



We Want to Do This: What Questions Should We Think About?

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Stipulating Goals and Outcomes

- » What are two or three overarching and clear goals that could be codified from data collection and analysis?
- » How will these goals be measured? What indicators will you use to assess progress toward reaching them? Will there be a reporting system?

Structure/Leadership

- » What leadership structure would be the most effective for your initiative? Multi-tiered? Collaborative? Hierarchical?
- » If a committee structure were used, what would be the responsibilities of each?
- » Who has decision-making authority?
- » Will there be an intermediary (or small group of organizations/individuals) serving as the “backbone” for the project? What criteria will you use to decide who will serve in this capacity?
- » Who are the key partners in the initiative and what is their role and responsibility, e.g., philanthropy, government, arts/nonprofit organizations, etc.?

Pre-Planning

- » Will you conduct an environmental scan to determine whether this a good time to launch an arts education initiative in your community? Are there economic, political, and cultural factors that are important to consider? How will those affect the planning and implementation of your initiative?
- » What key players need to be involved in planning the initiative? How would they be involved and what would be their roles and responsibilities?
- » What information do you need to collect and how will it be organized?

Data Collection/Analysis for Planning and Assessment

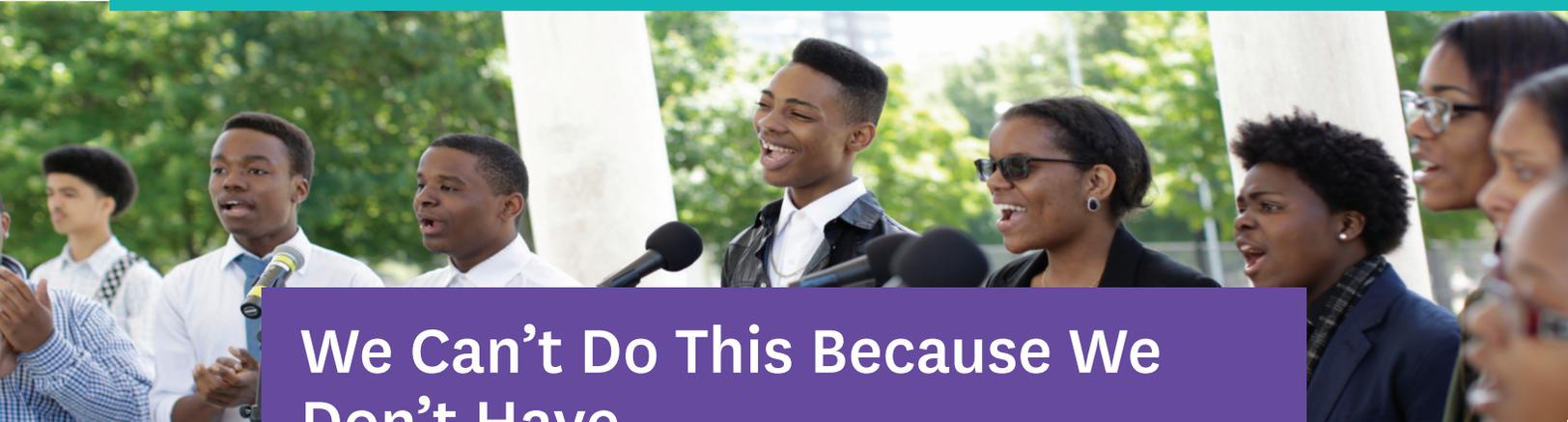
- » What is the current state of school-based arts education in your community? Are there data to show this? If not, will you collect it and how?
- » Where are there gaps and opportunities for arts education expansion in your community? What does the research show?

Planning

- » Which strategies will be the most effective in meeting the gaps and capitalizing on the opportunities that you’ve identified and why?
- » What will your final plan include? How will it address all of the factors that you’ve identified as important?
- » How will the larger community (e.g., teachers, nonprofits, business/civic leaders, etc.) be involved in the planning process? What would be the roles of each constituency?
- » How will the planning process be funded? Will donors be involved in the planning?

Implementation

- » Who will lead the effort as it’s rolled out? Who has decision-making authority during this phase?
- » How will stakeholders be kept informed and engaged in the process?
- » How will educators, partners, teachers, students, and parents be involved?
- » How will the effort be evaluated as it moves forward?
- » What’s the exit strategy, if appropriate?



We Can't Do This Because We Don't Have...

Undertaking a citywide, cross-sector initiative like BPS-AE isn't for the faint hearted. It's hard work, and there are often daunting barriers to overcome. The biggest are:

The money. These kinds of initiatives can be costly, so it's important to develop a resource development plan early on, preferably one that targets a mix of private and public investors. BPS-AE emerged from a group of local private foundations' collaborative funding for arts education so there was an existing funding base. Also look at the existing public investment in arts education, which, when quantified, can be substantial. How can those funds be best used and how can relatively small amounts of private funds leverage those public resources?

But what if organizations don't have a group of angel funders? Laura Perille, CEO of EdVestors, suggests that groups start by developing the strongest, most persuasive case statement they possibly can—especially one that includes data showing gaps and opportunities—and taking this to a funder (or set of funders) able to make a large kickoff investment. Having this kind of anchor funder is extremely helpful in getting other investors' attention. BPS-AE, for example, received early and modest support from Boston's largest private foundation (Barr Foundation) that was “willing to play with the messiness of the system involved.” That led to a domino effect with other financial supporters, Perille says.

The leadership. High-level leadership that's committed to making sure that these kinds of initiatives are successful is critical. While BPS-AE was fortunate to have a superintendent who publicly declared arts education a top priority, this wasn't always the case. When BPS-AE began, Boston was in the midst of an economic recession that was forcing school leaders' attention on budget cutting, rather than on championing specific disciplines or programs. Instead of sitting back and waiting for things to change, EdVestors and its partners decided to

tap other leadership pools for their help in moving the initiative forward: the teachers, nonprofits, students, donors, and civic leaders who were all eager to see arts education better integrated into schools. A group of powerful influential people—the Arts Advisory Board—was also created, which helped to position the initiative as a powerful and important voice in education debates, so that by the time a new mayor and new superintendent came on board, all cylinders were ready to fire.

The organizer(s). EdVestors, as well as the leaders of similar initiatives in other cities, agree that it is extremely important that these kinds of complex, multi-layered initiatives have a strong “backbone” organization or some other kind of entity that can serve as the lead organizer, manager, and decision maker for all activities. And it doesn't have to be one organization or even an organization at all, says EdVestors Senior Vice President Marinell Rousmaniere, “It can be a couple of individual leaders or a small group of organizations that serve this function.”

What makes an effective lead partner(s)? According to Perille:

- » A deep understanding of the policy, administrative, management, and financial context in which they operate.
- » The ability to think and take action that is highly strategic.
- » Strong credibility across sectors.
- » The capacity to serve as a neutral and objective broker with no pre-conceived agendas.
- » Commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for students.
- » Relentless focus on using data-based goals and indicators to assess progress and results.