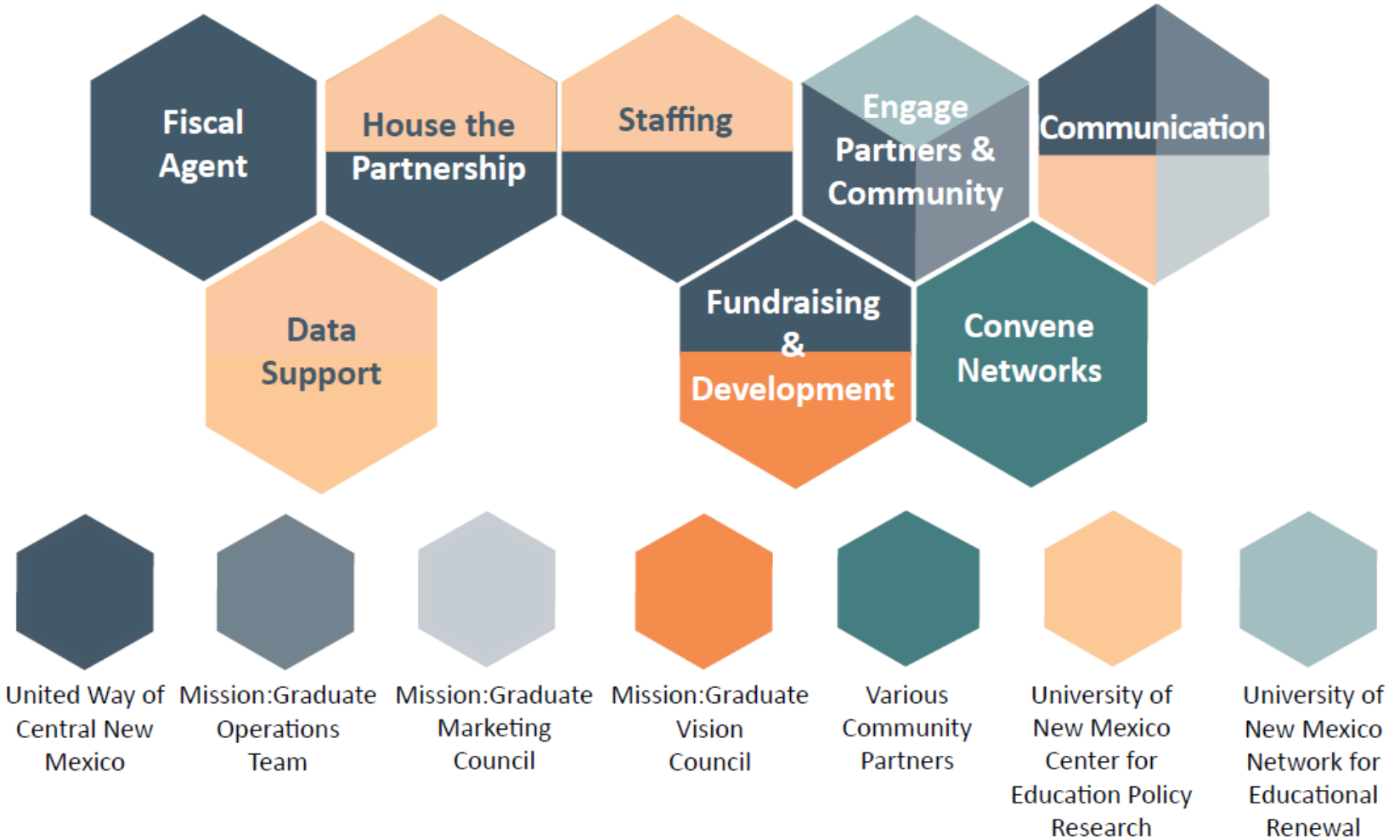


Committee Outlined in the EHI Accountability Structure



Southeast Technical College

Diagram of Mission:Graduate's Backbone Structure



DISCUSSION QUESTION

How do we fill the capacity needed to do this work long-term given the assets at our disposal?

