



# The Power of Partnership

Continued Journey on the Road Map to Success

Formative Evaluation Report for the Road Map  
Project, a Regionwide Collective Impact Effort

July 2016



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Success

Midpoint Formative Evaluation Report for the  
Road Map Project, a Regionwide Collective  
Impact Effort

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# Introduction

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In the 1990s, collaborative, community-driven efforts gained recognition as a promising approach to solving complex social issues such as environmental and public health challenges. These challenges demanded the involvement of multiple sectors and stakeholders—government, businesses, community-based organizations, and researchers—in creating long-term, systems-level change. In 2011 Kania and Kramer termed this approach “collective impact”<sup>1</sup>. This report describes the progress of one such effort in the South King County region—the Road Map Project (RMP)—five years into their journey to double the number of students achieving a postsecondary credential by 2020.

Collective impact efforts differ from traditional collaborative efforts in their necessity for high levels of coordination across partners and a strong emphasis on data-driven decision making. The collective impact framework calls for a common vision, constant communication, and collaborative practice as partners move from isolated actions to aligning their services and resources across organizations toward a shared community-level goal. To realize these ambitious goals and address the root cause of a complex problem often requires intentional strategies to transform key policies and practices of entire systems, such as K–12 education, higher education, or early learning. Collective impact efforts also rely on shared responsibility for tracking outcomes and reaching benchmarks that indicate progress toward systems and community-level change.

Collective impact is an approach to solving complex social issues through the involvement of multiple stakeholders—government agencies, businesses, education systems, community-based organizations, researchers—to build effective, long-term solutions. Five conditions are proposed to support the success of collective impact initiatives: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

## The Road Map Project

RMP is a collective impact effort aimed at improving educational outcomes from birth through postsecondary completion in the South King County region in Washington state. Started in 2010, RMP’s long-term goals are to double the number of students who are on track to graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020 and to close opportunity and achievement gaps for low-income students, immigrant students, and children of color.

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<sup>1</sup> Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

Using a collective impact model, the initiative brings together leaders and stakeholders across seven South King County communities to collaboratively design and implement high-leverage strategies in different “milestone” areas that will result in dramatic improvement in outcomes and opportunities for students of greatest need in the region. These strategies, in combination, are expected to produce the conditions to meet the 2020 goal.

The Center for Community Education Results (CCER) is the backbone organization for the Road Map Project. CCER coordinates and supports project partners in planning and carrying out the common agenda. CCER participated in the design of this evaluation, and is using the results for continuous improvement around their own role and to inform strategic planning across the partnership. RMP partners include early learning representatives, pre-K through higher education systems, community-based organizations, parents and families, funders, and public institutions and agencies (such as mayors’ offices and non-education governmental agencies). Many of these partners participated in the interviews and surveys that informed this report.

RMP uses four mechanisms to catalyze change to meet the initiative’s goals:

- Align vision, communication, implementation, and resources across partners collectively working to improve education in the region
- Build strong systems to better serve the region’s children and youth at scale
- Engage families and communities in improving education systems
- Use the “power of data” to catalyze improvement, advocate for policy and practice change, and hold organizations and systems accountable for improving education

## **Report purpose and overview**

This report summarizes key findings from the 2015 midpoint formative evaluation of how RMP’s theory of change is evolving and having an impact on the region. Our goal is not to report on indicator progress (as that is expertly done through the Road Map Results Report and other public reporting mechanisms). Rather, our purpose is to examine each of the key aspects of the RMP approach, how well they are doing on each one, and provide insight on where desired changes are—or are not—happening from the perspective of RMP stakeholders. The evaluation also explores stakeholder perceptions of how well RMP addresses racial and economic equity in all aspects of the project.

Five questions guided this evaluation:

1. What changes are occurring across the Road Map Project region?
2. What evidence is there that the theory of change is producing these changes?
3. What areas of effort are getting the most traction?
4. What do stakeholders see as the most important local success factors and challenges?
5. How can systems-level change be better supported?

Findings are drawn from survey data collected from 311 stakeholders across the initiative and interviews with 37 stakeholders involved in three key areas: family engagement, birth to third grade, and high school completion to postsecondary enrollment. For each section, we present high-level findings, supporting data, and stakeholder recommendations. Where possible, we include data from the 2013 evaluation for comparison.

## Evaluation Methodology

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In this section, we describe the sources of evaluation information gathered to inform the findings and recommendations in the report. The current evaluation activities build on and extend previous formative evaluation work in place since 2012. While our primary data were collected through interviews and surveys, we also observed meetings and reviewed documents. For example, we observed RMP Harvard Family Engagement Institute planning meetings, Community Network Steering Committee meetings, and Project Sponsor group meetings throughout the year to provide background and context for analyzing the survey and interview data. In addition, we conducted document reviews of materials presented in the meetings, as well as other relevant documents such as work group plans and policy initiatives.

### Interviews

We conducted interviews with 37 respondents, which included key implementers or system-level informants from state, local, or regional government (N = 10); advocacy groups (N = 3); community-based organizations (N = 8); funders (N = 3); K–12 institutions (N = 7); postsecondary institutions (N = 4); and backbone staff (N = 2). Our interviews focused on three issue areas: early learning (N = 15), transitions from secondary to postsecondary education (N = 13), and family engagement (N = 9). Interview responses were coded to identify recurrent themes across respondents. When we describe findings from the interviews, we classify evidence from interviews as strong support (more than half), moderate support (between a quarter and half), or minority viewpoint (less than a quarter).

### Surveys

The report draws on two sources of survey data. First, we conducted an online survey of different stakeholders as part of the evaluation and included some questions from a previous survey conducted by Education Northwest in 2013 to assess initiative progress over time. Second, we used existing survey results from the Gates Alignment Index Survey conducted in 2014 and 2015. Appendix A provides more complete descriptions of the survey instruments and characteristics of the survey samples. Table 1 below shows the response rates by survey and group.

Responses from survey items are presented as percentage agreement on most graphs in the report. This percentage agreement was calculated one of two ways: (1) as the average level of agreement calculated by dividing the mean of the item with the number of categories in the scale or (2) the percentage of respondents that marked “Strongly agree” or “Agree” on a four-point agreement scale.

Table 1. RMP survey respondents

Respondent group	Description of group	2013 N	2015 N
Formative evaluation survey <sup>2</sup>			
Education Results Network (ERN)— “Less involved” stakeholders	This group includes those who are less directly involved in RMP work but have an interest in its outcomes. These respondents answered questions about the overall role and effect of RMP.	324	211 (10%)
Work group members/action plan key implementers— “More involved” stakeholders	This group includes those who are more involved in RMP work (such as participating in work groups or initiative governance) and receive regular updates through “traffic reports” on key accomplishments of RMP. These individuals are involved more directly in RMP work and meetings and are RMP partners implementing the initiative’s strategies on the ground. These respondents answered the same broad questions about the overall RMP as the ERN group, as well as in-depth questions about the RMP theory of change. Some members of the High School to College Completion, Birth-to-Third Grade Reading, and Family Engagement work groups were asked additional questions about their specific issue spaces.	103	100 <sup>3</sup> (30%)
Total formative evaluation survey respondents		427	311
		<b>2014 N</b>	<b>2015 N</b>
<b>Gates Alignment Index Survey</b> Administered annually by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to all of its grantees to assess changes in collaborative practice and other alignment outcomes. Results presented here are for the Road Map Project region.		104 (62%)	88 (Not available)

### Triangulation of data sources

To enhance the rigor of this evaluation, the team triangulated data and methods. Data triangulation included the collection of data from a wide range of stakeholders with varying levels of involvement across multiple aspects of the initiative. We conducted analysis at both the issue level (e.g., early learning, family engagement, postsecondary transitions) and at the initiative level to identify cross-cutting patterns, as well as distinctions. Methodological triangulation included the use of interviews, surveys, archival materials, and observations. We used survey data from participants to confirm themes that surfaced in interviews. In areas in which the evidence from different sources and methods converge, the use of triangulation strengthens the findings. To triangulate data across methods, the evaluation team met to discuss patterns in various types of data.

<sup>2</sup> The 2015 survey included 21 items that were also given in 2013 so that we could assess change over time.

<sup>3</sup> Some “more involved” respondents participated in interviews (N = 35) and not the survey; therefore, the actual response rate from participants to at least one data collection method was 40 percent.

## What Progress Is the Road Map Project Making on Student Outcomes?

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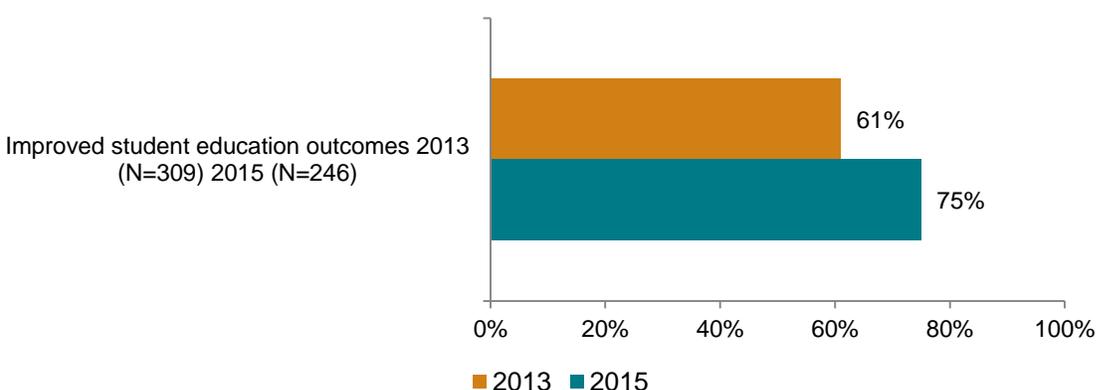
In 2011, the RMP collaboratively selected a set of indicators of student success. These indicators are benchmarks at various points in a child’s educational journey and are important milestones on the way to meeting the overall goals of the RMP. The indicators assess whether or not the initiative is making progress on four major areas across the cradle-to-career continuum: healthy and ready for kindergarten, supported and successful in school, graduate from high school college/career ready, and earn a college degree or career credential. In addition, RMP tracks gaps in access and outcomes for different racial and ethnic subgroups as part of its efforts to increase racial equity across the region. Interim targets are set on the indicators to determine whether progress is “on track” to meet the 2020 goal.

### What progress is the Road Map Project making toward on-track indicators?

*The RMP is widely and increasingly seen as an important influence in regional efforts to improve education outcomes.*

Over the last two years, there has been a moderate increase in the percentage of stakeholders who perceive RMP as helping to improve education outcomes for students across the region (Figure 1). This may be expected given the visible role that the RMP plays in public data reporting.

*Figure 1. Road Map Project is widely and increasingly seen as an important influence in regional efforts to improve education outcomes<sup>4</sup>*



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<sup>4</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 427; 2015 N = 311). Percentages represent average level of agreement calculated by dividing the mean of the item with the number of categories in the scale (in this case four).

*While stakeholders see promise in Road Map Project efforts, there is uneven progress toward closing opportunity and achievement gaps, with only a few indicators on track to meet the 2020 goal.*

RMP data confirm that there is uneven progress across the indicators and student groups (Table 2). There is positive movement in reducing the number of students who trigger early warning indicators for dropping out, and course-taking patterns and high school graduation rates are also improving. However, progress on academic achievement in reading, math, and science is mixed. For most indicators, gaps in student performance by race and ethnicity continue to be large and persistent. The only indicator meeting the target and closing the gap for students of color is grade 9 students, with one course failure and six or more absences.

*Table 2. Progress on student performance indicators for the Road Map Project region since baseline<sup>5</sup>*

Indicator	Overall		Race/ethnicity opportunity gap	
	Change since baseline <sup>a</sup>	Met target <sup>b</sup>	Gap closing <sup>b</sup>	On target to meet 2020 goal <sup>b</sup>
2014 students proficient in:				
3rd grade reading	↑	×	✓	×
4th grade math	↑	×	✓	×
5th grade science	↑	✓	×	×
6th grade reading	↑	✓	✓	×
7th grade math	NC	×	×	×
8th grade science	↑	×	✓	×
2015 students proficient in: <sup>6</sup>				
3rd grade reading	New test	NA	×	×
4th grade math	New test	NA	✓	×
5th grade science	↑	×	×	×
6th grade reading	New test	NA	×	×
7th grade math	New test	NA	✓	×
8th grade science	↓	×	×	×
9th graders expelled or suspended from school	↓	×	✓	×
9th graders with one course failure and six or more absences	↓	✓	✓	×

<sup>5</sup> Road Map Project 2014 and 2015 Results Reports, <http://www.roadmapproject.org/data-center/reports/>

<sup>6</sup> Washington state changed its state assessment in 2014–15.

Indicator	Overall		Race/ethnicity opportunity gap	
	Change since baseline <sup>a</sup>	Met target <sup>b</sup>	Gap closing <sup>b</sup>	On target to meet 2020 goal <sup>b</sup>
Students who graduate from high school on time	↑	×	×	×
High school graduates in community and technical colleges enrolling in pre-college English courses	↓	×	NA	NA
High school graduates in community and technical colleges enrolling in pre-college math courses	↓	×	NA	NA
High school graduates who directly enroll in postsecondary education	↓	×	×	×
High school graduates completing past first year of postsecondary	↑	×	×	×
Students from grade 9 cohort earning a postsecondary credential by age 24	↑	×	NA	NA

<sup>a</sup> Arrows indicate direction of change since baseline.

<sup>b</sup> Check mark indicates the target was met; X indicates the target was not met.

NC = No change.

NA = No baseline or disaggregated data available.

Because the RMP is not yet making change fast enough to meet the goals of the initiative, it is important to examine how well specific strategies (e.g., outreach events, investments) are working and where strategies could be revised for greater impact.

# Aligning Efforts for Change and Building Stronger Systems

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Collective impact efforts such as the RMP aim to align vision, communication, implementation, and resources across partners working to improve education in the region. When diverse organizations, systems, and sectors engage in mutually reinforcing activities around a common agenda that is informed by data, then they are better equipped to address complex social problems such as educational inequity.

This common agenda drives all of the work of the collective impact initiative as organizations align their practices and policies to achieve a common goal. These changes may involve significant shifts in the way educational organizations do business. In addition to shifting organizational policy and practice, collective impact efforts such as RMP also seek to influence broader systems by removing barriers and expanding opportunities for young people. This may involve strengthening existing systems (e.g., the K–12 education system) or building new connections between systems (e.g., between early learning providers and school districts).

In this chapter, we first describe how the RMP is making progress on developing and sustaining a common agenda, including shared vision, common language and messaging, and mechanisms for determining and implementing an action plan of collective strategies for achieving the goal. We then discuss how the RMP is sparking change within partner organizations and creating the conditions for stronger local systems.

## How is the Road Map Project supporting the creation and implementation of a common agenda?

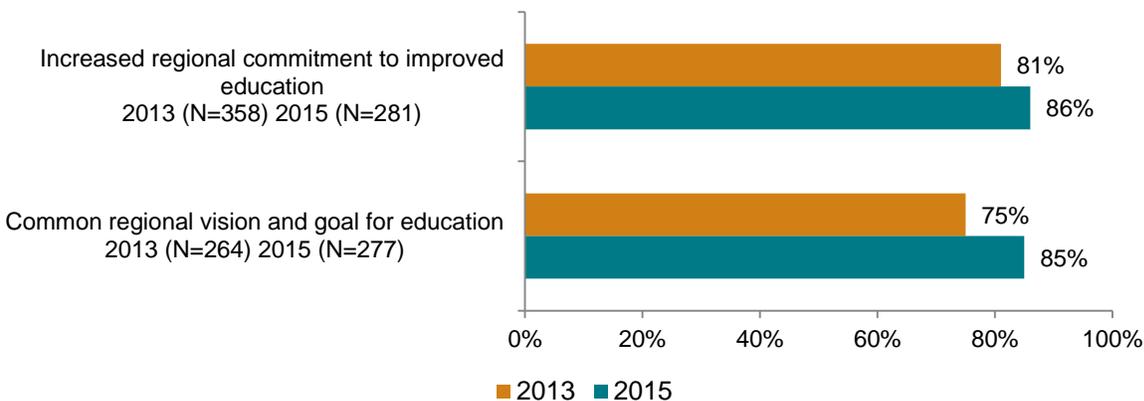
The common agenda provides a map to guide the joint work of diverse partners as they seek to transform systems and achieve significant impact in their community. A common agenda has two main components. First, it starts with a focus on what the initiative wants to achieve—a **goal and vision** that all partners aspire to work toward together. A common agenda requires a shared understanding of the issue to be addressed and consistent messaging about why this issue is important. To reach this collective vision requires a level of cross-sector and organizational commitment to the goal. The second component of a common agenda is mutual agreement around an **action plan**. This includes a shared set of strategies for how to best approach solving the issue, as well as common measures and indicators for tracking progress toward the goal.

*Over time, the Road Map Project has built a very strong shared vision and commitment to its goal across the region, and its partners and support continue to grow.*

This commitment is an area of strength for the RMP. A large majority of stakeholders report that there is a greater focus on regional identity and more buy-in to the importance of taking a cradle-to-career approach to improving education outcomes.

*There is a spirit of sharing that hasn't always been around. An example is we have a student survey that we do that looks at a lot of different things, like aspirations and connections to school and noncognitive factors. Other districts are interested in our survey; it's like wow, can we develop it and tweak it? There is just a lot of sharing of best practices and less competition maybe. Sometimes people are secretive or like, our district is the best, and you know, it's a competitive thing. Now I think there is more of a spirit of community, of working on it together and that we're trying things out and learning from best practices.*

*Figure 2. Over time the Road Map Project has built a very strong shared vision and commitment to its goal, both across the region and among its partners, and that support continues to grow<sup>7</sup>*



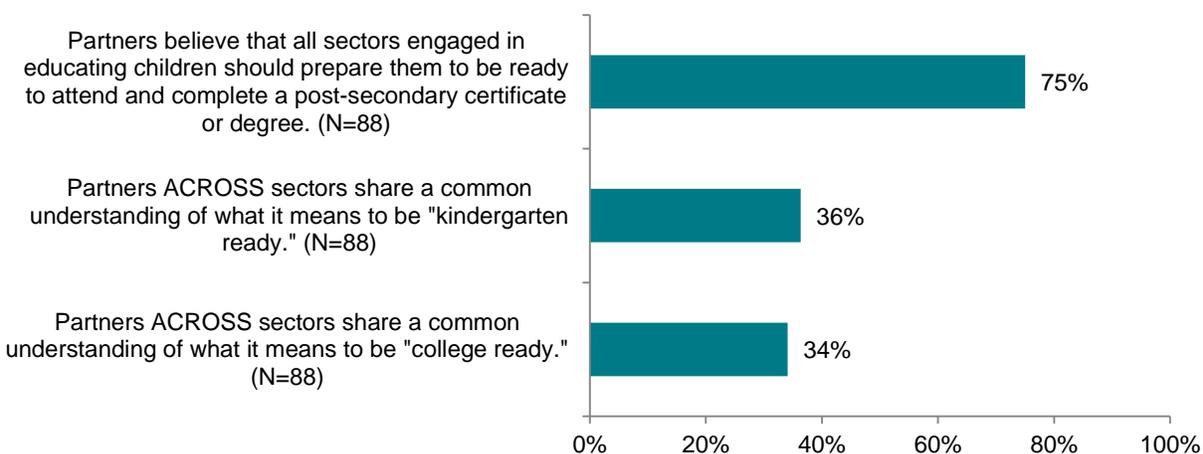
The majority of stakeholders perceive that there is a common regional vision and goal for education and that there is an increased regional commitment to improving education (85 percent and 86 percent respectively). From the interview data, there is a definite increase in the sense of unity—partners commonly report that there is more focus on the regional identity and more buy-in to the importance of taking a cradle-to-career perspective. Media campaigns and public will-building activities to engage community stakeholders from all sectors have provided the foundation for the RMP to build a regional commitment and momentum to achieve its goals.

<sup>7</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 427; 2015 N = 311). Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale [4]).

***Stakeholders widely agree on the overall vision and goal but less on what it means to achieve readiness at intermediate steps of the cradle-to-career continuum.***

There appears to be much stronger shared agreement about the overall RMP goal of preparing children to complete a postsecondary credential than there is about the definition of what readiness means at different benchmarks along the cradle-to-career education continuum (Figure 3). Three-quarters of the stakeholders taking the alignment survey agreed that partners across the initiative believe that all sectors should be engaged in preparing children for success. However, there was much less agreement when asked whether partners across sectors share common understandings of what “kindergarten ready” and “college ready” mean.

***Figure 3. Stakeholders widely agree on the overall goal, but less on what it means to achieve readiness at intermediate steps of the cradle-to-career continuum<sup>8</sup>***



***Stakeholders feel that a common language around education is emerging across the region, although it is stronger among institutional partners than in the community.***

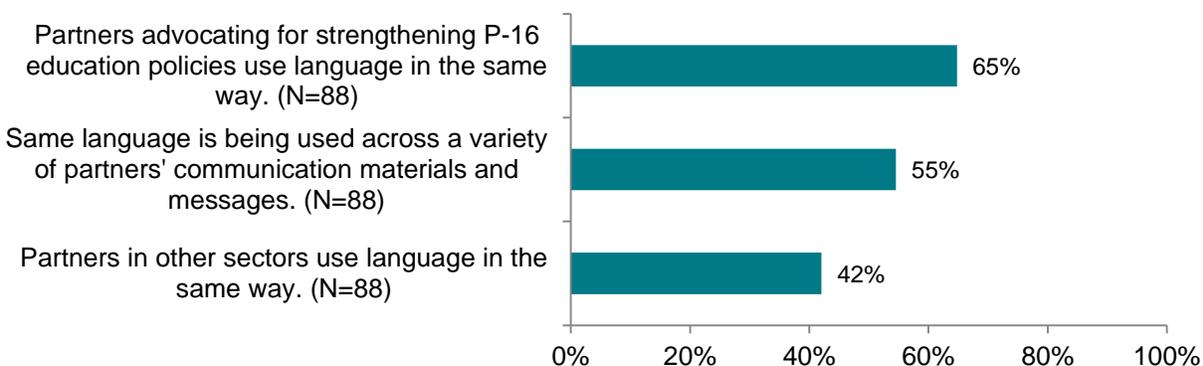
Two-thirds of stakeholders report that RMP partners use similar language in advocating for strengthening P–16 education policies (Figure 4). Slightly more than half indicated that common language and messaging is being used across partner communication strategies. There is less progress in developing common language across sectors. For example, partners may use the same language to refer to very different outcomes or strategies — such as the use of equity to refer to both opportunity and achievement gaps.

Continuous messaging and consistent language are critical for developing and supporting the shared vision, understanding, and agreed-upon approaches to meeting the goals. Common language is a mechanism to build shared community understanding about what is important and what is meant by core concepts guiding the efforts. Efforts such as the Education Results

<sup>8</sup> Results come from the 2015 Gates Alignment Index Survey (N = 88).

Network meetings, traditional and social media coverage, and explicit outreach to groups are some of the public will-building strategies implemented by the RMP.

Figure 4. Common language and messaging is developing across the Road Map Project region<sup>9</sup>



Effective communication strategies build public will and momentum around key campaigns and efforts—both raising community awareness of key issues and implementing strategies that will build toward meeting the RMP goal. For example, RMP partners sponsor a regional summer “Let’s Read!” campaign in which local and regional libraries, community-based organizations, and school districts spread the message about the importance of summer learning to help students stay on track to success. The campaign distributes materials that stress the importance of summer reading and have also distributed more than 12,000 free books to students. A second example is the *Discover U* regional campaign to promote college going. *Discover U* is a kick-off event to a weeklong Road Map to College campaign. During *Discover U*, schools, community organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders promote college enrollment by wearing collegiate or career gear, discussing their own college and career paths with young people, and participating in a college or career exploration activity with youth. Materials and ideas for activities are provided to educators and community volunteers across the region.

Moving forward, the initiative is making a concerted effort to sharpen and target communication about the RMP across the region. In 2015, the RMP engaged in the development of a strategic communication plan aimed at generating pressure and action to support educational equity across the region, at the local level, and through direct communication with parents. The plan focuses on building public will and accountability by continuing to develop and refine a common message, language, and communication tools for talking about educational equity; creating a college-going culture across the region; engaging parents to support their children’s education; and creating a common understanding of partner roles in the work.

<sup>9</sup> Results come from the 2015 Gates Alignment Index Survey (N = 88).

*Partners agree about the overall goals but vary in their levels of agreement around the strategic action plan to reach those goals.*

At the midpoint of the RMP initiative, the primary mechanism used to develop and implement a common agenda is a set of work groups defined by milestone or subgroup, including Birth-to-Third Grade; High School to College; re-engaging Opportunity Youth; English Language Learners; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); and Youth Development for Education Results. The work groups determine which strategies are likely to yield the highest return, develop action plans for implementing the strategies, and set short- and long-term indicators of success to monitor progress in their area of focus. Some examples of goals and priority strategies for the work groups can be seen in Table 3.

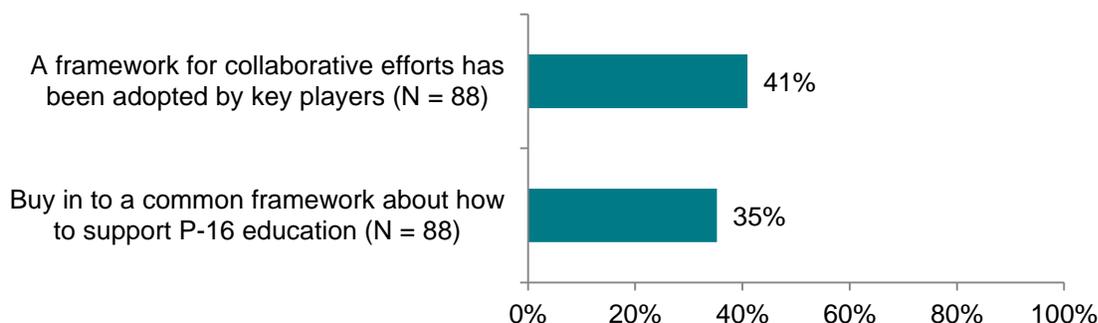
*Table 3. Examples of key strategies within early learning, postsecondary transition and completion, and English language learner issue spaces*

<b>Early learning (Birth to third grade)</b>	<b>High school to college completion</b>	<b>English language learners (ELLs)</b>
Goal: Increasing rates of kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading proficiency	Goal: Increase postsecondary enrollment and completion rates	Goal: Integrate ELL students into all phases of meeting the RMP goal
<p>Example priority areas and strategies:</p> <p><i>Parent and Family Engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase knowledge of brain development, early literacy, and numeracy with emphasis on transitions support</li> <li>• Identify potential opportunities for aligning funding, communications, partnerships, and advocacy</li> </ul> <p><i>Kindergarten Registration Campaign:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spread information to parents about kindergarten registration with a focus on immigrants, refugees, limited English proficient, and other groups with the lowest rates of kindergarten registration</li> <li>• Align kindergarten registration across RMP</li> </ul>	<p>Example priority areas and strategies:</p> <p><i>Postsecondary Enrollment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for increased counselor capacity to support college and career advising</li> <li>• Strengthen implementation of high school and beyond planning that involves families</li> <li>• Improve college-bound scholarship communications from sign-up through college completion</li> <li>• Advocate to fully fund the College Bound Scholarship and State Need Grant</li> <li>• Develop tools and supports to allow students to clearly understand course-taking pathways, map their course of study, and stay on track</li> </ul> <p><i>Postsecondary Completion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use completion coaches to re-engage postsecondary students and support them to finish their outstanding degree requirements</li> </ul>	<p>Example priority areas and strategies:</p> <p><i>Positive Identity and Primary Language Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure curricula are inclusive and relevant</li> <li>• Ensure school environment reflects students' cultural and linguistic heritage</li> <li>• Hire and develop staff that reflect the diversity and languages of the student population</li> </ul> <p><i>Strong Instructional Practice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support for ELL coaches</li> <li>• Provide cultural competency training</li> <li>• Align ELL teaching to Common Core State Standards</li> <li>• Provide professional development for general education teachers</li> <li>• Ensure content area teachers receive training to teach ELLs</li> <li>• Develop professional development at the administrative level that is focused on ELLs</li> </ul>

However, even though the work groups have attempted to create action plans to guide their collective action, fewer than half of the stakeholders surveyed felt that there was a consistent alignment of efforts and buy-in into the strategy framework for how to best support education in the region (Figure 5). This is also supported from the interview data, in which stakeholders

expressed that they were not entirely clear about how strategies are selected and how the strategies are supposed to add up to a larger impact.

*Figure 5. Stakeholders are only beginning to perceive that a common approach to supporting education guides the work of the Road Map Project<sup>10</sup>*



Partners reported that it is difficult to focus on and choose where to invest effort among the myriad of tactics that the RMP is implementing. In addition, some raised a concern that partners might be overwhelmed by the number of strategies and unsure about how to leverage their efforts. They indicate that more specific guidance about the best strategies to use—bringing in national research and resources about evidence-based and best practices—would help them target their efforts. In addition, having some sense of how strategies work together to produce change would increase collective buy-in to the priority strategies and action plans.

There is also some concern that the strategies currently in place at the time of this evaluation may not be the most effective ones to accelerate change. This lack of agreement about how to achieve the goal, combined with a large menu of strategies without clear connection to objectives, may be a barrier to effective implementation.

One implication of these findings is that the work group strategy may not be consistently effective as a mechanism for bringing partners together in agreement about coordinated action. There may be processes that allow work groups to work more effectively, such as having a more tightly focused strategy around a specific objective. There is a sense from stakeholders that some groups may be more cohesive and therefore more able to affect change. This suggests a need to better understand what a good work-group process looks like.

### **Where are system changes beginning to emerge?**

System changes can take a variety of forms. In particular, the RMP focuses on increasing collaboration, leveraging funding sources, advocating for equitable access to opportunities, and promoting changes in education policy and practice, especially related to racial and economic equity.

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<sup>10</sup> Results come from the 2015 Gates Alignment Index Survey (N = 88)

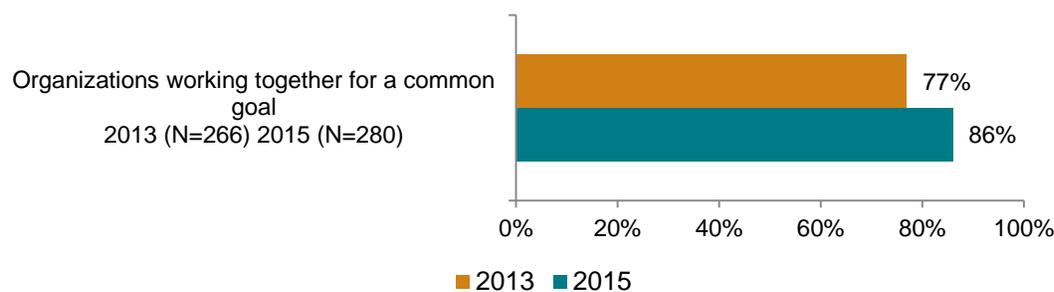
## Collaboration in mutually reinforcing activities

In the world of collective impact, collaborative practice goes beyond simply working together on a task or an activity. The complex challenges addressed by collective impact initiatives such as RMP do not lend themselves to single-shot, disjointed approaches. For real change to occur, these complex educational issues require intentional cross-sector collaboration in which public and private systems leverage their capacities and resources to work toward a common goal. Increased collaborative practice might include scaling up best practices, advocating for policy change, smoothing transitions between levels of a system, and conducting community campaigns to raise awareness of an important issue, such as summer reading loss or college enrollment. For example, municipal or community-based organizations may have resources to serve children and families that can be leveraged with education funding to create wraparound approaches to educational challenges.

*The Road Map Project has brought partners together to work on common efforts in ways that were not happening before.*

Stakeholders see an increase in organizations working together toward a common goal (from 77 percent to 86 percent over two years, Figure 6). There also appears to be an emerging awareness and heightened attention to relationships across sectors. For example, several higher education stakeholders reported being more aware of—and thinking more systematically about—what happens to students in the K–12 system and the implications that has for their postsecondary success.

Figure 6. Organizations are working together toward a common goal<sup>11</sup>



Many stakeholders described an increased level of collaboration within and across sectors as diverse groups work together around the RMP common agenda—particularly related to discrete events or efforts. There are substantial examples of stakeholders working together on **regionwide campaigns or events** such as Let’s Read, kindergarten sign-up, or the College Bound campaign. Stakeholders are also coming together for **regionwide professional development opportunities**, such as the Pre-K Institute, High School and Beyond Institute, and

<sup>11</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 427; 2015 N = 311). Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale (4)).

Harvard Family Engagement Institute. These collective learning opportunities, which often bridge systems (e.g., K–12) and sectors (e.g., CBOs and K–12), are helping to create a shared understanding around promising practices. Other examples of collaborative efforts include districts implementing early warning systems, policy initiatives such as the Early Learning Start Act, and cross-sector data initiatives in several work groups.

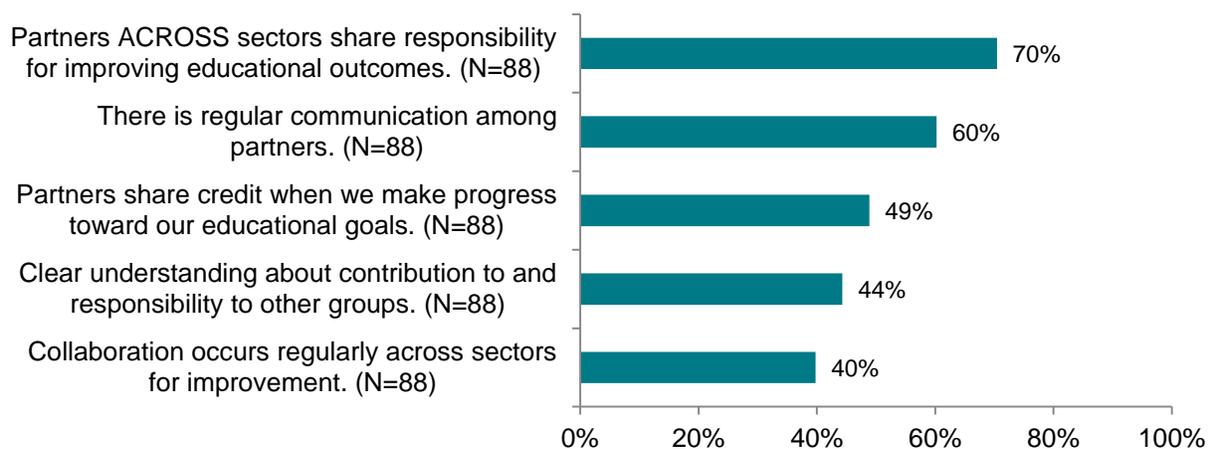
Other collaborative changes include the **development of new cross-system and cross-sector partnerships**. Within the early learning arena, there is an increase in partnerships between districts and CBOs to administer high-quality pre-K programs such as Kaleidoscope Play and Learn. In the high school-to-postsecondary space, stakeholders offered many examples of new school and CBO partnerships to offer college access programming, as well as district partnerships to co-lead college access events for specific populations, such as opportunity youth. Race to the Top funded several new partnerships between districts and CBOs that are specifically focused on family engagement.

*Collaborative practice is emerging across Road Map Project partners, but more is needed to strengthen conditions for collaboration.*

This can be seen in survey results in which stakeholders were likely to agree that there is progress in collaboration related to partners sharing responsibility for educational outcomes and engaging in regular communication (Figure 7). However, significantly fewer stakeholders reported that collaboration occurs regularly and that there is shared understanding of contributions and roles of different partners. From the interview data, it is clear that collaboration is happening, at least in terms of coordinated events. For example, respondents cite many examples of convenings, public meetings, and other discrete events.

One challenge raised by interview respondents is that some aspects of the work are lagging because there is no agreement on who should own the work. For example, much work is happening in the K–12 space to prepare students to be college-ready, but much less work is happening in the transition space between high school and postsecondary. There are few bridging policies and programs that systematically follow students from high school into college and target their support needs along the way.

Figure 7. Collaborative practice across Road Map Project partners is emerging, but more is needed to strengthen the conditions for collaboration<sup>12</sup>



*While these changes in collaborative practice are promising, it is not yet clear how they are producing stronger systems as a result.*

The examples above illustrate that the RMP partners are beginning to work together in collaborative ways. However, stakeholders are still unsure how these many collaborative activities add up to long-term, comprehensive systems change. For example, although significant progress has been made in aligning the P–3 system, there is a sense that there is still a long way to go for real and sustainable systems change.

*I think the P–3 alignment is very different and still a long way to be solid and long lasting but [it] is such a key thing in early childhood space from birth to first grade [where] you’ve got completely different organized efforts, completely different system in terms of K–12 and early learning and EL is not an effort at all. I have seen a lot of progress in trying to create an awareness of a lack of alignment, importance of lack of alignment, commitment to changing it, down to district hiring P–3 lead.*

### **Aligned funding**

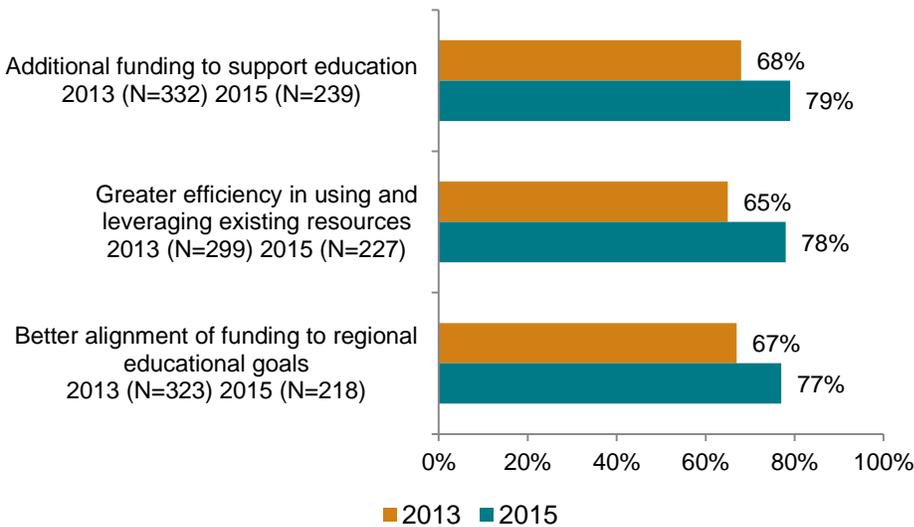
A critical aspect of alignment involves targeting resources and funding toward strategies and efforts that support the overall goal and objectives of the RMP initiative. By aligning funding to initiative priorities, the funding and resource landscape provides incentives for organizations and systems to engage in actions that are more likely to achieve the goals. These changes might start with better signaling of private funding commitment to RMP strategies, which could then lead to deeper, more sustainable reallocation and leveraging of resources across funding sources and partners. Partners could work together to leverage existing sources of private and public funding or could collaborate on bringing additional resources into the system to support ongoing work.

<sup>12</sup> Results come from the 2015 Gates Alignment Index Survey (N = 88).

*There is a strong perception that Road Map Project aligned funding efforts are leading to more funding to support education and better efficiency and alignment of existing resources.*

More than three-quarters of stakeholders indicated that RMP has influenced the influx of new funding to support education and that this has led to greater efficiency and alignment of existing resources to regional education goals (Figure 8). Exhibit A describes four examples of how the RMP has leveraged funding.

*Figure 8. Most stakeholders agree that aligned funding strategies are leading to more funding to support education and better efficiency and alignment of existing resources<sup>13</sup>*



<sup>13</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 427; 2015 N = 311). Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale (4)).

## *Exhibit A. Examples of aligned funding in the Road Map Project*

### **Small Grants Fund**

This program aims to boost parent and community engagement by supporting community groups, organizations, and institutions committed to achieving the RMP goal of improving education results from cradle to college and career by funding family engagement efforts. Awards range from \$500—5,000 per grant.

### **RMP Aligned Funders Group**

This is primarily a network of private and family foundations and funders who are interested in supporting RMP's work in improving educational outcomes in South King County and South Seattle. Many of the participating funders support other initiatives in the region and have strategically aligned their educational grantmaking efforts to the RMP goals. Some members of the group have begun to pool resources to collectively fund activities that are aligned with RMP goals, such as the Rapid Resource Fund—a funding strategy that invests in short-term opportunities that have potential to leverage larger system changes. For example, the Rapid Resource Fund awarded a grant to Youth Development Executives of King County to support the initial website development for a new youth program directory that will lead to increased coordination and integration.

### **South King County Race to the Top Grant**

This effort brought together a group of 23 education leaders and numerous community partners to apply for a collaborative federal grant that supports early learning, K–12, and postsecondary readiness efforts across the seven RMP districts. In fall 2012, seven King County school districts joined forces to compete in the federal Race to the Top competition and won \$40 million to enact a plan to raise student achievement. The grant focuses on three areas:

- Funding to help districts work with their preschools and early learning programs
- Supports for STEM learning (science, technology, engineering, and math) through intensive math instruction and information on STEM careers
- Strategies for increasing postsecondary enrollment and success, including support for college entrance and readiness exams, expansion of Advanced Placement and rigorous course taking, and training for middle and high school counselors

### **Open Doors and Opportunity Youth**

In response to a change in state policy allocating funding for dropout prevention, members of the Road Map Opportunity Youth work group came together to pool Basic Student Allocation dollars from the state and in-kind services and funds from the United Way, King County, and other local foundations and organizations. The leveraged dollars are used to fund service gaps for youth and to pay for a variety of services, including bus tickets for students, student scholarships, student leadership development training, school supplies, and food for opportunity youth in the program. The pooled private and public dollars are supplemented by external grants awarded to partners.

*Stakeholders express concern that efforts to align funding to Road Map Project goals may not take into account all tactics that can move the needle in terms of student outcomes.*

Some respondents raised questions about whether there has been sufficient investment in the actual strategies that are needed to reach the goal. For example, if the goal is to double the number of students earning a postsecondary credential, then has the initiative sufficiently increased related inputs such as guidance counselors or rigorous high school course offerings?

A second challenge is the perception that RMP is a resource vacuum in that it receives significant local funding. Not all stakeholders understand what that funding is supporting. In addition, the alignment of funding resources appears to be creating a climate of competition among CBOs, resulting from a perceived reduction in resources available to do the work. Some stakeholders expressed concern that the aligned funding strategy is “forcing” CBOs to change their approach to funding and as a result important strategies that are not part of the RMP action plan may not be getting support.

Finally, stakeholders are concerned about the financial sustainability of the initiative. While RMP is currently well funded, there is concern about how to pay for and sustain the work after Race to the Top is over or if the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation changes its strategy.

### **Advocacy**

Another area of systems change that can emerge out of a common agenda involves increased collective advocacy for policy and practice change. These policies and practices can be macro-level (e.g., education funding strategies by the state) or implemented within individual organizations (such as early warning systems as best practice for increasing graduation rates).

The Advocates Caucus is the primary mechanism through which the RMP influences state and local policy. The purpose of the caucus is to leverage relationships with institutional allies to educate and advocate for policies, resources, and practices that can strengthen the political will to pass, implement, and sustain effective long-term solutions that are aligned to the overall goal of the Road Map Project. The caucus engages in active advocacy campaigns and testimony and also conducts regular meetings and trainings to build the capacity of RMP members and other allies to more effectively advocate for change.

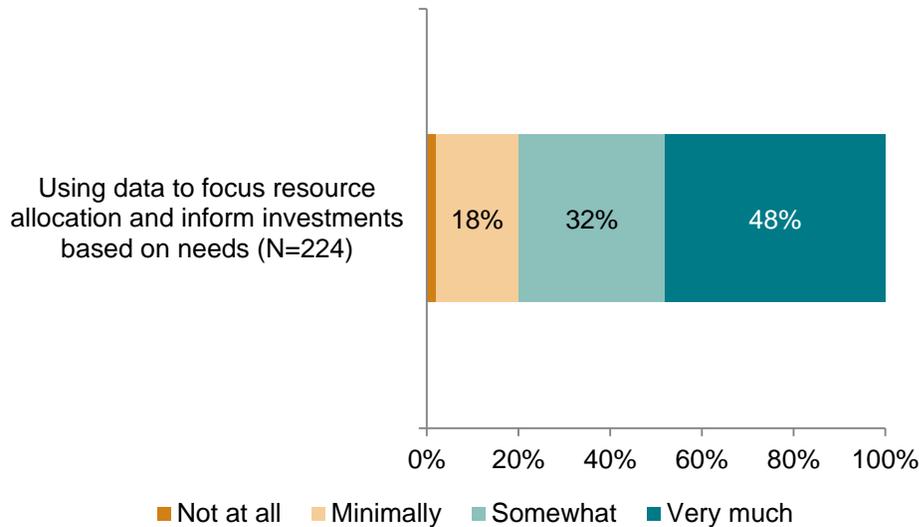
*The Road Map Project plays an important role in advocating for the passage of public policy decisions.*

Several partners identified the role of advocacy as an important one for the backbone organization CCER. In particular, they cite CCER’s regional and state-level connections and the wealth of data available for RMP partner to use in making the case for policy changes.

*In regards of what data points need to be a part of the early report of the Early Start Act and how connections are supposed to be made to school and how to connect it to WaKIDS data, and I believe it is all coming from the initial work of the Road Map Project.*

Eighty percent of stakeholders perceive the RMP as effectively influencing the use of data to focus local resource allocation and investments (Figure 9).

*Figure 9. The majority of stakeholders perceive that the Road Map Project influences the use of data in resource allocation and investment decisions<sup>14</sup>*



Examples of the RMP's role in successfully advocating for policy change can be seen in the areas of early learning, postsecondary transitions, and English language learners (ELLs). Exhibit B shows some examples of the RMP's advocacy efforts.

<sup>14</sup> Results come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2015 N = 311).

## *Exhibit B. Examples of collective advocacy efforts in the Road Map Project*

### **Best Starts for Kids**

The RMP was an active advocate for King County's Best Starts for Kids initiative. Best Starts for Kids is a funding levy to invest in prevention and early intervention for children, youth, families, and communities. RMP partners participated in advocacy by sending letters of support for the proposition, testifying in support, and bringing public attention to the campaign. Partners included the backbone organization, early learning stakeholders, and public health representatives.

### **English Language Learner Policy**

The English Language Learner work group contributed to several state level policies related to providing more equitable opportunities for students who do not speak English as a first language. For example, the World Language Credit program created a system within each district to award competence-based high school credits for different world languages, enabling more students in the Road Map region to graduate on time and become college eligible.<sup>15</sup> Another example of their policy influence has been to improve policies related to dual language programs, ELL endorsements for educators, and "speak your own language" outreach efforts to parents for school districts.

### **Cradle Through College Coalition**

RMP is leading a Cradle Through College Coalition, which has the goal of advocating for strategic investments in the wake of a State's Supreme Court ruling that the state has not adequately funded the K–12 system as constitutionally mandated. As a result, the state must increase investment and implement revenue restructuring to adequately address the needs of students in the K–12 education system, particularly those of greatest need. This cross-sector coalition includes educational institutions, community-based organizations, business groups, and local governments. The coalition identified several priorities across the education continuum, including early learning, STEM, and college access.

### **College Bound Scholarship and College Access**

Within the area of postsecondary transition, the coalition is focused on fully funding the College Bound Scholarship and State Need Grant. The State Need Grant is the state's financial aid program from which the College Bound Scholarship draws funding. Together, the College Bound Scholarship and State Need Grant have helped thousands of Washington students obtain a college education, but nearly 34,000 students could not access financial aid last year because funding ran out. To meet this objective, the RMP partners sponsored an *Advocacy Day* to highlight college access needs for low-income students and the importance of funding need-based college financial aid. Students, parents, and community members shared stories with legislators, testified in committee, and demonstrated at the capitol about the importance of fully funding the College Bound Scholarship and State Need Grant.

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<sup>15</sup> Greenberg Motamedi, J., & Jaffery, Z. (2015). *The impact of competency-based world language credits on graduation: A case study from the Washington Road Map districts*. Portland, OR: Education Northwest

Stakeholders cite growing opportunities for the RMP to support policy advocacy efforts in the region, especially related to equity.

*They [Road Map Project] could better support by more conversations and policy advocacy for changes where there is disproportionality. They didn't get involved that I saw around the disproportionate discipline issues for African American students in the Seattle Public Schools. That might have been a role because if kids aren't in school, if they're not in class, then they're not learning. That might be something around equity. We know it's an issue nationally. We know we have issues in Seattle Public Schools, and is there a role for the Road Map in looking at this across the region.*

### **Increasing regional strategies to promote equity**

From the beginning of the RMP initiative, a priority goal was reducing opportunity gaps for students of color and low-income students. However, outcomes and opportunities remain inequitable across this diverse community. In the last two years, RMP has embarked on efforts that draw attention to these gaps. Many of these efforts are just starting and much of the hard work around racial and economic equity has yet to occur. Below is a list of current and emerging\* (indicated by an asterisk) steps taken by RMP to raise the visibility of equity within the initiative and in the region:

- Presentation of disaggregated data to track progress for racial and income groups
- Efforts to strengthen family engagement in education
- Equity training for CCER staff and partners
- Adoption of racial equity statements and policies within CCER\*
- Implementation of a racial equity self-assessment tool\*
- Explicit equity goals in action plans and priority strategies\*

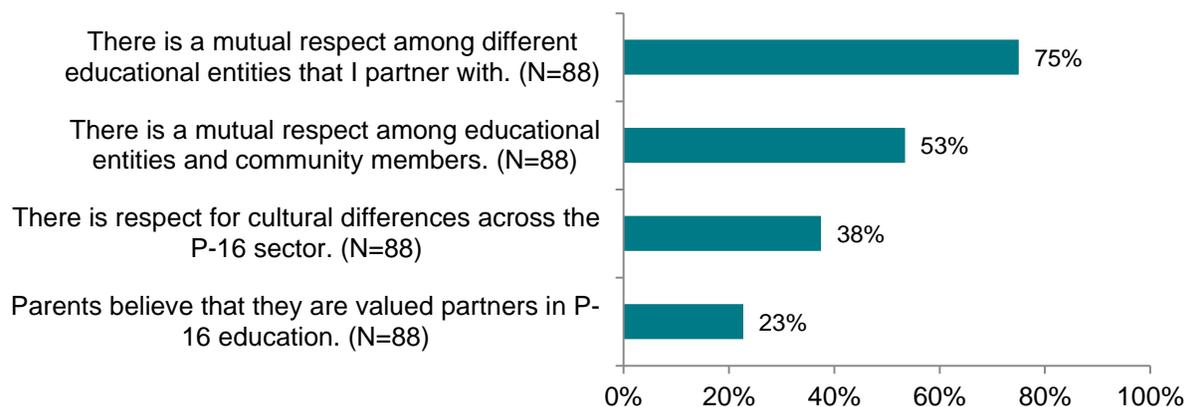
While this renewed focus on racial and economic equity is emerging and is yet untested, there are several strategies that RMP is using to engage communities and address barriers to equitable participation and success in the system. These include: conducting more intentional and targeted disaggregation of data (e.g., African American males), incorporating explicit equity goals in action plans and priority strategies, adopting racial equity statements and policies within CCER, implementing a racial equity self-assessment tool to identify areas in which institutional racism needs to be addressed, creating more intentional work groups and decision-making groups that mirror the communities being impacted, and providing equity training and support for the backbone organization and other partners.

***Stakeholders cite an urgent need for policies and practices that are more inclusive and culturally responsive.***

Stakeholders are uncertain whether RMP is offering policies and practice solutions that will mitigate educational inequities in the long term without a significant shift toward approaches that focus on cultural and community assets. While mutual respect appears to be growing across partner organizations and between education systems and the community (Figure 10),

there has been less progress on respecting cultural differences (38 percent agreement) and valuing parents as partners in education (23 percent agreement).

*Figure 10. Mutual respect between Road Map Project education partners and the community is growing but there has been less progress in respecting and valuing cultural differences and treating parents as partners<sup>16</sup>*



In an example from the family engagement data, 81 percent of respondents said it was “critically important” to improve school climate and to create a culture that is more inclusive of diverse families—making this the most critical family engagement strategy for stakeholders. In interviews, participants reflected on the “unintended consequences” of policies and practices that aim to address opportunity gaps yet inadvertently further exclude historically marginalized students and families, in part because those stakeholders were not consulted in the design of these policies and practices. This is an area in which a more explicit equity lens may be useful in determining which policies and practices the RMP puts forward.

*I do think that’s [equity] an area where they [CCER] could better support progress, yes. They have the resources. They have the structure. They have the will. It’s always something I hear is going to happen, but I think there is just so much happening, not everything can be your top priority at once for any organization. It’s not possible. But, I think that this is one where really meaningful improvement could be made in a short-term timeframe.*

*I think people need deeper training in culturally responsive practices ... The Road Map Project they could share the research ... maybe Road Map Project can have a stronger focus on undoing racism to achieve equity.*

*One of the places where I see that play out in the micro level, particularly in schools, is really thinking about what are the expectations that we have of kids and families? That goes two ways; one of them being the frame that we tend to use that it is the responsibility of kids and families to be ready to enter school and not thinking about what*

<sup>16</sup> Results come from the 2015 Gates Alignment Index Survey (N = 88).

*is the responsibility of the school to be ready for the families that they serve, especially if those families are not white, English speaking families. I think the other piece of it, too, frankly, especially when you look at trying to change teacher practice to have a stronger instructional core, there is often times a real resistance there because the system has been set up in a way that it reinforces our biases. You have this role; teachers just having low expectations of kids, frankly, of certain kids and not really believing those kids are going to be able to achieve whatever it is that we're trying to help them get to. That plays out kind of on the micro level, but I think the way our institutions have been set up reinforces that for them.*

***There is no overarching approach guiding work related to equity across the Road Map Project.***

Several stakeholders noted that equity should be a more visible and consistent aspect of RMP's strategy and approach. For example, several equity-related terms are used in RMP work—“equity,” “opportunity gaps,” “social justice,” “inclusion”—but there is a lack of clarity around what these terms mean, how they are incorporated into actual work, and which terms are appropriate to a given context. Stakeholders report that equity is “part of the conversation,” but there is a gap between discussion, awareness, and the lived experience needed for it to have an actual impact on the work. In particular, stakeholders note a lack of explicit conversation around racial equity.

*I think change occurs because the data does drive them. I think it is the major player. I think the equity perspective has come later in the conversation and still is not very well honed. The integration of those two [Road Map Project] strategies has not happened as ideally as they could, and I think they can be brought together in some meaningful ways, and it's a place where some more work could be definitely done.*

**How is the Road Map Project sparking change in organizations?**

The RMP's common agenda is intended to yield changes, both within individual organizations and across organizations. These changes range from on-the-ground adjustments in the services and supports for young people and families to broader system changes in how partners work together. Organizations make internal changes by aligning their own policies and practices with the common agenda, which in turn may allow them to more easily interface with other partners. Organization-level changes may include changes in policy, practices, resources, and relationships that take place within a single organization (e.g., Puget Sound Educational Service District, districts, CBOs, higher education institutions). Some examples of organization-level changes might include:

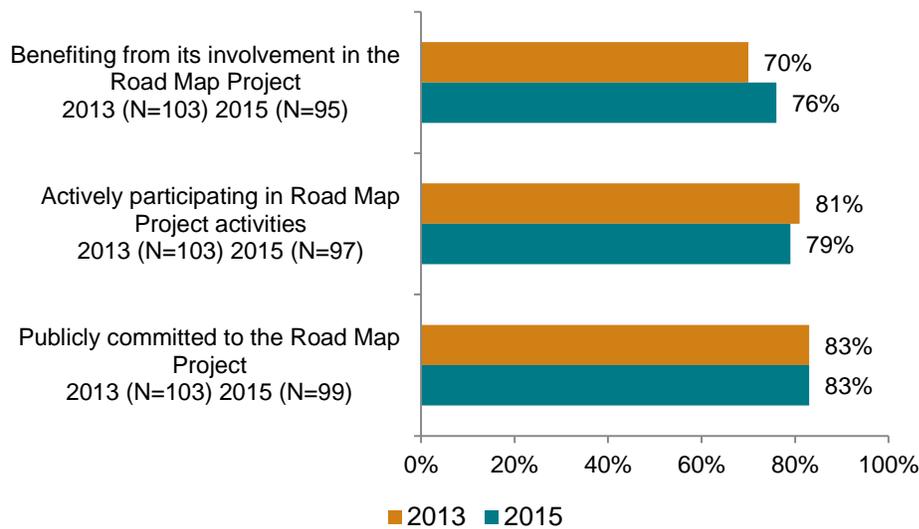
- Increased commitment to the RMP goal
- More intentional use of data for decision making
- Better engagement of parents and communities by school districts
- Alignment of organizational policies, practices, and resources to the RMP goal and shared strategy framework

Below, we describe how organizations are changing their policies and practices to align with the RMP’s common agenda.

*In general, stakeholders strongly agree that they are committed to and actively participating in the Road Map Project and that this participation benefits their organization.*

As indicated by Figure 11, 4 of 5 survey respondents report that they are active participants and publically committed to the RMP. Approximately 7 of 10 indicate that their organization is benefitting from their involvement.

Figure 11. Organizations are committed to—and actively participating in—the Road Map Project and are seeing benefits from that participation<sup>17</sup>

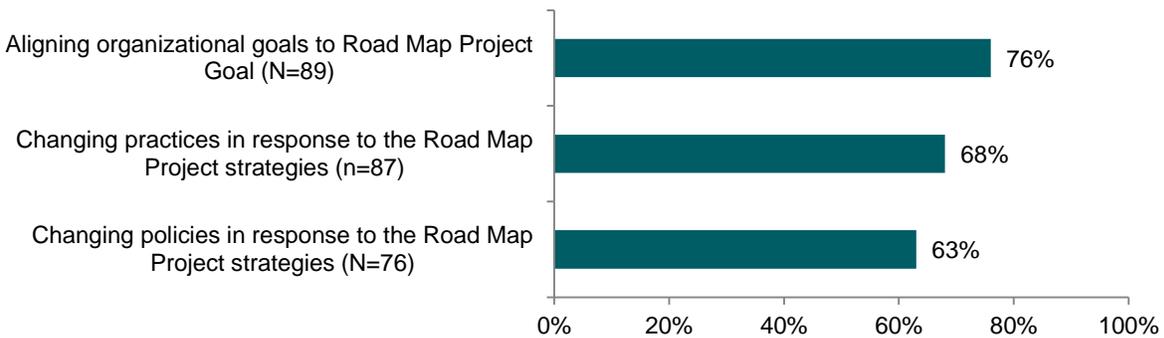


*Partner organizations—especially K–12 and higher education—are aligning policies and practices to support Road Map Project goals.*

When asked how their organizations are specifically benefiting from RMP and how their practices have changed as a result, the majority of stakeholders indicated that they are aligning their goals to the RMP goals (Figure 12, 76 percent). Approximately two-thirds reported that they are changing practices (68 percent) and policies (63 percent) as a result of the RMP.

<sup>17</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of “more involved” stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 103; 2015 N = 100). Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale [10]).

*Figure 12. Partner organizations are aligning to Road Map Project goals and are changing policies and practices as a result<sup>18</sup>*



*Many organizations report an increased capacity to use data to inform practice.*

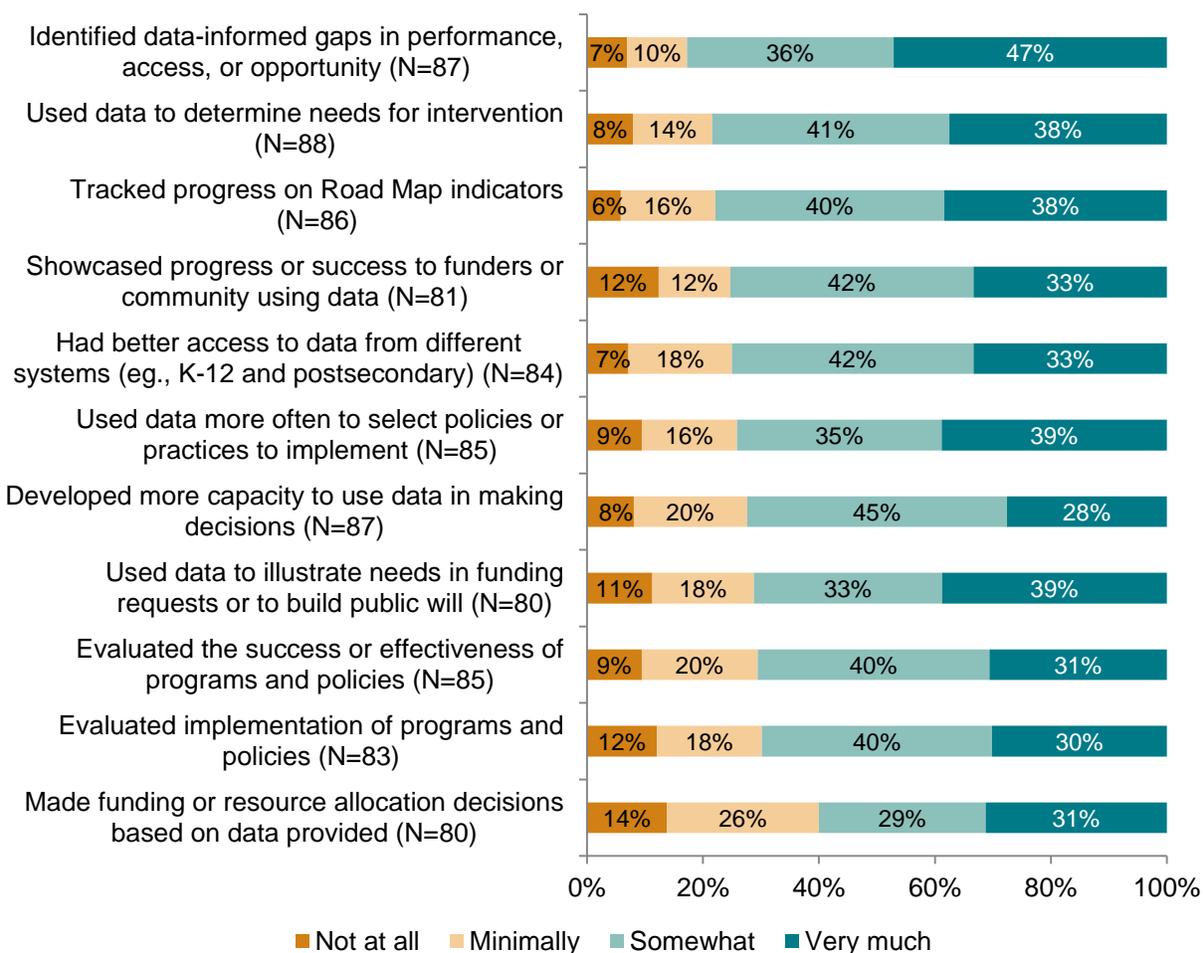
School districts and institutions of higher education are increasingly using RMP data to inform their practice, including the concentrated efforts on promoting the college readiness and access of College Bound students. Another example is the widespread adoption of early warning systems by RMP districts. Organizations were most likely to use data to identify gaps in performance or opportunity (Figure 13, 83 percent report “somewhat” or “very much”). Other ways they were likely to use data included identifying needs for intervention (79 percent) and tracking progress on RMP indicators (78 percent). Conversely, they were least likely to use data to make funding or resource allocation decisions (60 percent) and to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of programs (71 percent and 70 percent, respectively).

Qualitative data from family engagement, birth to third grade, and high school to postsecondary stakeholders offer some examples of other types of organizational change that are taking place. As discussed above, diverse organizations are aligning their goals and activities with RMP. Community-based organizations often speak to adjusting or expanding their service areas to align with the Road Map Project. CBOs, in particular, are using RMP data to inform their work, from identifying schools in need of services to selecting indicators and measures to track.

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<sup>18</sup>Results come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of “more involved” stakeholders across the region (N = 100). Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale (10)).

Figure 13. Participation in the Road Map Project has increased partners' use of data in practice and policy<sup>19</sup>



Participation in RMP is changing organizational practice in several other ways. A commonly cited example is the **creation of new staff positions** within districts. For example, in recent years, most districts in the region hired new district-level specialists to focus on early learning and family engagement. In the high school to postsecondary space, a number of districts are using funds to support new staff positions in schools focused specifically on college access.

Organizations are also making **new investments of resources** to support implementation of emerging areas of work aligned with RMP priorities. The districts contributed \$267,000 to fund their district teams to participate in the Harvard Family Engagement Institute and have provided staff with time to participate in regional learning activities. Similarly, districts are supporting staff participation in activities such as the University of Washington P-3 Executive Leadership Institute. While Race to the Top has provided a huge infusion of new resources that

<sup>19</sup> Results come from 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of “more involved” stakeholders across the region (2015 N = 100).

districts can leverage in support of these new staff positions, some organizations are also reallocating their existing resources to support these emerging areas of work.

In addition to investing resources and hiring new staff, districts are adopting new models, tools, or curricula. For example, the Kent and Renton school districts adopted a new districtwide curriculum to promote family engagement. Organizations are also making strides in administering kindergarten readiness assessments and creating a functional feedback loop with WaKIDS data.

## **Summary and implications**

The RMP is making significant strides in creating a strong regional commitment and shared vision around the 2020 goal. Stakeholders report that there is more focus on the regional identity and more buy-in to the importance of taking a cradle-to-career perspective. However, while there is strong agreement around the overall goals and agenda of the initiative, there is not yet consensus among partners about what it takes to achieve them. For example, there is less agreement among stakeholders on how to define specific benchmarks such as kindergarten or college readiness. Stakeholders report that a common language is emerging across the region, although it is stronger among institutional partners (e.g., schools and higher education) than in CBOs and the community in general.

RMP partners emphasize the need for more explicit connections between partnership goals, collaborative strategies, and outcomes. For example, partners report that collaboration does not occur consistently, and many suggest the need for a shared understanding of partner contributions and roles in the collaborative space. Partners might benefit from co-creating a collaboration model that clearly defines partner roles, including which partners should take the lead on a given strategy, how collaboration will lead to intended outcomes, the rationale for collaborative strategies, and how resources can be more effectively shared across partners and systems. RMP partners are currently engaged in a “strategic planning refresh” process, which may result in a clearer, more cohesive, and better aligned approach and a more consistent set of strategies across the initiative.

The RMP leveraged significant new funding to support education and improve the efficiency and alignment of existing resources. It is essential that RMP partners include financial sustainability in the strategic planning process. Without this sustainability it is impossible to ensure that sufficient resources will be in place to support the recommended strategies over time. Continued efforts to integrate and embed RMP activities within other collaborative efforts led by partners can also support sustainability. Partners may also want to investigate other types of collective impact funding models.

The RMP plays an important role in laying the groundwork for public policy decisions and advocating for their passage. Stakeholders see advocacy as a key role that the backbone organization can lead given the regional and state-level connections of the staff. In addition, the

data function of the backbone organization is well suited for making advocacy cases for key issues in the region.

Partners consistently draw attention to the need to shift the structure and culture of K–12 education. Without specific policies and strategies to address institutional racism, stakeholders suggest that the RMP will continue to face challenges in addressing opportunity and achievement gaps in the region. There is a perception that the RMP does not communicate about the root causes of inequity or explicitly call out a need for culturally responsive practice in the strategies advanced by the initiative. Stakeholders believe that the RMP is in a strategic position—both in terms of local power and national connections—to not only draw attention to gaps in opportunity, but to also advance innovative, research-based policy and practice solutions that clearly address these inequities.

There are substantial examples of stakeholders working together on regionwide campaigns or events. Stakeholders are also coming together for regionwide professional development opportunities. These collective learning opportunities, which often bridge systems (e.g., districts) and sectors (e.g., CBOs and K–12), are helping to create common frameworks around promising practices. However, opportunities remain to deepen collaborative practice within and across sectors.

While these cross-system efforts are promising, it is unclear at this point whether and how these activities will catalyze the type of deep structural change necessary to promote more equitable opportunities and outcomes for students. This kind of deep structural and cultural change takes time. It is important for the RMP to identify more immediate signs that suggest that the region is on a path to improved outcomes for children and families. This includes developing a shared understanding of what parts of a system (or systems) need to change to better support children and families, identifying a focused set of strategies designed to produce that change, and creating measurable indicators of systems-level changes that will help the initiative track and report progress.

## Engaging Families and Communities

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In this section we focus on engagement of the larger community and the inclusion of diverse stakeholder voices in setting Road Map Project strategy, vision, and implementation of the work. A key finding of the 2013 formative evaluation report was that representation and engagement remained a significant challenge for the RMP. As a result, the RMP has increased both family engagement<sup>20</sup> and community representation in decision making and implementation of strategies.

### **What progress is the Road Map Project making to authentically engage families and communities?**

#### **Engagement and representation within the Road Map Project**

*K–12 stakeholders remain the largest group of participants in the Road Map Project, followed by community-based organization representatives.*

Analysis of RMP membership<sup>21</sup> over time suggests that K–12 schools, districts, and educational service districts remain the largest sector involved in the initiative (30 percent of participants). CBO representation has remained relatively stable as the second largest group (18 percent) of participants, but there is some suggestion they have become more actively involved in planning, implementation, and leadership roles in the RMP. Government (14 percent), foundations (13 percent), and advocacy organizations (12 percent) are the next largest groups. Community members are the least involved group—making up only about 1 percent of RMP participants.

In terms of the distribution of membership across the various groups, K–12 makes up 35 percent of the early learning and postsecondary transition work group membership. However, CBOs make up a larger proportion of the Opportunity Youth and Youth Development work groups. Membership patterns are more evenly distributed across sectors in RMP-wide groups, especially in the Community Network Steering Committee and Project Sponsors groups. These differences in participation levels may explain in part why a greater percentage of K–12 and higher education partners (80–90 percent) than CBO partners (67 percent) report benefiting from involvement in the RMP.

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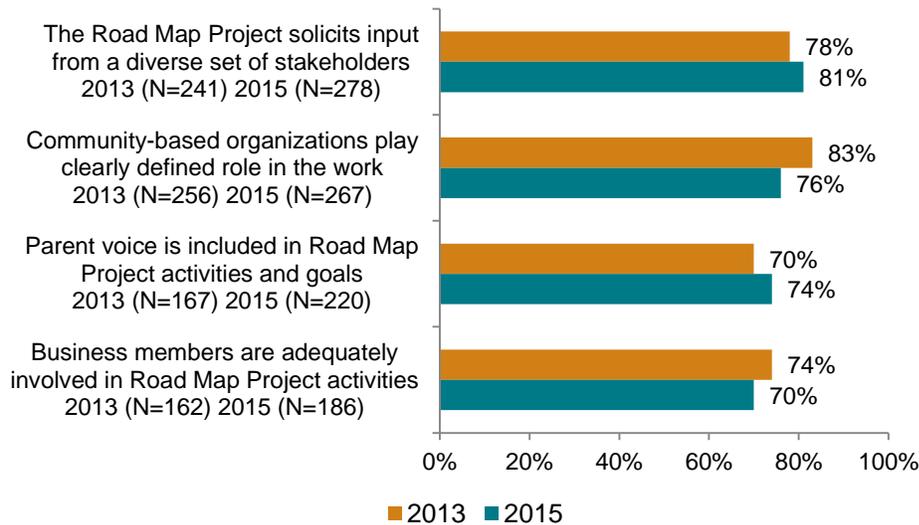
<sup>20</sup> For more detail on family and parent engagement efforts in the Road Map Project, please see the family engagement data memo.

<sup>21</sup> We analyzed the distribution of participants from Road Map Project membership lists in 2013 and 2015 to examine patterns of change over time.

*The Road Map Project is starting to engage a more diverse group of stakeholders in the planning, leadership, and implementation of strategies.*

One of the key findings of the 2013 formative evaluation report was that representation and engagement remained a significant challenge for the Road Map Project. As a result, efforts have been in place to increase both family engagement<sup>22</sup> and community representation in the Road Map Project. Figure 14 suggests that there is mixed progress in integrating diverse input into the initiative. Over the last two years, there was a gradual increase stakeholders indicating that RMP solicits input from a diverse set of stakeholders (78 percent to 81 percent) and that parent voice is included in RMP activities and goals (70 percent to 74 percent). However, there was a decline the in the percentage of stakeholders who feel that CBOs play a clear role in the work (83 percent to 76 percent).

*Figure 14. Road Map Project is increasing diversity of input into vision, strategy, and implementation<sup>23</sup>*



In another survey question, we asked more involved stakeholders to indicate levels of stakeholder involvement in specific aspects of the RMP (see Table 4). These results suggest a shift over time in perceptions of how various types of stakeholders participate in RMP. For example, the percentage of parents, youth, and CBOs has increased in RMP leadership, planning, and implementation. This indicates that partners feel these groups have more voice

<sup>22</sup> For more detail on family and parent engagement efforts in the Road Map Project, please see the family engagement data memo.

<sup>23</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project Formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 324; 2015 N = 311). In 2013, only "less involved" stakeholders responded. Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale (4)).

and influence than they did earlier in the initiative, although certainly not as much as the K–12 system leaders.

During the last year, the RMP has started bringing together its two leadership groups—the Community Network Steering Committee and the Project Sponsors Group—as a way to have a stronger community voice in the strategic direction of the RMP. The purpose of the Community Network Steering Committee is to advance the goals of the RMP through authentic community action and engagement and to strengthen public will to improve education results. The committee meets monthly to connect community leaders, advocates, and grassroots efforts through action-centered advising to the RMP. The Project Sponsors’ group comprises individuals from organizations that share the goal of dramatically improving educational attainment. Prior to combining the groups, the Project Sponsors’ group provided overall strategic direction for the RMP.

A clear message in the combined meetings of the two groups is that the work of the RMP needs to be much more closely aligned with the communities it is intended to serve and that the power structure around the initiative’s decision making and representation in setting the agenda needs to change.

*I believe that the Road Map Project is heavily weighted in terms of its executive functioning around school districts being represented and early learning is under represented in the initiative. I think to be able to meet the overall wins, bringing early learning fully into the fold, they have to change the way they’ve built the power structure around the initiative’s decision making.*

***Stakeholders indicate that Road Map Project leadership is not representative of the communities, identities, and experiences of the students it seeks to support.***

While efforts are underway to increase representation and inclusion—and survey results suggest some progress—there is considerable work to be done to diversify leadership within the RMP. K–12 system leaders continue to fill most roles in leadership, planning, and implementation across the RMP (see Table 4). This pattern is consistent across 2013 and 2015. For example, CBOs and districts are seen as the lead planners and implementers, but CBOs are not seen as having much involvement in leadership. Youth and parents are seen as the least involved, although participation rates are growing.

Stakeholders note that while there has been progress, silos remain both within and across sectors (e.g., K–12 and CBOs). Many highlight a need to expand participation in RMP beyond executive-level leadership to include practitioners who work more directly with students and families. For example, stakeholders suggest that the RMP move “beyond the choir” of family engagement specialists within districts and CBOs to engage district- and school-level leaders who may be in a position to create the will and capacity to transform school culture and climate.

*Table 4. Change over time in perceptions of stakeholder group involvement in Road Map Project leadership, planning, and implementation<sup>24</sup>*

	Leadership	Planning	Implementing	Don't Know
Community-based organizations	47%	69%	64%	11%
Parents	13%	39%	23%	43%
Youth	8%	22%	23%	52%
Schools and districts	64%	65%	65%	14%
Public officials	36%	25%	15%	43%
Business leaders	20%	18%	8%	57%
Higher education	37%	44%	35%	35%
Public agencies	12%	35%	36%	42%
Community advocacy groups	29%	57%	39%	27%
Funders	44%	42%	17%	31%

Several partners cite a need for more “power sharing” with CBOs in the region so that collective impact efforts are not just led by K–12 institutions and the backbone organization. In addition to engaging a wider range of professionals, stakeholders highlight a need for more meaningful engagement with youth and families within RMP processes.

*I think more access [to Road Map] for young people, a stronger focus on racial equity, honoring smaller organizations, feeling more accessible to folks, and spreading out the funding. They are seen as a powerhouse and they are recognized nationally for the work they are doing, so leveraging that to bring more funding not to Road Map but to the organizations. I think that is something people are waiting for.*

*Parents who already had advocacy skills are involved [in Road Map Project]. Parents who need leadership development still are not able to have access. They are benefiting from the work, but their voice around the table is missing.*

### **Family engagement in education systems**

*The Road Map Project has raised the visibility of family engagement work in the region.*

The RMP increased visibility of family engagement through events for families (e.g., Parent Forum), learning community activities (e.g., Harvard Family Engagement Institute and Family Engagement Collectives) as well as the development of new data tools in collaboration with the

<sup>24</sup> Note: Percentage reported in this table come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of “more involved” stakeholders across the region (2015 N = 100). Respondents could select more than one response. Red shading indicates that the percentage has dropped from 2013 to 2015, and green shading indicates that the percentage has increased.

University of Washington (e.g., Road Map Project Family Engagement Survey and Indicators for districts, Parent Poll). Interview participants indicate that these activities “legitimize” family engagement by linking to research and best practice while offering new forums for parents and practitioners to “network” across the region. Stakeholders highlight Race to the Top projects and activities related to the Harvard Family Engagement Institute as promising leverage points for change.

***The Road Map Project approach to family engagement is evolving to include both capacity building and culture change.***

There is no consistent definition of “family engagement” across the RMP. However, close partners appear to be moving toward a shared vision of “authentic family engagement” that involves “integrated partnership” among families, schools, and CBOs. At the center of this vision is the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships<sup>25</sup>, a schema for designing family engagement activities that build capacity among educators and families to partner with one another around student success. To realize this vision, the RMP is engaging in activities that seek to build the capacity of this “three-legged stool” of schools, families, and CBOs. The RMP family engagement strategy continues to evolve, with recent changes such as a pause in meetings as the collectives “reset,” restructuring of the Community Network Steering Committee and Project Sponsors groups, cancellation of the October Parent Forum, and development of a new aligned funding strategy. The current strategy focuses more tightly on supporting quality family engagement in high-needs schools.

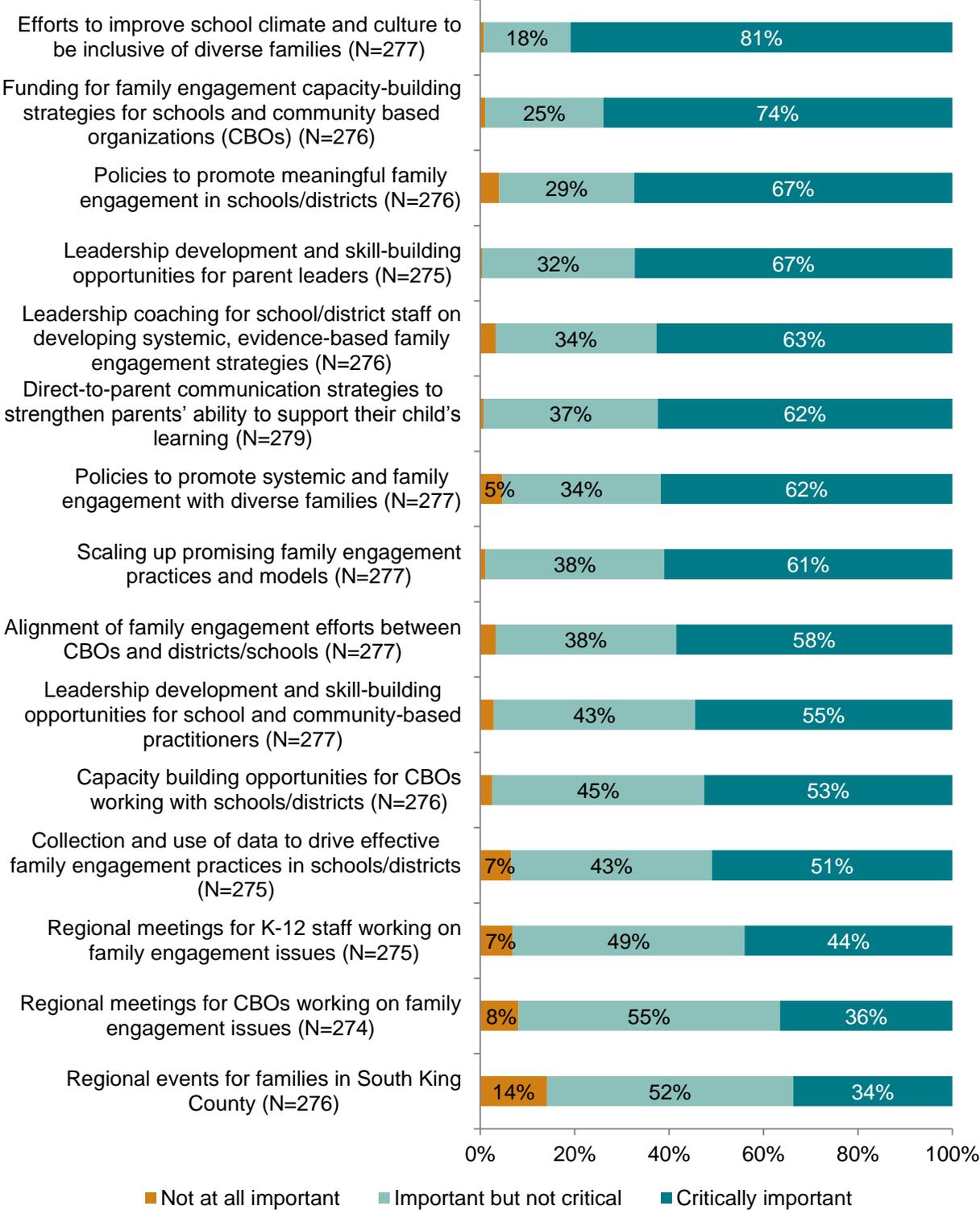
***Challenges remain in moving the work “beyond the choir” of advocates to encourage more school and CBO partners to adopt authentic family engagement practices.***

While the RMP’s emphasis on family engagement encouraged some districts to adopt research-based best practices, more work remains to be done. Participants describe authentic family engagement work as “messy” and “risky” for districts and suggest that some educators who are not family engagement “specialists” may be reluctant to change how they work with families. Other challenges are related to the promotion of family engagement through districts. Districts struggle to build the capacity to implement the survey and to interpret the results in a way that is meaningful for principals and other stakeholders. Changes in district leadership and district priorities also pose a challenge to sustaining attention on family engagement.

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<sup>25</sup> Mapp, K. & Kuttner, P. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships*. Austin, TX: SEDL. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>

Figure 15. Stakeholder priorities for Road Map Project family engagement strategies<sup>26</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Source: Results come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2015 N = 311).

*Efforts to improve school climate and culture are a top priority for Road Map Project partners, along with continued funding for school and community-based organization capacity building.*

Most respondents (81 percent) identified efforts to improve school climate and culture as critically important (see Figure 15 above). Policies for promoting meaningful family engagement in schools and districts and policies to promote systemic family engagement with diverse families were also rated as critically important by most respondents (67 percent and 62 percent, respectively). Moreover, leadership development for parent leaders and leadership coaching for school and district staff were rated as critically important by respondents.

*Family engagement is viewed as a critical, yet less visible, component of the Road Map Project. There is no shared framework guiding family engagement work across the Road Map Project.*

Stakeholders portray family engagement as essential to realizing the 2020 goal. The Community Network Steering Committee is currently viewed as shepherding the family engagement work as part of its mission to ensure the RMP is engaging communities and addressing issues related to equity. While the steering committee provides recommendations for how to incorporate family engagement into action plans, it is not clear what the expectations are for work groups to do so. A couple of stakeholders suggest a need for a new work group specifically focused on family engagement, while others advocate for reducing the number of groups and infusing authentic family engagement activities into all aspects of the RMP.

## **Summary and implications**

Efforts are underway to increase representation and inclusion in RMP activities, and survey results show the initiative is making some progress. However, stakeholders suggest there is a continued need to further diversify the leadership of the RMP and to include more students, families, and practitioners as partners. District leaders are seen as having the most prominent roles in the leadership, planning, and implementation of the RMP. CBOs are seen as very involved in planning and implementing RMP strategies, and yet are not viewed as having a significant role in leadership. Youth and parents are perceived to be the least involved, although participation rates are perceived to be growing. As a result, intentional steps to ensure that community members and practitioners are represented in the planning, implementation, and leadership are likely to strengthen buy-in and help with implementation of key strategies. There is a need to use innovative strategies to engage young people and families in the process of issue identification, strategy development, and implementation.

An emerging bright spot is the evolving work around family engagement. The RMP has increased visibility of family engagement through events for families and learning community activities, as well as the development of new data tools in collaboration with the University of Washington. These family engagement activities link research with best practice and have offered new forums for parents and practitioners to network across the region. Stakeholders highlight Race to the Top projects and the participation of district teams in the Harvard Family

Engagement Institute as promising leverage points for change, although it is too early to determine the full impact of these efforts.

RMP partners are developing a theory of change and a work plan of family engagement strategies that will focus on technical assistance and coaching for schools and districts. Being explicit about how these strategies may be infused into other RMP work plans and issue spaces will ensure engagement happens across the continuum.

## The Power of Data

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The RMP implements a variety of tactics to leverage the power of data to “fuel continuous improvement and community advocacy.” Through a combination of public reporting of progress on the indicators, sector-specific data reports, data use tools, and community data forums, the RMP is explicitly using data to increase accountability, highlight gaps and opportunities, document success stories, and foster continuous improvement of policies, programs, and practices within and across organizations and systems.

One of the primary roles that CCER plays in the RMP is hosting a comprehensive data system (*Wayfinder*) that has “cradle to college reporting” capacity. The data in this system provides the foundation for multiple venues of data reporting and disaggregation. The regional data system includes elements from multiple districts, colleges, public agencies, and other organizations. In the last year, CCER added several data elements to the system, including integrating the new state assessment scores (from Smarter Balanced) and new financial aid and college-going data.

A major underlying assumption of the RMP’s data strategy is that data distilled in a way that is understandable, relevant, and able to be disseminated publicly will catalyze change and shared accountability across the region by calling attention to gaps and showcasing success. The RMP produces a wide range of reports using the integrated data system described in the previous section. These reports are disseminated in a variety of formats and have several functions. The primary function is to press for shared public accountability for educational outcomes within different sectors across the system, along with a push for advocacy by making cases for critical needs and opportunity gaps to be addressed at the policy and practice levels. In addition, reporting of these data showcases successful endeavors that are moving the needle on important RMP indicators.

The third major focus of RMP’s data strategy is to build regional capacity for data-driven decision making to drive continuous improvement across and within organizations and sectors. The RMP engages in several efforts to use data to inform on-the-ground practice. These efforts range from embedding data tactics in action plans, providing support to work groups in using data, and brokering research evidence about effective practices and policies.

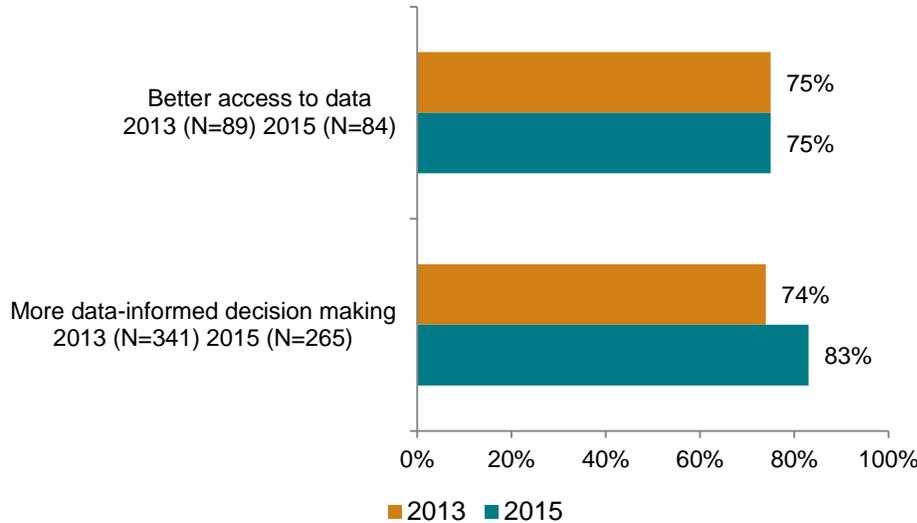
### **How is the Road Map Project using data to catalyze change across the region?**

There are multiple areas in which the RMP’s data strategy is making progress and being successful, including increasing access to data, linking data across organizations and systems, providing useful and actionable data, supporting data use, and using data to inform the regional conversation and accountability and advocacy efforts.

*The Road Map Project and CCER in particular have been instrumental in increasing access to data and in helping partners develop capacity to use data in decision making.*

The majority of survey respondents feel that the RMP is improving the access to and use of data across the region. In particular, progress has been made over time to increase the use of data to inform policy and practice decisions (Figure 16).

*Figure 16. Stakeholders perceive that the Road Map Project is increasing access to data and data-informed decision making in the region<sup>27</sup>*



In interviews stakeholders express that the RMP’s data efforts have significantly contributed to sharing of data across sectors and organizations and creating feedback loops. Partners also perceive that the RMP is creating a culture of evidence and data-informed decision making across the region (from 74 to 83 percent agreement across all stakeholders). This pattern was even stronger for stakeholders who were more involved in the work (an increase of 68 to 87 percent).

Linking data across systems and organizations continues to be highly successful, particularly across early learning and K–12, and again across K–12 and the higher education system. These efforts to bring together multiple data systems have helped to increase stakeholders’ access to data in the region.

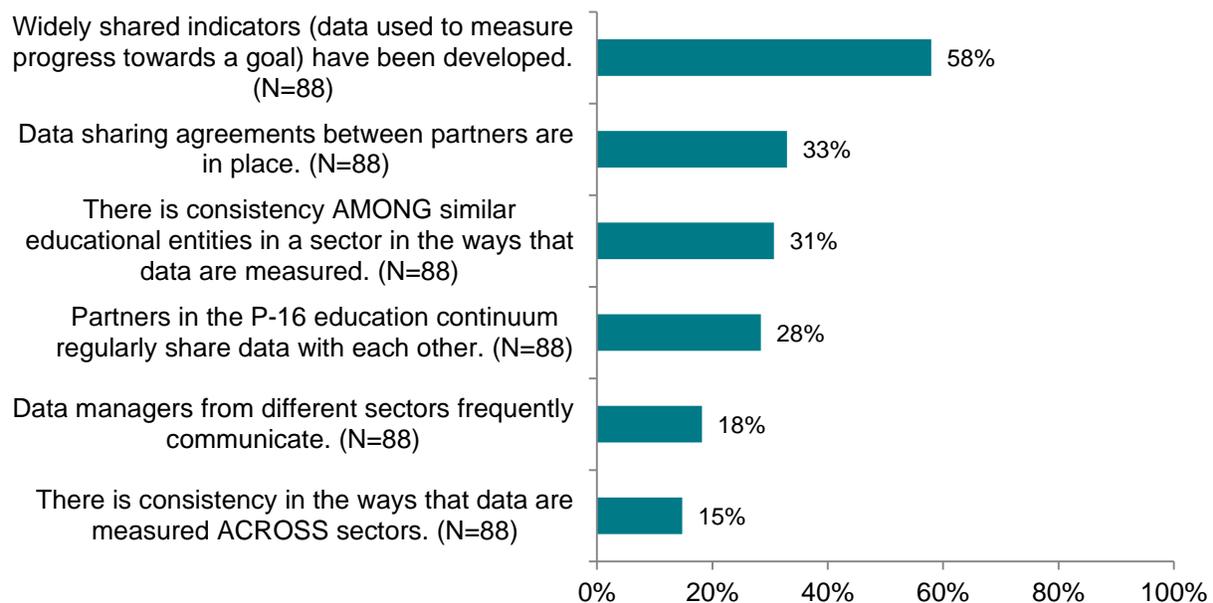
<sup>27</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey. For “Better access to data”, only “more involved” stakeholders responded (2013 N = 103; 2015 N = 100). For “more data informed decision making” all stakeholders responded (2013 N=427; 2015 N=311). Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale [4]).

*[Road Map Project is] mapping all the data efforts around the state and hopefully bringing them together so we would establish a flow of data which would be informative to all the sectors of the educational system. It has been the most exciting piece actually posed by the Road Map Project.*

***While access to and use of data are seen as strengths, there is need for continued work on data systems integration.***

There are continued challenges in establishing technical integration of data across partners and data owners in the RMP (Figure 17). Stakeholders perceive that there is a lack of consistency in how data elements are measured across sectors and organizations, as well as a lack of communication and sharing across data managers and partners related to data issues.

***Figure 17. Stakeholders perceive that there is a lack of consistency in the ways data elements are measured across sectors and organizations<sup>28</sup>***



An example of this continued need for data systems integration can be seen in efforts to create an early learning feedback report to link quality ratings of early learning experiences with measures of kindergarten readiness. These efforts have been slow to gain momentum—primarily because it is hard to get everyone on the same page about what elements are critical to measure. For example, not all early learning programs currently measure program quality. In addition, many of the systems do not currently have ways to clearly link students across sectors, lacking agreement in conventions and common ways to identify children and families.

<sup>28</sup> Results come from the 2015 Gates Alignment Index Survey (N = 88).

Not only has it been difficult to link the data systems across sectors in the early learning space (e.g., early learning providers, districts, state-level), many of the necessary data elements are either in development or in early stages of implementation. For example, the statewide WaKIDS initiative includes an assessment of children’s developmental readiness for kindergarten, as well as measures of quality of early learning experience. Teachers in kindergarten classrooms are currently being trained on administering the assessment component, but there has been less progress on how to define and measure quality at the early learning provider level.

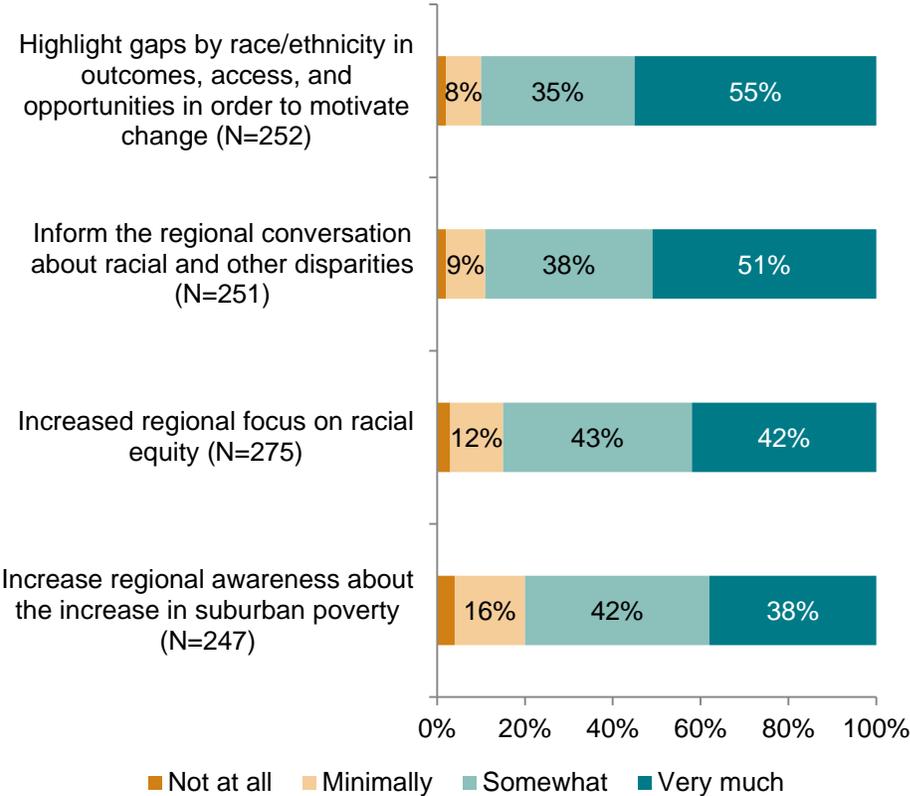
*Let us use WaKIDS as an example. There are six domains in WaKIDS; one of them is math. It’s the domain in which kids are least prepared when they entered kindergarten. If you disaggregate by race or income, it’s the most disparate. It requires a really good look at data to figure out what that is about and those data are not just about who the kids are, but you also have to collect data about the practices and what kinds of experiences those kids are having. It is relatively easy to collect demographic data because the K–12 system, which is where the WaKIDS testing happens, they are already collecting demographic data on those kids. But to really be able to look at where do these kids come from and what experiences are they having in that setting, it starts to get uncomfortable and it’s data that people haven’t been collecting, and people are worried that they are going to be labeled as bad and all that sort of thing and that becomes a very challenging conversation.*

***Stakeholders indicate that the Road Map Project is effectively drawing attention to issues of equity in the region, in particular by providing disaggregated data that highlights gaps in opportunity and achievement.***

The RMP played a key role in highlighting and bringing the discussion of equity to the forefront in the region by creating reports that disaggregate data by student characteristics, district, or school and are more accessible and easier for practitioners and policymakers to use. A significant majority of stakeholders see that the RMP has sparked regional conversation around equity (Figure 18).

*It’s really powerful and has helped move the conversation about racial equity forward to be able to look at how we’re doing and to see, you know, shifting discipline policies and then how are we seeing like, the racial impact and racial disproportionality in discipline. We can track our progress on so many things and look at it year to year and school to school and district to district and try to figure out, wow, what is that district doing that’s different? How are they serving Pacific Islanders in such a more effective way than we are? The data is really powerful.*

Figure 18. Stakeholders perceive that the Road Map Project informed and elevated the discussion and focus on regional equity<sup>29</sup>

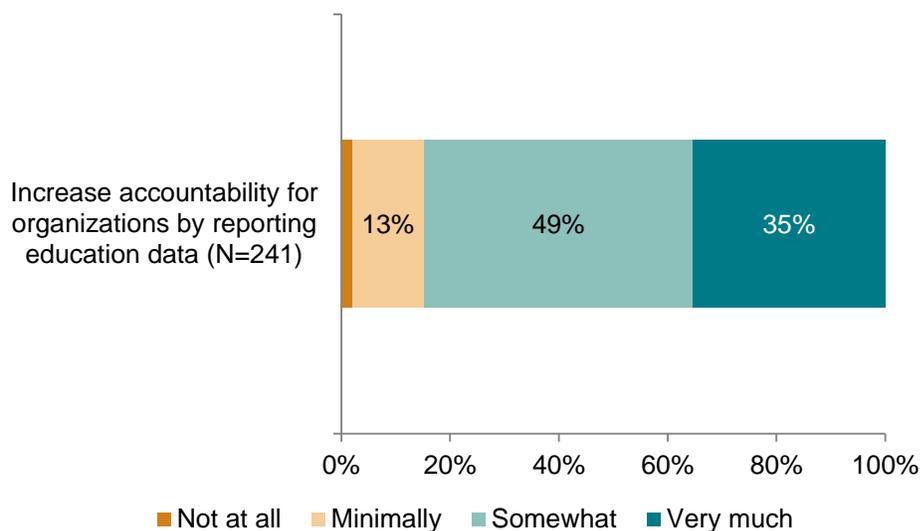


*The Road Map Project's use of data has increased accountability across partners, although a strong focus on data as an accountability mechanism may lead to unanticipated consequences.*

On one hand, several stakeholders see that the use of data for public accountability is vital and important. For example, 84 percent of survey respondents said that the RMP data efforts are increasing accountability for organizations somewhat or very much (Figure 19).

<sup>29</sup> Results come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2015 N = 311).

Figure 19. The majority of Road Map Project stakeholders feel that “power of data” strategies have increased organizational accountability<sup>30</sup>



Stakeholders strongly agree that the RMP has successfully increased public pressure and accountability across partner organizations by publically reporting education outcome and progress data.

*Their [CCER’s] ... analysis of the data in the region and how they reflect it back to the region on a regular basis, what we’re seeing in demographics, what we’re seeing in enrollment, what we’re seeing in outcomes, really helps remind and hold the system in South King County accountable. We wouldn’t be as far along as we are in this region without the Road Map Project. There is no doubt.*

*But I would say the school districts in the region compete with each other now because their data is published by Road Map Project. It’s a strange motivation, but whatever.*

On the other hand, some stakeholders feel that too much focus on accountability could lead to unintended consequences with respect to data collection and potential bias in how the stories are told.

*Need to also examine the negative outcomes of data reporting and hold those up. [For example] when schools/districts are compared by using data, the data has a high likelihood of being distorted [e.g., under reporting negative outcomes].*

<sup>30</sup> Results come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2015 N = 311).

***The Road Map Project initiative is making progress on creating a culture of evidence and data-informed decision making across the region.***

The Road Map Project is currently helping to create an educational decision-making culture based on evidence and data. There is some evidence that data collaboration and use across organizations is emerging, including:

- Early learning organizations and sectors are collaborating around systemic data initiatives that support professional development and knowledge of how to use data.
- Early warning systems are being implemented across all seven Road Map Project school districts in a data-driven effort to identify and intervene with students at risk for not graduating.
- Partners are using data to focus efforts to increase postsecondary readiness, access, and attainment, including different aspects of the college access process (such as FAFSA filings and College Bound Scholarship sign-ups) and to push the system to increase college enrollment.

The data strategy continues to be one of the most successful aspects of the Road Map Project, particularly the initiative's efforts to produce useful and actionable data for policy and practice. This is evidenced by the almost universal agreement that one of the most visible and successful roles of the backbone organization is providing data to stakeholders in accessible and actionable ways. They are seen as a go-to data support that is driving change across the region.

*The fact that they [CCER] have central ability to put together data, data analysis reports, and insight into a lot of areas, that is critical and they are filling a void in the long run the state should be filling. The types of reports they are creating are beyond compliance reports that districts and states are expected to create, and they are bringing it to the level that can be used and that cannot be understated.*

***While organizational partners indicate they are beginning to use data in decision making, there is still a significant need for capacity building in using data for continuous improvement.***

In general, there is an expressed need for more capacity in CBOs, families, schools, and districts to effectively use the data that the RMP provides. There is an understanding that this process is complex and that it is important to have expert help in understanding how to interpret and use data appropriately.

*[It's important to] help build capacity for schools, districts, and partners in how to effectively use a cycle of inquiry and use of data to drive change, including the understanding of local context and understanding of the issues when decisions are made. Often times decisions are made based on data, but skip critical steps in the understanding of the issue before 'fixes' are implemented, which then often don't work like they are intended because of unintended impacts which could be mitigated earlier in the process.*

*We need more increased capacity for how we continue to learn and change quickly and be responsive for those we are serving.*

Stakeholders also worry that not enough investment is being made in building capacity for organizations to collect and use data. Some suggest caution and balance in resources allocated to both.

*[There is] ... misalignment of resource allocation between funders' demand for in-depth program tracking, evaluation, and data reporting from CBOs and the nearly complete lack of funding dedicated to building and sustaining that core operational capacity—data collecting, evaluation, and reporting and the necessary staff training for it—within those community-based organizations.*

Another concern is that too much focus on data may come at the expense of other needed investments. For example, there is some concern that resources invested in data work may take away from resources to support needed interventions for children and families.

*Data is very important, and we should use it and need to help legislators use it to make better choices about what they support. But if we get too data driven, we leave out potentially great common sense ideas and spend too high a percentage of our resources tracking data instead of actually helping kids.*

***There is a need to get data into the hands of more stakeholders, particularly non-school organizations, communities, and families.***

Access to data for schools and districts is strong, and many of the reports and data points are targeted to districts and community colleges. CBOs and municipal organizations reported less access to these data systems. For example, some cited the need to better link CBO data to education providers (e.g., districts, early learning, and community colleges). Others talked about helping municipal agencies improve data linkages across agencies, such as linking Department of Health and Human Services data to connect municipal supports for children to education data. Municipal organizations report less access to education data that would be helpful for their program planning.

*I know that they would like to share more data. We certainly would like more data, and they have shared some. But ... with them having seven school districts, the ability of our schools to share information with us, we receive very little. We mostly use our state report card to look at our schools for the third grade reading and math scores.*

Stakeholders suggested a need for additional direct access to the datasets themselves rather than just the reports generated by CCER, especially for CBOs.

*Ideally, we need a regional (if not statewide), private/public funded, open API, comprehensive data platform infrastructure that will allow any community organization working on Road Map Project goals to cost-effectively and securely track, assess, and regularly report program efficacy—for internal program and staff evaluation purposes; for evaluation by funders, and (with secure access to a functioning Student Success Link student data portal) for schools to understand what combination of out-of-school and in-school programs lead to best results for student outcomes.*

While system leaders and organizations report that they receive and use the various reports the Road Map Project creates, there is still concern that the data are not being effectively disseminated into the broader community and are not being used as effectively as they could be to celebrate local community successes.

*It never gets to the hands of the communities whose problems the data highlights. It is important for the data to be available for the communities whose problems the project is supposed to address.*

In response to this challenge, CCER launched a process for communities to reflect on the Results Reports through community-based Results Roundtables. Results Roundtables are community gatherings led by local leaders. They are designed to share data and promote meaningful community action aimed at improving education for students of color and low-income students. In Roundtable discussions, parents and community members explore a limited set of data themes from the perspective of seeing their own children in the data and generating action to address the specific needs of their community. Roundtables might be Parent Living Room Conversations, in which small groups of parents and community members gather in a more intimate setting to deeply explore one or two data themes, or Community Results Roundtables, which are larger events hosted by community organizations and are designed to explore three to five data themes and to network around educational issues in the community. CCER has created a toolkit to help plan, facilitate, and follow-up on these discussions. In the past year, five roundtables were held around the region, with more than 150 participants.

Another way that the RMP has worked to increase community participation in data discussions is to change their approach to their Education Results meetings. In the past, these meetings were held quarterly, typically at times when working families found it difficult to attend. In the last year, the RMP has been experimenting with holding sessions of these larger network meetings in the evenings, as a strategy for getting more participation and attendance from communities and families at these events.

It should be noted that while the RMP has started to address this concern through their Results Roundtables and changes to their meeting venues, it is too early in implementation to determine whether they are resulting in greater community awareness and understanding of the opportunity gaps and educational outcomes for their own children and youth.

## Summary and implications

The “power of data” strategy continues to be one of the most successful aspects of the RMP. However, there is a significant need to build capacity to use data to transform policy and practice, continue data system alignment, and ensure communities have access to data.

There are multiple ways in which the RMP is leveraging its “power of data” strategy in the region. Through public reporting of “results” data, sector-specific data reports, data use tools, and community data forums, the RMP is explicitly using data to increase accountability, highlight gaps and opportunities, and document success stories. By disaggregating data by student characteristics the RMP provides data in ways that highlight the “true state of the region.”

Stakeholders agree that the RMP and CCER play an instrumental role in increasing access to data and creating a culture of evidence use in the region. Linking data across systems and organizations continues to be highly successful, particularly across early learning and K–12, and again across K–12 and the higher education system. Efforts around setting targets to focus collaboration, measuring progress, and promoting dialogue and comfort with data were cited as “great work in helping people understand data.” RMP data efforts are viewed as driving change across the region, informing the regional conversation on education and equity, promoting advocacy, and increasing public accountability. Across the board, there is awareness that data use is critical in transforming practice and policy, although there are also concerns about the capacity to do this well.

While system leaders and organizations report that they receive and use the various reports the RMP creates, there are concerns that the data are not being effectively disseminated into the broader community and that communities yet need capacity to fully utilize the information they do receive. Stakeholders also worry there is not enough investment in building capacity for organizations to collect and use data. Some suggest caution and balance in resources allocated to both.

There have been huge investments in public data reporting through the RMP. While these efforts have been successful, there are still challenges in regard to explicitly connecting data to transform practice and policy. Future investments should support partners’ ability to use data to catalyze policy and practice changes and to build capacity and sustainability for these data efforts.

# Effectiveness of the Backbone Organization

In this section, we examine the effectiveness of the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) in its role as the backbone organization for the RMP. CCER provides a variety of support functions to the RMP, including staffing work groups, convening stakeholders, mobilizing advocacy efforts for policy change, providing regional data, and facilitating RMP governance and strategic direction.

## How is the backbone organization supporting Road Map Project efforts?

*CCER is helpful and responsive to partner needs, and organizations feel they receive technical support to implement their priority strategies.*

The majority of stakeholders gave high praise for the work that CCER is doing to support the RMP (Figure 20). Most stakeholders feel that the staff is responsive and that they have the necessary skills to facilitate work groups and support partners in implementing the work of the initiative. More than three-fourths of stakeholders also feel that partners receive adequate technical support to help them implement their priority strategies. These patterns have been relatively stable over the last two years, with a slight decline in perceptions of staff responsiveness and skills.

Figure 20. Stakeholders perceive CCER support to be responsive and helpful<sup>31</sup>

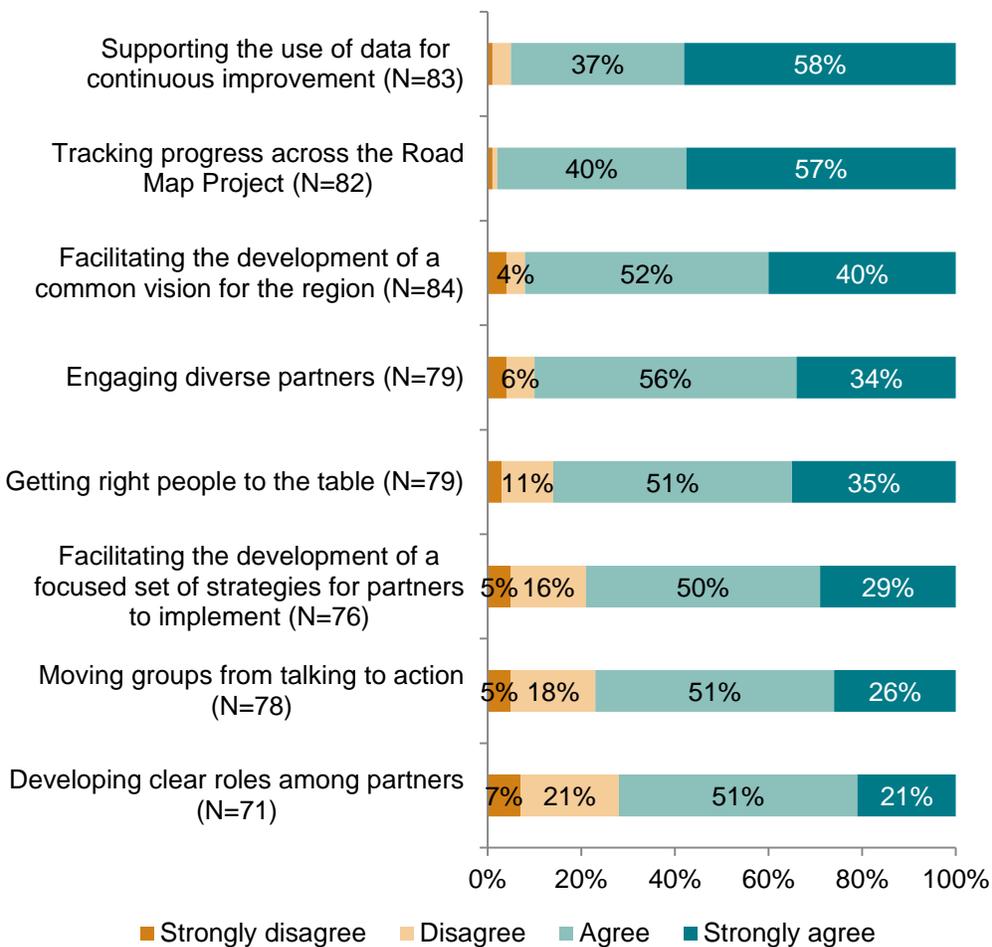


<sup>31</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 103; 2015 N = 311). In 2013, only “more involved” stakeholders responded.

*CCER is stronger in some roles (e.g., promoting data use and convening diverse stakeholders) than others (e.g., moving talk to action and developing clear roles for partners).*

Using data and convening partners are seen as core strengths of CCER and its support to the RMP partners (Figure 21). With respect to using data, stakeholders felt that CCER is effective in supporting the use of data for continuous improvement (95 percent) and in tracking progress across the RMP (97 percent). Convening strengths include facilitating the development of a common vision for the region (92 percent), engaging diverse partners (90 percent), and getting the right people to the table (86 percent). Approximately three-quarters agreed that CCER is effective in moving groups from talk to action (77 percent) and developing clear roles among partners (72 percent).

Figure 21. CCER has strengths in using data and convening partners and stakeholders<sup>32</sup>



<sup>32</sup> Results come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey (N = 100, stakeholders more involved).

Stakeholders also indicated that CCER should continue to play roles related to data, public communication, and advocacy. Conversely, they felt that schools, districts, and CBOs should take on more leadership responsibility around capacity-building, policy, and alignment efforts. Shared vision and engagement were seen as efforts whose responsibilities were shared across partners. Finally, stakeholders felt that funders should take leadership in funding decisions, but not in other aspects of the work.

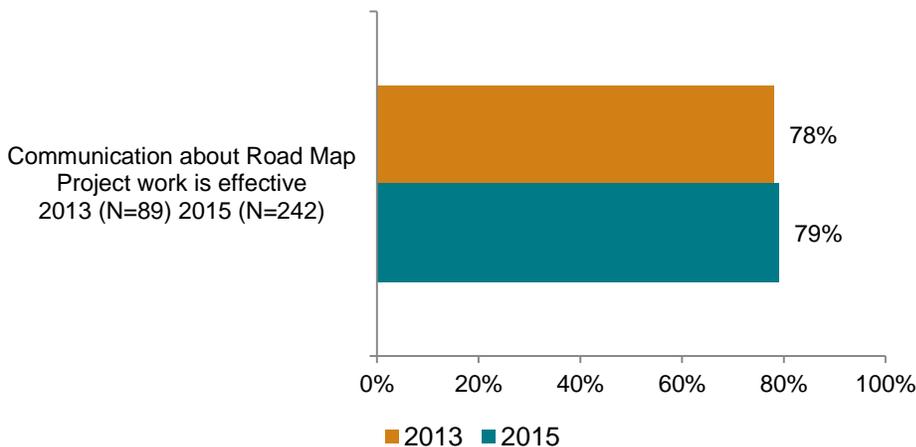
***Stakeholders see that CCER leadership and staff are passionate, hardworking, and invested in making progress on the Road Map Project goals.***

Participants said that CCER staff is “very knowledgeable,” are “great leaders,” and “have a national perspective” on issues impacting the region. Others mentioned that CCER staff members are “absolutely critical and essential,” and they “push leadership in Washington state to focus on” critical areas. They play a “critical role” and try “their level best” to “keep listening” to their stakeholders to move their work forward. Stakeholders appreciate that CCER “provides the infrastructure and framework” and “institutional support” for the RMP. Additionally, participants recognized their role as “conveners” and their ability to “create an atmosphere of trust.” Several participants admired CCER’s approach toward presentation of disaggregated data and sharing of best practices research.

***Road Map Project communication efforts are perceived as effective.***

Stakeholders continue to feel that communication efforts regarding the RMP are effective (78 percent in 2013 and 79 percent in 2015, Figure 22).

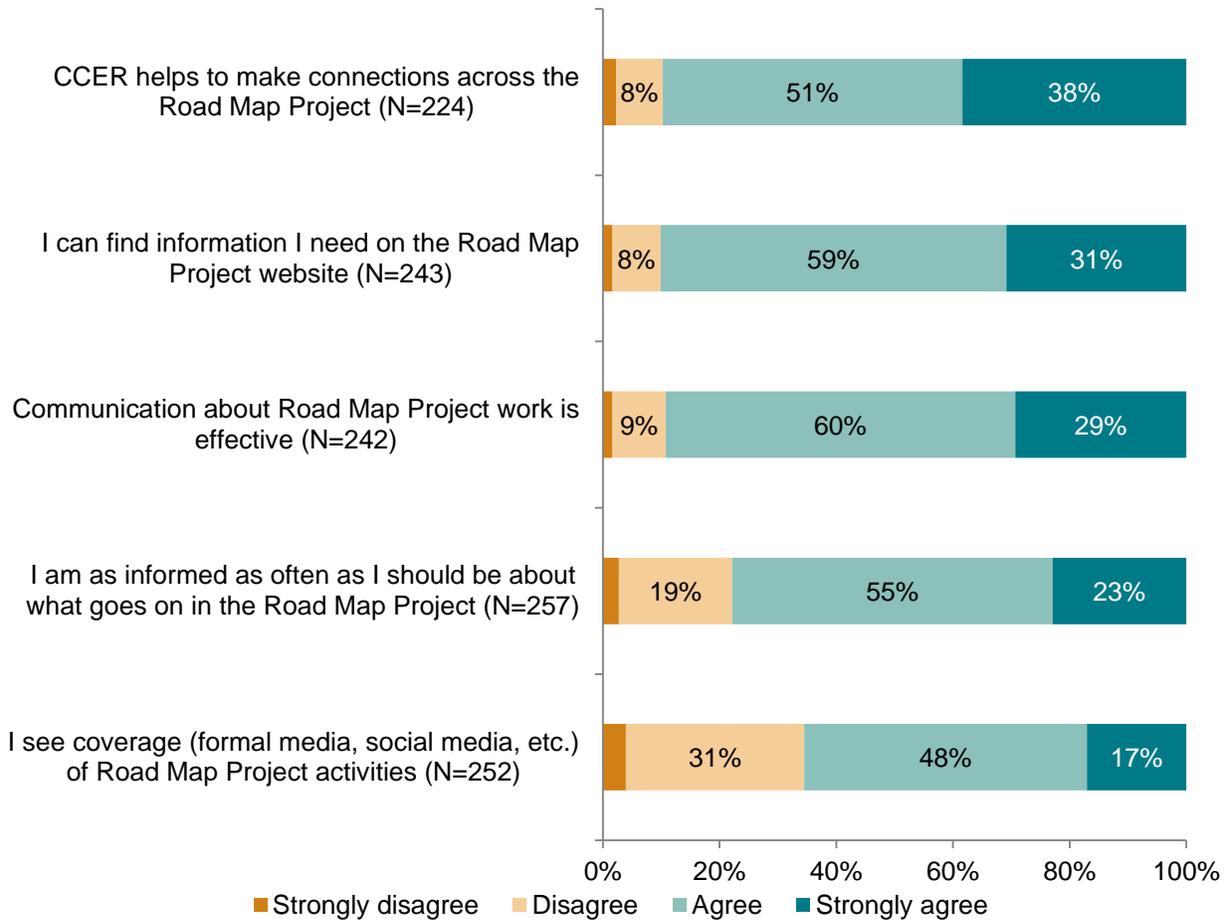
*Figure 22. Road Map Project communication strategies are seen as effective<sup>33</sup>*



<sup>33</sup> Results come from the 2013 and 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2013 N = 103; 2015 N = 311). In 2013, only “more involved” stakeholders responded. Percentages equal average agreement (item mean divided by item scale [4]).

For the most part, stakeholders see specific communication strategies as effective (Figure 23). For example, 9 of 10 reported that they can find the information they need on the project’s website. Most participants (89 percent) agreed that CCER helps to make connections across the RMP region and communication about the RMP is effective. Nearly 4 in 5 participants reported that they were as informed as they wanted to be. About two-thirds of the participants (65 percent) agreed that they see coverage of RMP activities on formal or social media.

Figure 23. CCER communication strategies are keeping regional stakeholders informed<sup>34</sup>



**Stakeholders identified that CCER lacks a clear and consistent process for selecting high-leverage strategies that help groups move from talk to action.**

Stakeholders are eager to see the RMP move beyond reports and events to support deeper changes in policy and practice. Participants from surveys and interviews expressed concern that CCER has focused “too much on data and not enough on action.” However, participants are

<sup>34</sup> Results come from the 2015 Road Map Project formative evaluation survey of stakeholders across the region (2015 N = 311).

unclear how CCER plans to move groups from talking about educational inequities to taking coordinated action to mitigate gaps in the region.

On one level, this is about a lack of clarity around decision-making processes within the RMP. Some stakeholders wondered about the criteria for selecting and prioritizing work group strategies and whether they were really the “right” strategies to pursue. Others highlighted a need for a process to better connect strategies across the initiative, especially around cross-cutting issues such as family engagement. Many asked for CCER staff to draw upon their unique regional and national perspective to offer more practical solutions and models. This may include the promotion of evidence-based models from other communities or taking to scale a promising practice from within the region.

***Stakeholders identified opportunities to strengthen the facilitation and staffing of the work groups.***

Participants were not clear about the criteria for participation in work groups, and some questioned whether the right people were at the table. Additionally, some participants felt that the work groups were not staffed appropriately or consistently. A few suggested that CCER might work better as a network hub in which partners lead the work groups rather than CCER. Some participants suggested that CCER staff can listen more and clearly communicate how each of the stakeholders fits into the vision for the work. A few suggested that the lack of classroom experience among CCER staff is a challenge to their facilitation, while others highlight a need for more CCER staff members who reflect the identities of the communities within the region.

***Stakeholders expressed concerns about the sustainability of the Road Map Project.***

Stakeholders frequently expressed concerns about the sustainability of the Road Map Project. Participants worried that with the end to the Race to the Top funding, districts might be unable to follow through with their verbal commitments to carry the work forward. In the absence of additional funding streams for the work that is supported by the Race to the Top funds, the work might “languish” (e.g., districts’ early learning leads collective). The uncertainty of the future of the RMP after 2020 also made the participants question whether the work will continue beyond 2020.

***CCER can do more to increase awareness and engagement of teachers, community members, and families in the Road Map Project region.***

Stakeholders shared that while CCER has made great progress in engaging district leaders and CBOs to work toward the RMP goal, there are still many families and educators who do not know about the project. At present, teachers, teacher leaders, and staff working in schools do not have a clearly defined role in the project. Practitioners feel that they do not have enough information or support to make alternative arrangements to attend RMP meetings.

## Summary and implications

Partners see CCER as a helpful and responsive backbone organization in roles that are best suited for them, such as data, advocacy, and convening. However, they feel that other partners could take more active roles in the work, including leading work groups and promoting equity. In general, stakeholders feel that CCER is strongest when it convenes stakeholders around a common agenda, facilitates strategy development, and supports implementation of this common agenda; provides data that “spark conversation” to inform policy and practice; and uses its position in the system to advocate for policy change in the interests of the region.

Stakeholders universally felt that CCER is helpful and responsive to partner needs, and organizations felt they received technical support to implement their priority strategies. They described CCER leadership and staff as passionate, hardworking, and invested in making progress on the RMP goals, with significant strengths in promoting data use and convening stakeholders. Partners felt that CCER is well positioned to advocate for policy change across the region.

Stakeholders were more mixed in their opinions about CCER’s effectiveness in guiding the work from talk to action. Some stakeholders felt that having partner organizations lead work groups could lead to more traction and better facilitation in the work. Others felt more clarity around roles for partners and a clear and consistent process for selecting high-leverage strategies that help groups move from talk to action would strengthen collaborative practice. There was also a sense that CCER can do more to increase awareness and engagement of teachers, community members, and families in the RMP region. All of these issues were couched in the need to consider more diversity of perspective and to view the work from the lens of long-term sustainability.

CCER may need to rethink the structure and facilitation of work groups. Participants would like to see CCER promote more shared ownership of the work and generate more buy-in from the work group members. A few stakeholders perceived that work groups managed by community partners, such as the ELL work group led by One America, are moving faster because there is a higher degree of shared ownership among partners at the table. Others suggest that CCER should critically evaluate how the work groups are staffed and whether members are supported to do the work.

## Future Questions to Address

The key findings above suggest that while RMP is making significant progress in many areas, there are questions to consider to help the initiative deepen and extend its work and to accelerate progress toward meeting its goal. The following information (Table 5) is a synopsis of the implications outlined in each section of the report. The recommendations reflect input from RMP stakeholders and the evaluation team.

*Table 5. Summary of recommendations and key questions for consideration*

Area of focus	Recommendations and questions
<i>Common agenda</i>	<p><b>Clarify the connection between Road Map Project goals, strategies, activities, and outcomes.</b> Define and track a set of interim system-level outcomes related to key high-leverage indicators to assess progress toward the long-term 2020 goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the high-leverage indicators that could accelerate change at other points along the cradle-to-career continuum?</li> <li>• What strategies could catalyze movement on these high-leverage indicators?</li> <li>• How is RMP building the capacity of districts and CBOs to implement high-quality, equitable practice in support of these indicators?</li> <li>• What structural changes (e.g., relaxed constraints, pathway connections, or new incentives) are necessary to sustain this change over time?</li> </ul>
<i>Community engagement</i>	<p><b>Diversify Road Map Project leadership while deepening and expanding roles for youth and families.</b> Reflect upon and strengthen efforts to ensure that RMP decisions and actions are grounded in the lived experience of South King County community members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what degree do the leadership bodies of RMP reflect the racial/ethnic composition of the communities it seeks to support?</li> <li>• Building on lessons learned from the ELL work group, what are other opportunities for grassroots CBOs to play a leadership role in RMP?</li> <li>• Where is there capacity to deepen the engagement of youth and families in the planning, implementation, and leadership of RMP? What needs to shift (e.g., capacity, flexibility, skills, norms) to allow for this deeper engagement?</li> </ul>
<i>Equity</i>	<p><b>“Lead with equity” by modelling and advocating for policies and practices that promote inclusion and equity.</b> Ensure that equity is at the core of all RMP work by adopting an equity lens to guide internal and external processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the equity lens that guides the everyday work of RMP?</li> <li>• How does RMP decide which policies and practices to promote? How could this process be made more transparent and consistent across the initiative?</li> </ul>

Area of focus	Recommendations and questions
<i>Data</i>	<p><b>Invest in partners' ability to utilize data to catalyze policy and practice changes and to build capacity and sustainability for these data efforts.</b> Strengthen local data culture and infrastructure, especially to align data across systems in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the opportunities to better link RMP data reports and action plans?</li> <li>• How could RMP build the internal data capacity of organizations within the region as a way to sustain CCER's data efforts?</li> <li>• How could the lessons learned from CCER's efforts to link data from multiple systems be replicated on other issues or by other organizations?</li> </ul>
<i>Backbone</i>	<p><b>Consider how other partners might take more active roles in the work, including leading work groups and equity.</b> Rethink the structure and facilitation of work groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How could CCER staff work with lead implementers to transfer leadership from CCER to community partners?</li> <li>• What are the opportunities to integrate RMP work into other collaborative activities taking place in the region and thereby reduce the number of meetings?</li> <li>• What needs to shift to allow for restructure of the work groups?</li> </ul>

## Appendix A: Survey Descriptions

In 2015, we administered surveys and conducted interviews across the Road Map Project (RMP) to gather direct feedback from key stakeholders. Our primary data were collected through interviews and surveys. Whenever possible, we observed meetings and conducted document reviews of materials presented in the meetings, as well as other relevant documents such as work group plans and policy initiatives. We also attended RMP

Harvard Family Engagement Institute planning meetings, Community Network Steering Committee meetings, and Project Sponsor group meetings throughout the year to provide background and context for analyzing the survey and interview data (Table A1).

*Table A1. Road Map Project meetings observed in 2015*

Road Map Project group	Meetings observed
Community Network Steering Committee	1
Project Sponsors	1
Education Results Network	1
Community Network Steering Committee/ Project Sponsors (combined)	2
Harvard Family Engagement Institutes	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>

### Surveys

The report draws on three sources of survey data. First we conducted an online survey of different stakeholders as part of the evaluation. Second, we used existing survey results from the Gates Alignment Index Survey conducted in 2014 and 2015. Third, we compared some items on the 2015 formative evaluation survey to the survey conducted in 2013 to assess initiative progress over time.

#### 2015 formative evaluation survey

In November and December 2015, we administered online surveys to RMP stakeholder groups. Copies of the surveys are available upon request (Table A2). The first group of stakeholders included those who are less directly involved in the RMP work but have an interest in its outcomes. These respondents were drawn from the Education Results Network mailing list. The second group of stakeholders consisted of those who are more deeply interested in the work of the RMP and receive regular updates through the traffic reports. The remaining three groups of individuals are work group members who participated in the High School to College Completion work group, Birth to Third Grade work group, and the Family Engagement work (such as the Harvard Family Engagement Institute delegates and Community Network Steering Committee members).

All respondents answered a core set of questions about the RMP theory of change and their perceptions of the initiative's impact on the region. All respondents in the more involved groups (Traffic Report, Family Engagement, Birth to Third Grade Reading, and High School to

College Completion) completed a more in-depth set of items about data and engagement. Finally, members of the High School to College Completion, Family Engagement, and Birth to Third Grade Reading work groups completed additional items specific to their areas of work.

*Table A2. Survey response rates*

Road Map Project survey group	Sample	N	Response rate
Education Results Network	2,123	212	10%
Road Map Traffic Report	203	59	29%
Family Engagement	85	23	27%
Birth to Third Grade Reading Work Group	28	10	36%
High School to College Completion Work Group	22	8	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,461</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>12%</b>

Figures A1–A7 show the distribution of survey respondents across organizational type, role, experience in the partner organization, and focus of work.

*Figure A1. Almost two-fifths of respondents are from the K–12 education sector*

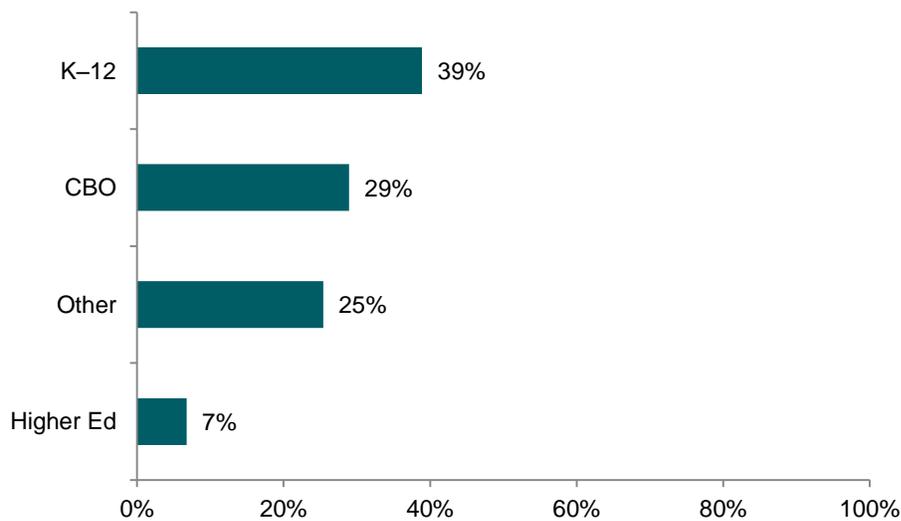


Figure A2. In what sector does your organization work?

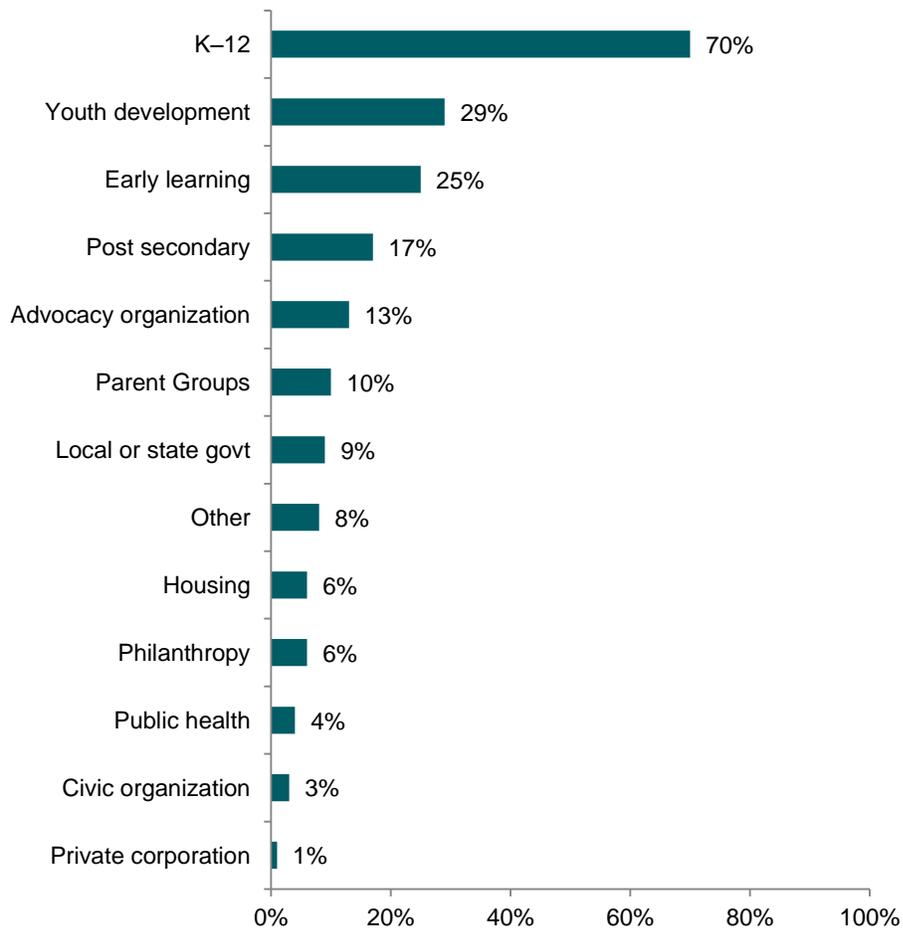


Figure A3. In which part of the education continuum do you focus your work?

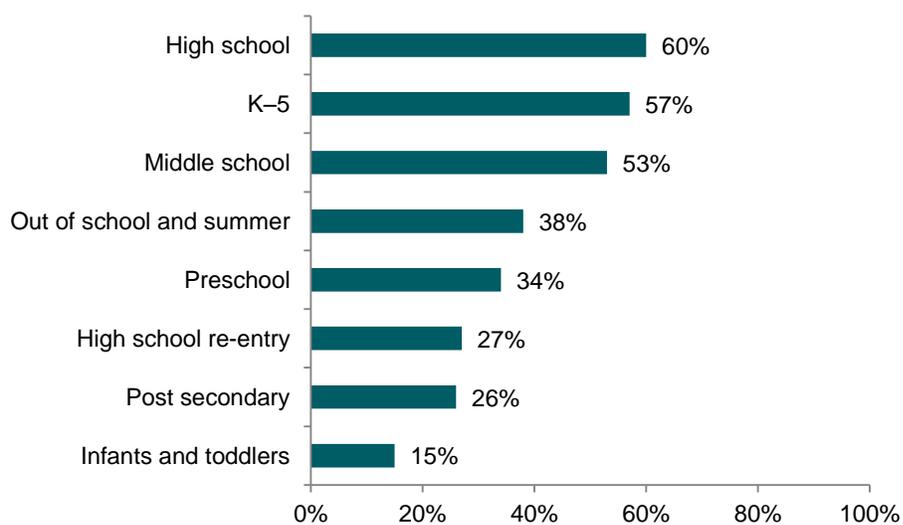


Figure A4. With which stakeholders does your organization work directly?

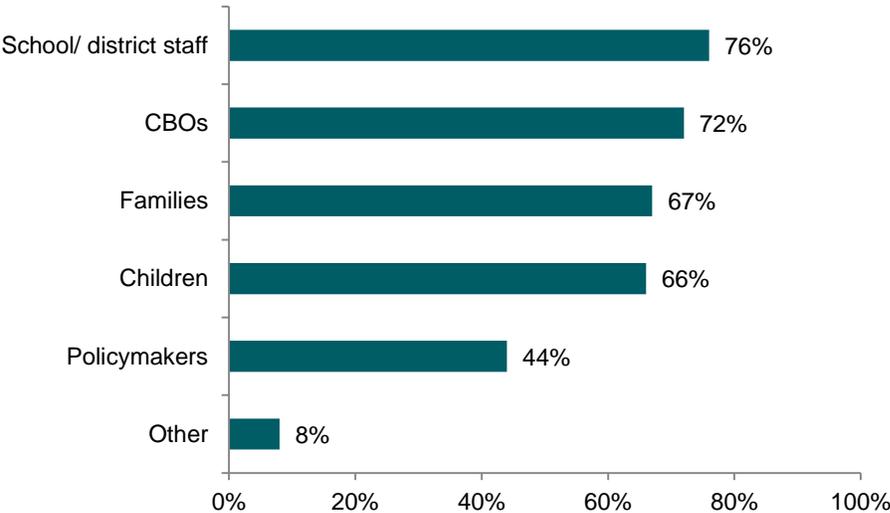


Figure A5. At what level does your organization focus?

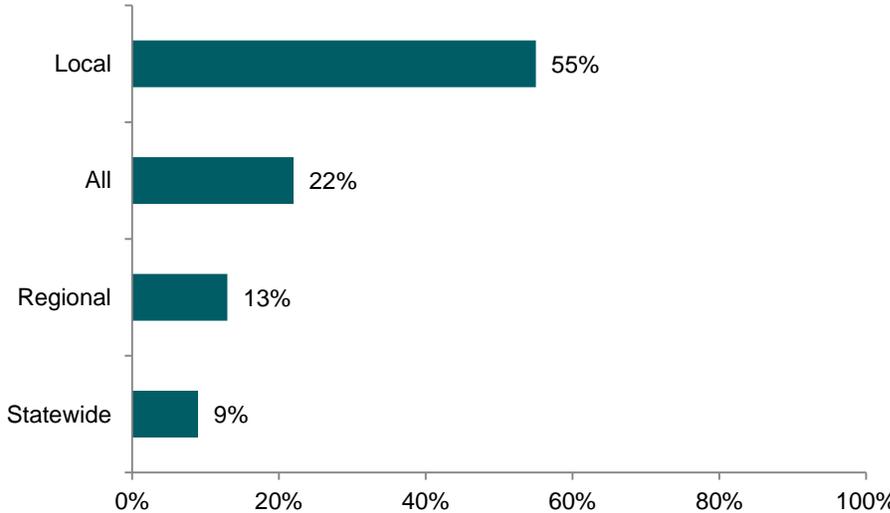


Figure A6. What role do you play in your organization?

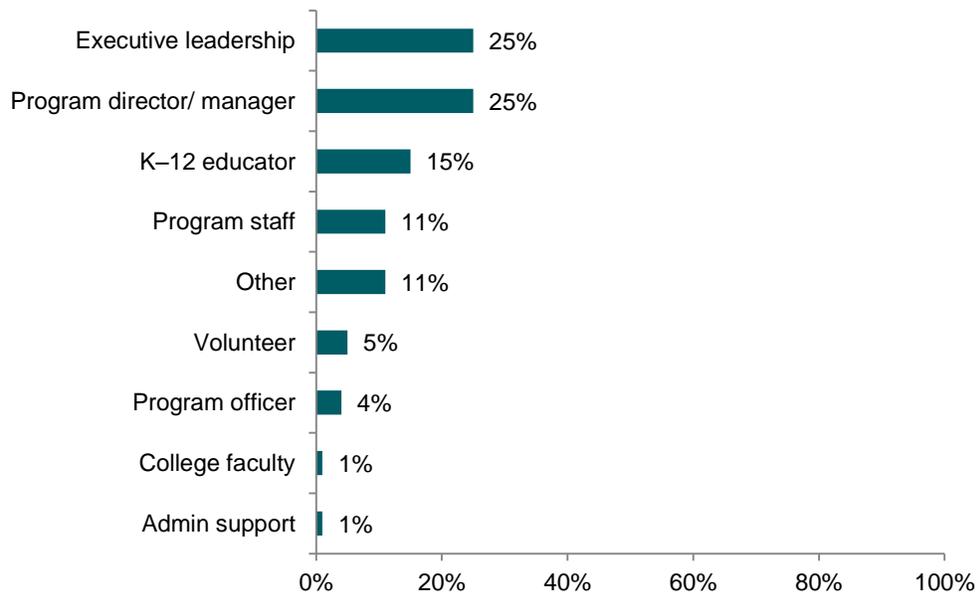
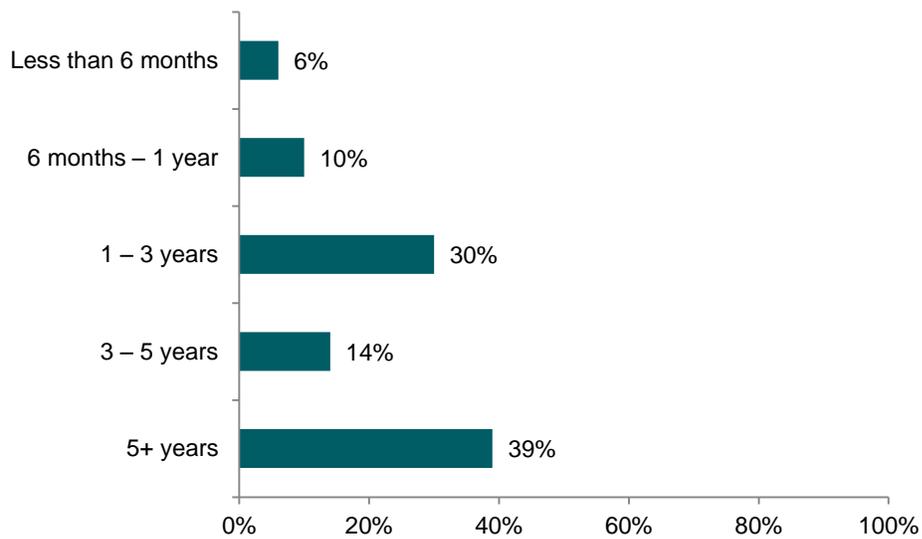


Figure A7. How long have you been in your current position?



## **2014 and 2015 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Alignment Index Survey**

We also summarized responses from the 2014 and 2015 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Alignment Index Survey.<sup>35</sup> The evaluation team was provided the 2014 descriptive summary, which included the sub-indexes and associated items and the raw data for the 2015 survey. The sub-indexes included the following:

- Collaborative frameworks and practice
- Use of common language
- Common understanding of readiness terms
- Data sharing
- Changes in culture

There were 101 respondents in 2014 (out of 167, for a response rate of 62 percent). Eighty-eight individuals responded to the 2015 survey, although we do not have the total sample to calculate the response rate. No demographics were provided for the 2014 data, but we were able to determine roles and focus for respondents on the 2015 survey.

On the 2015 survey, three-fourths of respondents (66 of 88) indicated that education is their primary focus. About half (45 of 88) identified their role as senior leaders in their organization and over a quarter (23 of 88) as a program manager. Less than a quarter of respondents were represented by various other roles, such as data lead (7) and partnership/coalition developer (11). When asked about where they worked in the cradle-to-career continuum, more than half (49 of 88) of respondents indicated other, and about a fifth of respondents (18 of 88) identified K–12. Few respondents indicated either early learning or P–3. When respondents identified their sector, almost two-fifths (34 of 88) indicated they were in the K–12 sector. Ten respondents each identified early learning and philanthropy, and eight respondents identified postsecondary and youth development. The remaining eight sectors presented as response options were: advocacy organization, private corporation, local or state government, parent groups, public health, civic organization, and other. Each of these sectors was identified by fewer than five respondents each.

## **Stakeholder interviews**

The evaluation team worked with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Community Center for Education Results to identify RMP partners for our interview sample. Respondents were recruited who represented several areas of the initiative—advocacy, community-based organizations, early learning, funders, K–12 institutions, postsecondary institutions, and backbone staff.

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<sup>35</sup> Sources: ORS Impact (June 2014). “Alignment Index Results: Descriptive Statistics for Road Map,” provided by Road Map Project.

2015: Education Northwest analyses of: 2015 Education Pathways Alignment Index dataset, provided by Road Map Project.

Between June and December 2015, Education Northwest conducted interviews with the 37 identified stakeholders. Interviews were conducted in person or over the telephone; each took 30–60 minutes. Table A3 summarizes the groups represented in the final interview sample. In cases where an organization fell into multiple groups, we assigned the interviewee an organization type based on the individual’s primary role in the RMP.

We analyzed interview data with ATLAS.ti to code for themes within each topic area. We first created a priori codes based on a preliminary reading of interview notes and transcripts. During the coding process, we refined the initial codes and added others that emerged. We also drafted analytic memos to summarize the results from survey, interview, observations, and document reviews and to corroborate findings across different data sources.

*Table A3. Stakeholder interviews*

<b>Type of organization</b>	<b>N</b>
Backbone organization	2
Government (state, regional, local)	3
Funders/philanthropy	3
Advocacy	3
Higher education	4
Community-based organizations	8
K–12 (includes educational service districts)	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>