The Research Alliance for New York City Schools

Preparing for Evaluation
Lessons from the Evaluability Assessment of the Teagle Foundation's College-Community Connections Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

Funders, policymakers, and program leaders increasingly recognize the value of high-quality evaluations of education programs and initiatives. Such evaluations are typically driven by a few central questions: What impact do programs have on the lives of participants? How and under what conditions are programs most successful? Do the benefits outweigh the costs? These are critical areas of inquiry that programs must eventually tackle in order to develop and grow.

But there is often a set of questions that must be answered even before program evaluation can begin. These more fundamental questions reside in the challenge of defining the program itself: What outcomes does the program seek to affect? Are daily activities in line with long-term goals? What forces are driving program changes over time? These essential questions can be easy to neglect, especially after the first few years of a program's operation, when conversations about the underlying theory of action may be few and far between. For large-scale initiatives with a broad-based agenda and multiple partner organizations, each with its own perspective and organizational mission to pursue, these conversations are particularly important—and challenging.

For the Teagle Foundation, which since 1944 has worked to advance liberal arts education, this set of dilemmas appeared ten years into a well-established initiative called College-Community Connections (CCC). The CCC initiative funds partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and universities to promote college access and success among talented but underrepresented students in New York City. Over the previous decade, CCC grantees have served more than 1,200 students, the vast majority of whom have gone on to enroll in college immediately after their high school graduation.[1]

In 2015, the Teagle Foundation contracted with the Research Alliance for New York City Schools to explore the feasibility of a variety of approaches to evaluating CCC. This work—often called an evaluability assessment—was designed to determine the current potential for an experimental evaluation that could illuminate the impact of the CCC initiative, and to explore how the grantee partnerships might be better aligned to Teagle's goals in advance of that kind of evaluation. The project surfaced an array of issues and challenges that are relevant not only for Teagle and its CCC partners, but for many CBOs and multi-partner initiatives that are interested in

evaluating their work. This report highlights a number of lessons for such initiatives, particularly those working to support college access.

Overview of the CCC Initiative and Current Project

The organizations taking part in the CCC initiative vary widely in size, selectivity, location, and target population, but the partnerships share a common structure. Each one is comprised of a CBO and a university working together to implement one or more programs. The CBOs offer individualized college guidance and explicit instruction related to college access, such as college application support, school visits, and standardized test preparation. The universities, in turn, provide college-level instruction in the liberal arts, as well as an intensive on-campus experience. In both the scope and intensity of the intervention, CCC aims to make a larger collective impact on students' educational trajectories than would be possible for either of the partners working in isolation.

The fall of 2015 marked the tenth year and fifth phase of funding for the Teagle CCC. The Phase V Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in October—at roughly the midpoint of our work with Teagle—and offered selected partnerships a maximum of $100,000 per year for three years. The six partnerships below (five of which had received funding from Teagle previously) submitted successful proposals; each will begin work under the new grant in Summer 2016:

- **Brooklyn College & CAMBA:** Brooklyn College's College Now and CAMBA's Leading to College Program at the School for Democracy and Leadership (SDL)

- **Columbia University & Double Discovery Center:** Freedom and Citizenship: Explorations in Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Thought

- **Fordham University & Bronxworks:** The History Makers Scholars Program

- **New York University & Children's Aid Society:** EXCEL in Writing, Thinking, and Inquiry Project

- **Skidmore College & Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO):** SEO-Skidmore Connections

- **Drew University & Harlem Educational Activities Fund:** Access and Academics: Pathways to College and Liberal Arts

In anticipation of the Phase V RFP, the Research Alliance decided to focus our inquiry on the work of the five invited returning grantees.[2] We conducted semi-structured interviews with staff from CBOs, colleges, and in some cases, high schools from each grantee partnership. In addition, we visited each college to observe the range of instructional activities and curricular content. We also interviewed Teagle Foundation staff, reviewed Foundation documentation (i.e., previous RFPs/solicitations, grantee reporting, internal communications, and program assessments), and undertook basic background research about grantees.

Our data collection and analysis were organized around the following typical steps of an evaluability assessment:

1. Articulate Goals and Outcomes: What long-term goals and interim outcomes does the Foundation seek to affect through CCC? What implications do these goals have for an evaluation of the initiative's impact on students?
2. Assess Past Learning and Identify Current Evaluation Needs: What do we already know about the CCC initiative based on the Foundation's previous program reviews? What do those findings suggest about the most pressing evaluation needs for the future?
3. Describe Current Operations: What are the current structures and elements found among grantees? What do these suggest about the most promising designs for an evaluation?
4. Develop Mechanisms for Organizational Learning: Will stakeholders be able to use the findings of an evaluation productively? What mechanisms for feedback need to exist to improve organizational learning?
5. Explore Evaluation Strategies: What is the current potential for a rigorous experimental evaluation? What evaluation structures best meet the Foundation's needs?

The remainder of this report presents findings from each of these steps and highlights a set of broader lessons for conducting evaluability assessments with similar organizations.

1. ARTICULATE GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The first, and arguably most essential, step in an evaluability assessment is a comprehensive review of goals and desired outcomes for the overarching initiative, for the individual programs, and for the evaluation process itself. The review of goals and outcomes serves two major purposes: 1) it allows stakeholders to come to some agreement about the nature of the initiative and its intended impact, and 2) it drives the evaluation design by determining the scope, sequence, and type of data collection activities. Whether an initiative can be evaluated at all will depend largely on the clarity and specificity of desired outcomes.

In our work with Teagle Foundation staff, the review of goals took the form of an extended conversation, which continued throughout data collection and analysis and served as an anchor for all aspects of our work. We learned that the Teagle Foundation sought to bring about change at three distinct levels: (1) at the individual level, by directly improving students' postsecondary outcomes; (2) at the institutional level, by encouraging grantee organizations to develop sustainable and ongoing relationships that would improve the outcomes of future cohorts of students; and (3) at the national level, by developing a replicable model for collective action on college access and success. We further define each of these goals and discuss their implications for growth and evaluation below.

Individual Impact Goal: Improve Students' College Outcomes

In interviews, Foundation staff described the value of CCC as helping students to prepare for and succeed in college by building a college-going identity and critical postsecondary skills through rigorous engagement with the liberal arts. Over the course of our conversations, the Foundation further articulated three separate but interrelated aspects of this goal:

- **Improved College Access**: Expanding students' awareness of the range of quality college options, as well as their capacity to engage successfully in the college application and decision process;

- **Improved College Success**: Improving students' postsecondary achievement in terms of both academic performance and social integration.

- **Increased Interest and Engagement in the Liberal Arts**: Cultivating students' understanding of the liberal arts as part of their motivation to attend

college and as a framework for developing critical skills needed in college and beyond.

This articulation of Teagle's individual-level goals in turn helped guide the data we collected from the grantee partners. Although each of these individual-level goals was relatively straightforward, it was less clear to us how they interacted in practice, and we specifically sought to understand how the liberal arts functioned in relation to college access and success. We therefore focused our interviews and program observations on the different ways that the partnerships enacted a liberal arts education and the kinds of skills and practices they attempted to develop through their curricula.

Institutional Development Goal: Encourage Long-Term Sustainability of Program Partnerships

In addition to having a direct impact on the students in CCC-funded programs, Teagle expressed an interest in having an indirect influence on future cohorts of students by encouraging grantees to institutionalize their partnerships. Ensuring the sustainability of the partnerships in this way would extend the influence of the CCC model beyond the life of the grant.

Although program sustainability was not the central focus of our investigation, we noted two implications of this goal for Teagle's relationships with its partners. First, because grantees were encouraged to develop their revenue streams outside of CCC, at least some partnerships were developing in ways that were increasingly independent of Teagle's funding and original program goals. Second, the focus on sustainability also made Teagle staff somewhat reluctant to dictate program structures or services in ways that would disrupt the productive and organic work already underway. These aspects of Teagle's relationship with its grantee partners would be important to keep in mind for evaluation design, but they also had some influence on our data collection process, as we sought to document the variation in program structure, student services, and instructional focus across the grantee partnerships.

National Replication Goal: Develop a General College Access and Success Model

Finally, Teagle sought to widen the influence of the CCC initiative even further by developing a model for college access and success partnerships that could be replicated in other contexts. We understood this final goal—developing a replicable model—to be the driving force behind Teagle's interest in a rigorous evaluation. Therefore, in addition to making a full inventory of the variation across partnerships, we sought to categorize grantee services into a framework that would reflect both the Foundation's goals and the larger national conversation about college access and success.

Lessons for Evaluation Planning

- **Involve all stakeholders in the conversation:** The evaluability assessment presents an outstanding opportunity to check in with all the major stakeholders and determine whether there is agreement about the program's goals and objectives. In our work with Teagle, this included Foundation staff and board members, staff at the grantee CBOs, college faculty, high school principals, and students. Other organizations might find it helpful to discuss program goals with parents or community partners. These conversations are particularly important for multi-service collaborations like CCC, because their programs are shaped by numerous individuals across different organizations.

- **Specify multiple levels of goals:** Many programs—and particularly multi-service, multi-partner initiatives—aim to have an impact in more than one context. Programs may be aimed at changing the lives of individuals, encouraging institutional development, influencing state or federal policy, or developing a substantive knowledge base. Explicitly specifying goals at each of these levels will not only help to clarify which ones an evaluation will target, but will also make visible any interactions or conflicts between goals. For instance, it became clear that Teagle's goal of encouraging the sustainability of programs (which, as described above, led to some divergence in the services offered by participating partnerships) conflicted somewhat with the goal of creating a replicable college access model. A solid evaluation strategy would require wrestling with these conflicts and finding a way to balance both goals.

- **Translate goals into concrete outcomes:** The goals for an intervention are not always easy to translate into measureable outcomes. Some of Teagle's goals

were relatively straightforward to define in concrete, quantitative terms—for example, selectivity of college attended and degree attainment would function as good proxies for college access and success. Other student-level goals would be better captured in more qualitative ways, such as through surveys about participants' experiences in the programs. Still others are more difficult to define—developing a rich engagement with the liberal arts, for instance, does not present any immediate directions for measurement. Throughout the course of the evaluability assessment, we worked to understand how the liberal arts were viewed and enacted among the various grantees. For any programmatic goal, it is important to identify the concrete outcomes that are desired, which then determines the kind of data that need to be collected and helps drive the design of the evaluation.

- **Begin developing a logic model, but leave room to adjust it throughout the evaluability assessment:** A common pre-evaluation activity is the development of a logic model to show the relationships between (and underlying assumptions about) an initiative's resources, activities, and outcomes. The process of developing a logic model is extremely valuable in explicitly marking connections and disjunctures between program elements and in laying out a clear set of pathways that might be tested in an evaluation. However, many social impact initiatives, particularly those such as CCC that involve multiple service providers, are complex affairs with a great deal of variation across individual programs. In our work on CCC, we developed a simple, working logic model that we refined and expanded over the course of our conversations with Teagle and data collection among the grantees. To start, our model included only the most basic information about the partnership relationships and the student-level goals as articulated by Teagle. (Phase 1 of the logic model can be found on page 21). This initial logic model also helped make visible the fact that we did not fully understand the short-term goals of the program or how the grantees' many activities fit into the larger initiative.

- **Review goals throughout the assessment process:** The evaluability assessment will inevitably raise additional questions about the intended scope and focus of an initiative. These moments are opportunities to reassess the boundaries of the initiative and can lead to either a change in operations or a revision of the stated goals. In either case, though, the articulation of goals should offer all stakeholders the opportunity to reflect on the original intent of the program and its operational realities.

2. ASSESS PAST LEARNING AND IDENTIFY CURRENT EVALUATION NEEDS

Depending on how long the program has been operating, there may be previous evaluation work or an ongoing set of "lessons learned" that suggest a clear direction for evaluation planning. Reviewing the program's history is therefore an important step in orienting the evaluability assessment and ensuring a degree of continuity in program operations, evaluation design, and outcomes measurement over time. Reviewing program history also can help to identify the purpose of the current evaluation effort.

When the Research Alliance began working with Teagle, the CCC initiative had already been operating for ten years. Therefore, we sought to understand what Teagle had learned during that time. In fact, the Foundation already knew a great deal about students' experiences in the grantee programs and the most promising operational models. That evolving knowledge had guided their selection of partnerships to fund over the previous four grant cycles. Specifically, Teagle's earlier evaluations had identified the salience of rigorous college-level coursework and campus residency in students' satisfaction with their CCC experience. Previous work had also identified a set of institutional practices that were most likely to support smooth program operations.

What was less clear was whether and how the wide diversity of services being delivered—particularly by the colleges—might differentially affect students' experiences and outcomes. Taken altogether, our review of CCC history suggested that we should focus our data collection on two aspects of the programs: 1) the specific types of academic services each partnership college was providing to students, and 2) how those services fit into an overall model for the CCC initiative.

Our review of CCC history also revealed a number of limitations of the previous evaluation work, most notably a reliance on self-reported survey items, absence of a clear comparison group, and an unwieldy logic model. These issues became the focus of our examination of possible evaluation designs, which we discuss further in Step Five, Explore Evaluation Options.

Lessons for Evaluation Planning

- **Inventory previous findings and identify evidence gaps:** The focus throughout the review of an initiative's history should be on answering two basic questions: What is known? What remains to be learned? There may be obvious gaps in the evidence base for an initiative, including questions about how various elements work together. In our project with Teagle, we felt we had a clear picture of the major long-term goals for the initiative, but did not understand how program activities related to those longer-term goals. Although there was evidence that students felt personally satisfied with their experiences in the CCC program, we were uncertain of whether their self-reported growth actually led to improved outcomes during college. Unearthing these gaps helped to guide our data collection during the evaluability assessment and pointed toward a set of evaluation priorities.

- **Specify the intended audience for future evaluation findings:** One way to think about the purpose of an evaluation is to consider the intended audience. Is the goal to provide programs with actionable evidence they can use to improve their practices? To convince funders of the value of the program? To contribute to a knowledge base other organizations might draw from? These audiences may demand very different kinds of evaluation information. Ultimately, the design of an evaluation should be driven both by the questions that remain to be answered and the intended use of findings.

3. Describe Current Operations

Developing a strong evaluation strategy requires clarity about a program's daily operations. This is especially the case for multi-service partnerships, in which programming is delivered by a variety of actors, whose work together may take several years to reach full maturity. It is important to document the current realities of programs to determine not only whether they have reached a point of stable operations, but also whether their activities are aligned with the goals of the larger initiative, and how they might accommodate the intrusions of an evaluation. Our data collection focused on identifying program structures, program-specific goals and objectives, and the scope and sequence of student services. We were particularly concerned with understanding how the activities, short-term outcomes, and longer-term goals might work together, and whether program-level goals were consistent with those of the larger CCC initiative.

Program Structures and Institutional Characteristics

We found that the organizations comprising the CCC partnerships represented a broad range of CBOs and colleges. The CBOs ran the gamut from large, established, multi-site or multi-service organizations to smaller, more local community institutions; the partner colleges varied in terms of size, offerings, selectivity, recruitment practices, and location (see Appendix B for details about each partnership). Still, there were some consistent structural elements across all five grantees:

- The CBOs served as the entry point for students and offered guidance and support focused on college access, and in some cases, on building academic as well as social and emotional skills;
- The colleges offered on-campus coursework, often supplemented by supports focused on developing a college-going identity;
- The CBO and college components of CCC generally operated independently, without visible systems for student-specific case management and/or data sharing; and
- The students who participated in the college programming represented a subset of a larger body of students served by the CBO.

We also noted that although four of the five grantees had been relatively stable in terms of program operations for the previous three years, the college in the remaining partnership was in the process of overhauling its student curriculum. This change posed some potential challenges for developing an evaluation because students in this program might not receive the same kind of services from one year to the next.

Program Goals and Outcomes Measures

None of the five grantees had developed a formalized theory of change, but they articulated program goals, informal theories of change, and potential target outcomes that showed remarkable alignment with the Foundation's priorities. Grantees also expressed some reservations about whether all of their goals could be accurately measured. For example, one program expressed a desire for "transformative education" that would both improve their students' life outcomes and push them to take an active role in American democracy. Other programs were concerned with empowering students to critique existing social and political structures, including the academic traditions in which they would engage in college. While these goals are not easily quantified, we understood them to be deeply rooted in the tradition of liberal arts education as Teagle had articulated it. Our conversations with the grantees therefore reinforced the importance of incorporating rich qualitative data collection into any future evaluation.

Scope and Sequence of Program Activities

By far the greatest source of variation in the CCC programs appeared at the level of student services and curriculum. In keeping with Teagle's goal to create a replicable model, one of our major objectives was to develop a comprehensive framework that would categorize the kinds of services and instruction being provided through the partnerships. We found that, together, the CBO and college partnerships provided services in support of three short-term goals: college access, postsecondary skills, and expanded personal and social identity.

We then developed a matrix of student services and program activities, color-coded by these larger categories, to display the extent to which each partnership focused on different services within the entire inventory. This exercise resulted in a visual snapshot (Appendix C) of all of the services being offered and contributed to the

continuing development of the logic model (see page 22), providing further direction for an evaluation design.

Lessons for Evaluation Planning

- **In describing current operations, be sure to document goals, operational structures, and key elements of the program:** Important points to clarify include: Are the goals of each programming element aligned with or complementary to those of the larger initiative? Do programs specify outcomes or outcome measures that are feasible to measure in an evaluation? For a multi-partner, multi-site initiative like CCC, are the activities performed within each partnership or site similar? Do they advance similar goals? Will the operational structures as they currently stand support a rigorous evaluation? Does each partnership support data sharing or organizational learning?

- **Categorize program services based on short-term goals for student impact:** Describing the potentially wide range of program activities in terms of student-level goals and outcomes serves two primary purposes. First, this exercise provides a snapshot of programs across the entire initiative and allows for the development of program-specific dashboards that can track services offered and student-level outcomes targeted. Second, patterns identified through this process can help make visible the most salient and common programmatic features, which might be considered core elements of a program model. These core programming elements can then be added to the initiative's logic model. We further discuss the development of a dashboard and the logic model for CCC under Step Four.

4. DEVELOP MECHANISMS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

One frequently neglected aspect of evaluation planning is ensuring that program stakeholders are in a position to use any eventual findings to facilitate change within their organizations. If organizations do not have mechanisms in place to promote knowledge sharing and collective decision-making among program partners, it is important to begin developing these prior to the evaluation.

We proposed a number of strategies for improved organizational learning and development during our work with Teagle. First, we discussed the Foundation's potential role as host of a semi-annual roundtable, during which grantees could share successful program elements, collaborate on outcomes measures, and reflect on any evaluation findings. The roundtable format would permit grantees to better align their work in terms of student services and data collection—both within and across the partnerships.

The second proposed tool for organizational learning was a dashboard we designed to connect with our larger overview of program services. This dashboard, which was completed for each partnership, was intended to 1) communicate to the grantees the extent to which their programs aligned with others in the initiative, and 2) emphasize aspects of program operations that would be most important in the event of an initiative-wide evaluation. Teagle was able to incorporate both of these learning tools (the roundtable and the dashboard) into the Phase V RFP, which helped to solidify the role of the new tools in the partnerships' operations.

Finally, we completed a logic model for the initiative, which was aligned to the dashboard and could be used to guide evaluation decisions and highlight focus areas for roundtable meetings among the grantees. The final two phases of logic model development are found on pages 23-24.

Lessons for Evaluation Planning

- **Build opportunities for learning within and across organizations:** Multi-service initiatives have a tremendous opportunity to learn and grow by pooling informal knowledge about promising practices, testing those practices in a variety of settings, and scaling up strategies that work. This approach requires that the programs gather regularly to share experiences, information and lessons.

Funders can play a key role in incentivizing these meetings and helping to set the agenda.

- **Develop a dashboard to communicate the initiative's theory and expectations:** Multi-service initiatives can easily become collections of very disparate kinds of services, so it is important to develop tools that help track what services are being provided by whom and how those services fit into the rest of the initiative. If program-specific dashboards can be aligned to a larger logic model, then they also have the benefit of making explicit the intended relationship between student services and desired outcomes. An example of how a dashboard might interface with a larger system-wide snapshot and logic model is provided in Appendix D.

- **If possible, use the RFP process to clarify and refine the programmatic model:** Because an RFP sets the stage for future work, it offers a unique opportunity to systematize various aspects of the program model. Teagle's Phase V RFP, for instance, required for the first time that grantees participate in occasional roundtables and include particular elements in their lineup of student services. The Foundation also provided completed program-specific dashboards to each invited returning grantee, communicating Teagle's understanding of that partnership and indicating to what extent the partnership's activities were aligned with the initiative's overarching goals.

5. EXPLORE EVALUATION STRATEGIES

The overarching purpose of an evaluability assessment is to develop the groundwork for a coherent evaluation design. Successful evaluation designs—those that are able to meet the needs of participating organizations within the context of relevant resource constraints—follow directly from the insights that emerge during an evaluability assessment. More specifically, the initiative's history and logic model help drive the goals for an evaluation; these goals will point to a set of research questions, which, in turn, should determine the research methods and data collection strategies.

Strong evaluation designs take the following factors into account:

- Goals for the partnership, organization, and/or program, including the kind of outcomes that will be most relevant for determining program success;
- The purpose of the evaluation, including the intended audience for the findings;
- Alignment of the evaluation process with existing program operations and culture, including program size and recruitment/selection methods, current data collection processes, consistency of program structures, and the presence of a relevant and valid comparison group;
- Feasibility and timing, including whether evaluation findings will be available in time to make use of them as intended; and
- Availability of financial and human resources.

Coordinating these priorities and constraints is the defining challenge of designing a high-quality evaluation. We offered Teagle recommendations for evaluating the impact of CCC as well as its implementation, in both the short and long term.

Measuring Impacts

The Foundation was deeply interested in identifying a valid estimate of the CCC initiative's impact on students' long-term college outcomes, in part because this could provide a rationale for replication. This priority suggested a randomized experiment, in which students are selected at random to receive services or not, with any subsequent differences in outcomes attributable to the initiative, or a quasi-experimental design, which would compare the CCC participants to an existing group of students not receiving services. Both of these designs would attempt to discern the impact of the CCC initiative, above and beyond other factors that might influence students' outcomes.

There were a number of indications, however, that these methods would not be well supported by current operations. First and foremost, our evaluability assessment revealed that identifying an appropriate comparison group for all of the CCC programs would be difficult. The rigor of the selection and recruitment process for CCC suggested that there were fundamental differences between students who received CCC services and those who did not, such as motivation, maturity, self-advocacy, and college interest. Thus, if we simply compared participants' and nonparticipants' outcomes (i.e., a quasi-experimental design), it would be difficult to know whether the results were due to the initiative or to underlying differences between the two groups of students. Randomizing among qualified students—those who made it through the initial application process—would offer a clearer look at the initiative's impact. But it would likely only be feasible in the larger programs, where there was excess demand to participate in CCC (for some of the smaller programs, all students who met admissions criteria were provided with services, so there was no opportunity to randomly select a group of nonparticipants). [3]

Some of the partnerships' program structures also posed challenges to identifying an appropriate comparison group. For instance, in one partnership, we discovered that the students who did not participate in CCC took part in other similar college enrichment activities, occasionally on another college campus. This structure would complicate the effort to select a group of nonparticipants who didn't have access to CCC-like supports for an experimental or quasi-experimental design.

A separate concern related to the wide variation of services offered within and across program sites, which would make it difficult to know what "treatment" is actually being tested in an impact study. Programs that operate differently might produce very different results, and pooling them, as we would likely have to do to achieve a large enough number of study participants, could obscure the impacts (or lack thereof) from any particular version of the program.

Given these factors, we suggested that Teagle start by systematizing its data collection activities in a way that would support a pre-post evaluation design. This approach measures growth by assessing outcomes at the beginning of the program, and again at the end. While the findings of pre-post designs cannot be interpreted causally, they can provide evidence about which practices show the greatest promise and which outcomes seem most responsive to treatment. In turn, this knowledge (and the data collection practices) can support a range of other evaluation activities, including more rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental designs in the future.

Documenting Implementation

Teagle also expressed interest in learning more about how specific programs were being executed, variation across program sites, and challenges and advantages of particular operational structures. Assessments of implementation can help identify the conditions under which programs are most successful, and thus are particularly useful for organizations looking to scale up or develop a replicable model. Therefore, we recommended that any CCC evaluation include qualitative data collection, such as interviews, program observations, and assessments of implementation fidelity (i.e., the extent to which participants experienced the program in accordance with its core principles, at the appropriate "dosage," and at a consistent level of quality).

We made two recommendations for Teagle to pursue in the immediate term. First, we encouraged the Foundation to specify in the Phase V RFP the program elements that would be considered core features of the initiative. These additional requirements ensured that all participating partnerships would be focused on the student services and outcomes that a future evaluation might measure. We also developed a dashboard to help organize the range of services in the CCC initiative as a whole, and to indicate how the work of any given partnership fit into the broader inventory of activities.

Finally, we suggested that Teagle consider adopting a continuous improvement framework[4] either as an overarching evaluation strategy or as a way to prepare for an evaluation down the road. This approach would allow the CCC partnerships to share and test best practices, and to increase consistency in terms of their program goals, implementation, and outcomes measurement. Improved alignment between partnerships on goals, services and target outcomes would not only contribute to the development of a replicable model, but also facilitate an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation in the future.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

One other common component of program evaluation is cost-benefit analysis, which attempts to calculate the full extent of treatment costs and benefits at the individual, institutional, and sometimes societal levels. We did not pursue this form of evaluation with Teagle, but we noted that understanding the balance of program costs and impacts would be a critical issue to consider as they worked to develop a replicable model.

Lessons for Evaluation Planning

- **Identify what is possible in the near term as well as in the future:**
  Choosing an appropriate evaluation design is a matter of balancing the needs and
  goals of the evaluation with the constraints of program resources and operations.
  For the CCC initiative, it was clear that the partnerships were not positioned to
  immediately undertake a quasi-experimental or experimental evaluation, but that
  they might be able to do so after some time spent aligning programs and testing
  measures. We therefore recommended that Teagle implement a pre-post design
  in the immediate term, work to build some consistency across programs, and aim
  to conduct a quasi-experimental or experimental evaluation within a year or two.
  Scaffolding an evaluation in such a way is not always possible, particularly if there
  are time constraints driving decisions, but this structure allows organizations to
  learn from what is currently in place while building toward a strategy that will
  eventually answer the most important questions.

- **Use variation to your advantage:** As described earlier in this section, one of
  the challenges in evaluating multi-service, multi-partner initiatives is that
  individual programs may be structured differently. This can make it difficult to
  measure the impact of the initiative overall. However, variation across programs
  can also create learning opportunities. For example, some of the CCC grantees
  sought out students with the strongest academic performance, while others
  accepted students whose academics were typical of the school or neighborhood
  they served. Evaluating a similar intervention in both of these settings could shed
  light on whether it produces different outcomes, depending on students'
  incoming characteristics. In this way, evaluations can leverage variation to learn
  more about how a program works, for whom and under what circumstances.

- **Consider continuous improvement:** For programs seeking an evaluation
  primarily for the purpose of improving their own practices, a continuous
  improvement framework—which focuses on generating knowledge within
  programs that can then be shared, and acted on, with a larger network—might
  be beneficial. In this approach, new methods are tested at a small scale, closely
  measured to determine whether or not they produce improvements in operations
  or outcomes, refined, and then deployed broadly. Improvement science is a
  rapidly growing field, and one that may serve multi-service, multi-partner
  initiatives particularly well because they are already structured as a network that
  can be leveraged for learning.

CONCLUSION

The Teagle Foundation's CCC initiative is illustrative of the many challenges facing multi-service, multi-partner programs as they prepare for evaluation—challenges in aligning goals at multiple levels and across institutions, in clarifying theorized relationships between a diverse set of program services and intended outcomes, and in identifying feasible directions for research in both the near term and the future. Our work with CCC also underscores the critical task of embedding evaluation activities into the life of programs, and grounding funding and program decisions in evidence. While these challenges are significant, they also represent tremendous opportunities. In the case of CCC, the process of planning for an evaluation has guided the initiative's development in promising ways, encouraging stronger relationships between service providers and more clarity about the initiative's overarching mission and goals.

Further Reading on Evaluability Assessment and Evaluation Planning

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APPENDIX A: DEVELOPING A LOGIC MODEL FOR THE CCC INITIATIVE

Phase 1

Inputs	Activities	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Comprehensive College Access Programming from CBO partner			Improved College Access
Teagle Foundation CCC Funding			Interest in and Engagement with the Liberal Arts
High-Quality, College-Level Liberal Arts Instruction from College Partner			Improved College Success

Phase 2

Inputs	Activities	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes

Inputs

Comprehensive College Access Programming from CBO Partner

Teagle Foundation CCC Funding

High-Quality, College-Level Liberal Arts Instruction from College Partner

Activities

Applications & Financial Aid Help

College Visits

Standardized Test Prep

Transferable Credits

Letters of Recommendation

Extended Campus Residency

Introduction to Campus Resources

Familiarity with Academic Calendar

Professional/Academic Communication Norms

Making Liberal Arts Personally Relevant

Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Education

Undergraduate Mentorship

Ongoing Connection to Program Alumni

Critical Reading of College-Level Texts

Text-Based Argumentative Writing

Composition/Presentation Literacies

Discussion Based Classrooms

Academic Research Standards

Digital Literacies

Embedded Developmental Literacy

Time Management

Self-Advocacy

Living with Others

Academic Engagement

Focus on Social Responsibility and Citizenship

Familiarity with Community Organizations in NYC

Long-Term Outcomes

Improved College Access

Interest in and Engagement with the Liberal Arts

Improved College Success

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Phase 3

Inputs	Activities	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes

Inputs

Comprehensive College Access Programming from CBO Partner

Teagle Foundation Community-College Connections Funding

High-Quality Liberal Arts Instruction from College Partner

Activities

Applications & Financial Aid Help
College Visits
Standardized Test Prep
Transferable Credits
Letters of Recommendation
Extended Campus Residency
Introduction to Campus Resources
Familiarity with Academic Calendar
Professional/Academic Communication Norms

Making Liberal Arts Personally Relevant
Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Education
Undergraduate Mentorship
Ongoing Connection to Program Alumni
Focus on Social Responsibility and Citizenship
Familiarity with Community Organizations and Cultural Centers in NYC

Critical Reading of College-Level Texts
Text-Based Argumentative Writing
Composition/Presentation Literacies
Discussion Based Classrooms
Academic Research Standards
Digital Literacies
Embedded Developmental Literacy
Time Management
Self-Advocacy
Living with Others
Academic Engagement

Short-Term Outcomes

College Access and Application Knowledge
Institutional Literacy

Intellectual Connection to the Liberal Arts
Social Connections to Liberal Arts Institutions

Academic Competencies
Social-Emotional Competencies

Long-Term Outcomes

Improved College Access

Interest and Engagement with the Liberal Arts

Improved College Success

Inputs	Activities	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes

Comprehensive College Access Programming from CBO Partner

Applications & Financial Aid Help
College Visits
Standardized Test Prep
Transferable Credits
Letters of Recommendation
Extended Campus Residency
Introduction to Campus Resources
Familiarity with Academic Calendar
Professional/Academic Communication Norms

Teagle Foundation Community-College Connections Funding

Making Liberal Arts Personally Relevant
Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Education
Undergraduate Mentorship
Ongoing Connection to Program Alumni
Focus on Social Responsibility and Citizenship
Familiarity with Community Organizations and Cultural Centers in NYC

High-Quality Liberal Arts Instruction from College Partner

Critical Reading of College-Level Texts
Text-Based Argumentative Writing
Composition/Presentation Literacies
Discussion Based Classrooms
Academic Research Standards
Digital Literacies
Embedded Developmental Literacy
Time Management
Self-Advocacy
Living with Others
Academic Engagement

Short-Term Outcomes:

College Access and Application Knowledge

Institutional Literacy

→ Improved College Knowledge and Credentials

Intellectual connection to the liberal arts

Social connections to liberal arts institutions

→ Expanded Social and Personal Identity as a College-Going Student

Academic Competencies

Social-Emotional Competencies

→ Improved Post-Secondary Skills and Practices

Long-Term Outcomes:

Improved College Access

Interest in and Engagement with the Liberal Arts

Improved College Success
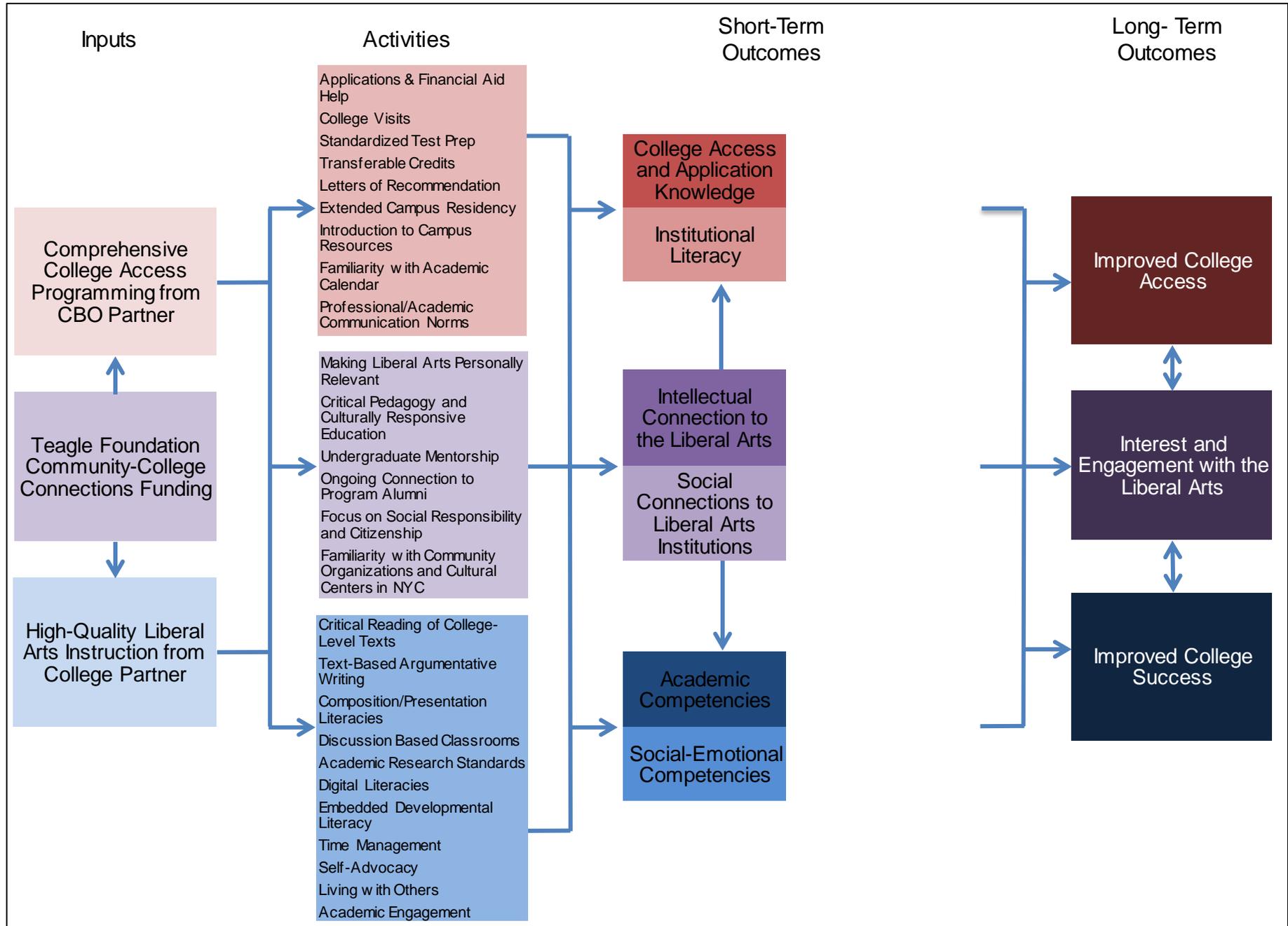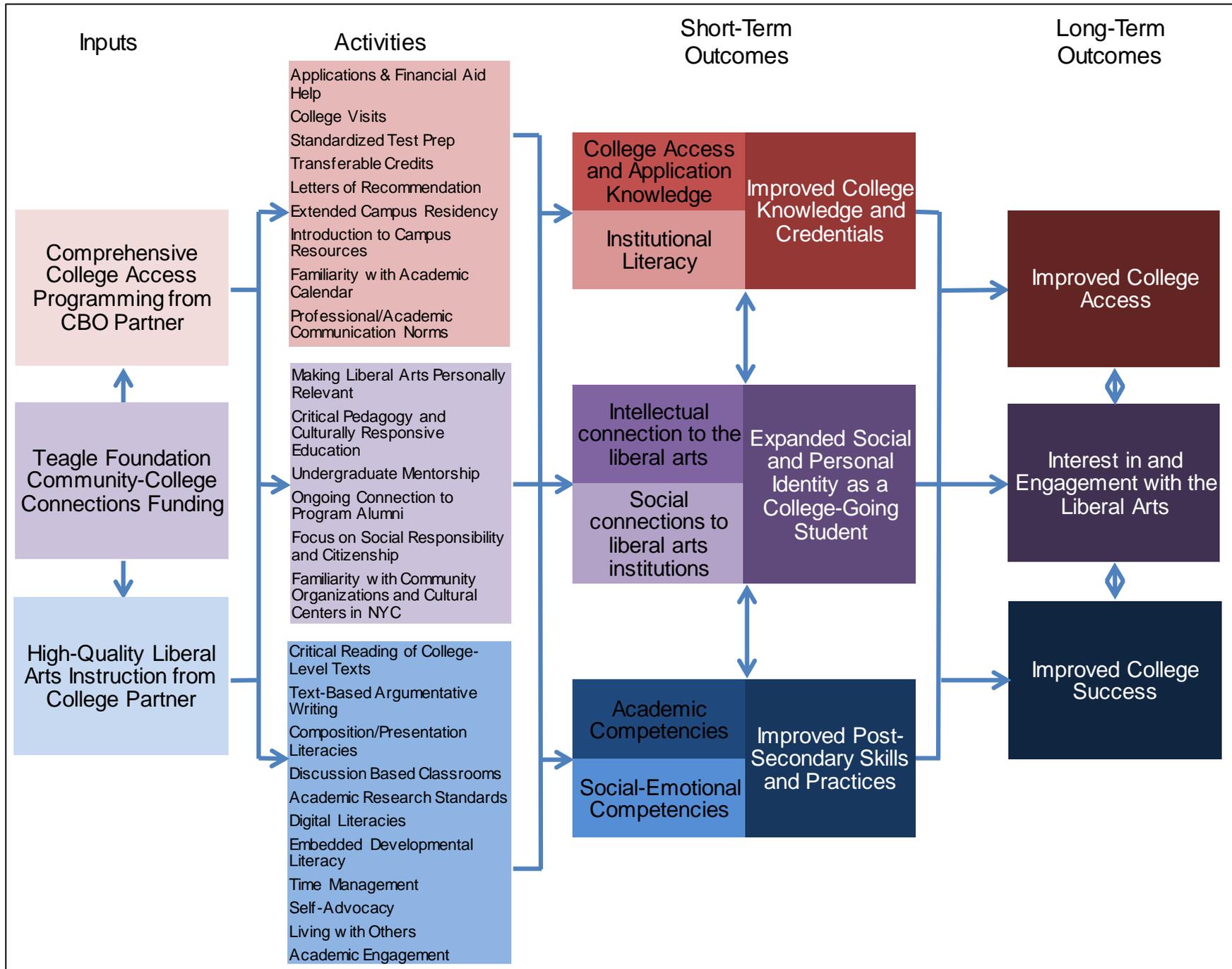
APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTION OF CBOS, COLLEGES, AND HIGH SCHOOLS IN CCC PARTNERSHIPS

CBO	CAMBA Inc.	Double Discovery Center (DDC)	Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO)	BronxWorks	Children's Aid Society (CAS)
Range of services outside of CCC, and number served	CAMBA offers integrated services and programs in: economic development, education & youth development, family support services, HIV/AIDS services, housing services & development, and legal services. CAMBA serves 35,000 individuals and families (8,000 youth).	DDC's mission is to improve local schools by exposing students to the rigor of Columbia University, and to engage Columbia students with the neighborhood. Other Programs: Upward Bound and Talent Search (tutorial assistance programs), Application Development Initiative (computer programming & application development), and College Persistence Initiative (contact and support through freshman year of college). DDC serves 1,000 students annually.	SEO Scholars: Free 8-year academic program that gets low-income public high school students to and through college, serving 695 students (CCC is part of this initiative). SEO Career: Summer internship and training program targeting talented, underrepresented college students of color. SEO Alternative Investments: Broadens exposure to the alternative investments industry for professionals and college students traditionally underrepresented in the sector.	Bronx-based settlement house that helps individuals and families improve their economic and social wellbeing. Services include children, youth, family, and senior citizens' programs; immigrant assistance; employment help; HIV/AIDS programs; homeless services; and homelessness prevention. BronxWorks serves 40,000 individuals annually.	Adoption and foster care, after-school & weekend programs, arts programs, camps, adolescent pregnancy prevention program, early childhood, family support, health & nutrition, health services, juvenile justice, legal advocacy, special initiatives, sports and recreation, and youth development.
Ages served	Youth - adult	Students grades 7-12; young adults under the age of 27	High school students - professionals	Toddlers - seniors	Prenatal - parents
Location	Brooklyn	Manhattan	NYC and San Francisco	South Bronx	40 locations across NYC and surrounding areas
High School	**School for Democracy and Leadership** Serves grades 6-12; total enrollment: 326 (approx. 75 students / grade in HS); academically unscreened; located in Central Brooklyn.	Program works with students from multiple high schools in Northern Manhattan.	Multiple.	Multiple.	**Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School (FLH)** Serves grades 9-12; total enrollment 463 (approx. 115 students / grade); academically unscreened; located in South Bronx.
College	**Brooklyn College**	**Columbia University**	**Skidmore College**	**Fordham University**	**New York University**
Enroll-ment	17,390 students (14,115 undergraduate and 3,275 graduate)	29,870 students (8,559 undergraduate and 21,311 graduate)	2,400 undergraduate	15,231 students (8,633 undergraduate and 6,598 graduate)	58,547 (26,287 undergraduate, 24,289 graduate, and 7,971 noncredit)
Location	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Saratoga Springs, NY	Manhattan and Bronx	Main campus in Manhattan
Barron's Selectivity[1]	Competitive (4)	Most Competitive (1)	Highly Competitive (2)	Very Competitive (3)	Most Competitive (4)

Notes: The data in this table was compiled from organizational websites, grantee self-reports, or Research Alliance fieldwork. [1] The numbers in parentheses rank these categories from least competitive (4) to most (1).

APPENDIX C: PROGRAMMATIC FOCUS AREAS

This overview of partnership focus areas provides an example of how one might look at the full suite of services offered by a multi-partner initiative. A score of "2" indicates the service is a strong area of focus for the partnership, 1 indicates the service is present but not an area of focus, and 0 indicates that the service is not present.

		Partnership				
		A	B	C	D	E
College Access — College Access & App Knowledge	Applications and Financial Aid Help	2	2	2	2	2
	College Visits	2	2	2	2	2
	Standardized Test Preparation	1	2	1	2	0
	Letters of Recommendation	0	2	0	0	0
Institutional Literacy	Extended Campus Residency	2	2	2	1	0
	Transferable College Credits	0	2	0	0	2
	Introduction to Campus Resources	1	2	1	0	2
	Familiarity with Academic Deadlines	0	2	0	0	2
	Academic Communication Norms	2	2	2	2	2
Expanded Personal and Social Identity — Intellectual Link to Liberal Arts	Focus on Personal Relevance of the Liberal Arts	2	2	2	2	1
	Critical Pedagogies	0	0	2	2	2
	Culturally Responsive Instruction	0	0	2	2	2
Social Links to Liberal Arts Institutions	Undergraduate Mentorship	2	1	2	0	1
	Ongoing Connection to Program Alumni	1	1	1	0	1
	Focus on Social Responsibility and Citizenship	2	0	2	2	0
	Familiarity with Community Orgs in NYC	0	0	2	1	0
Postsecondary Skills — Academic Competencies	Critical Reading of College-Level Texts	2	2	2	2	2
	Text-Based Argumentative Writing	2	2	0	2	2
	Composition/Presentation Literacies	2	1	2	2	2
	Norms of Discussion Based Classrooms	2	2	2	2	1
	Academic Research Standards	0	0	2	0	0
	Digital Literacies	1	0	2	2	2
	Embedded Developmental Literacy	2	1	1	1	2
Social-Emotional Competencies	Time Management	2	2	2	2	2
	Self-Advocacy	1	2	1	1	2
	Living with Others	2	2	2	0	0
	Academic Engagement	2	2	2	2	2

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APPENDIX D: SAMPLE PARTNERSHIP DASHBOARD

PROGRAM NAME		
COLLEGE	CBO	HS(S) OR NEIGHBORHOOD(S) SERVED

NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED & SELECTION CRITERIA

NUMBER OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING ANNUALLY	
IN CCC CBO SUPPORTS	IN CCC COLLEGE-BASED COMPONENT
SELECTION CRITERIA	
FOR PARTICIPATION IN CBO PROGRAMMING	FOR PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE PROGRAMMING

PROGRAM DURATION

Indicate whether services were provided during each of these periods:

HS 10G	summer	HS 11G	summer	HS 12G	summer	COLLEGE YR1	summer	COLLEGE YR2

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

CORE CCC ELEMENTS

Indicate whether the partnership offers the following core elements of the CCC model:

Intensive college guidance		Extended residential component	
Rigorous, college-level coursework		Undergraduate mentorship	

PROGRAM NAME		
COLLEGE	**CBO**	**HS(S) OR NEIGHBORHOOD(S) SERVED**

PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

In the blank boxes, indicate the level of a program's engagement with each focus area:

2 – Strong area of focus for the program

1 – Present but not an area of focus

0 – Not present

College Access & Credentials: Access/Application	
Applications/Admissions/Financial Aid Support	
College Visits	
Standardized Test Preparation	
Transferable College Credits	
Letters of Recommendation from College Faculty and Staff	
College Access & Credentials: Institutional Literacy	
Extended College Campus Residency	
Introduction to Writing Center, Library, and Other Campus Resources	
Familiarity with Academic Calendar & Deadlines	
Professional/Academic Communication Norms	

Post-Secondary Skills & Practices: Academic Instruction	
Critical Reading of Rigorous, College-Level Texts	
Text-Based Argumentative Writing	
Other Composition/Presentation Literacies	
Norms and Practices of Discussion-Based Classrooms	
Academic Research Standards	
Digital Literacies	
Embedded Developmental Literacy – Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading Comprehension	
Post-Secondary Skills & Practices: Non-Cognitive/Socio-Emotional	
Time Management	
Self-Advocacy	
Living with Others	
Engagement	

Expanded Social & Personal Identity	
Focus on Personal Relevance of the Liberal Arts	
Critical Pedagogies & Culturally Sensitive Instruction	
Undergraduate Mentorship	
Ongoing Connection to Program Alumni	
Sense of Social Responsibility and Citizenship	
Familiarity with Community and Cultural Resources in NYC	

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Endnotes

[1] Coleman, S., Turner, T.T., Hellman, T. (2014). *Evaluation Summary of the Teagle Foundation's College-Community Connections Initiative.* Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

[2] The partnership between Drew University and Harlem Educational Activities Fund was not in operation at the time of our data collection and analysis.

[3] For a discussion about some of the ethical implications of a randomized study design, please see http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/201 4/03/05/the-economics-of-randomized-experiments/.

[4] For more on continuous improvement strategies, see Bryk, A.S., Gomez, L.M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P.G. (2015). *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. Also see Langley, G.J., Moen, R., Nolan, K.M., Nolan, T.W., Norman, C.L., & Provost, L.P. (2009). *The Improvement Guide: A Practical Approach to Enhancing Organizational Performance.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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rigorous studies on topics that

matter to the city's public schools.

We strive to advance equity and

excellence in education by

providing nonpartisan evidence

about policies and practices that

promote students' development

and academic success.