

Bottom Up and Top Down Orientation: Overview

	Bottom-Up Orientation	Top-Down Orientation
Key Idea	Successful community change begins with action and personal commitment throughout the community. Over time, the actions link and create a "tipping point" as individuals and groups become deeply invested in the vision.	Successful community change requires that leaders identify and drive the desired change. Then the desired goals and practices cascade through the community with carefully planned and executed processes.
Launch Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promote participation of people from throughout the community in decision making and problem solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focuses on engaging key leaders to set the vision and strategy, then "sell" it to the community.
Approach to Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The change effort grows out of the sum of many different actions across the community that are spawned by a shared vision or call to action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establish, implement, and monitor joint precise strategies and work plans.
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ People on "the front lines" in the community really know the community and should shape and "own" the change process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Those at the top do the more abstract and strategic thinking (why); those at the bottom focus on operational matters (how).
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Individuals and groups who become passionate to lead the efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Formal leadership of key stakeholders and influencers in the community.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All who are inspired to take action within their own spheres of influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Formal systems and sectors that set or influence policies and programs.
Collaboration Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Network model that emphasizes mutual support and celebration of innovations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Formal collaboration structures involving representatives of stakeholder groups.
Data Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stories and examples that tap people's emotions and passions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Precise data to guide priorities and evaluate progress.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Emphasize persuasion to facilitate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Set clear lines of authority and accountability.
How Change Spreads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stimulate lots of experiments, then spread the successful ones around. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify and replicate effective programs.

Strengths and Limitations of Top-Down, Bottom-Up, and Middle-Out Orientations

	Strengths	Limitations
Top Down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clear goals for buy-in ▶ Accountability ▶ Change system, policy ▶ Can institutionalize ▶ Generate funding ▶ ▶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Less broad buy-in ▶ Can be bureaucratic ▶ May not change norms ▶ "Another program" ▶ Major funding needed ▶ ▶
Middle Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ People get things done ▶ See tangible progress ▶ Systems enhance communication ▶ Can facilitate broad involvement ▶ ▶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reduce to programs ▶ Create bureaucracy ▶ Can become routine ▶ Can reduce vision or stifle innovation ▶ ▶
Bottom Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Taps passion, energy ▶ Includes everyone ▶ Broad ownership ▶ Stimulates innovation ▶ Sustain past funding ▶ ▶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Can be unfocused ▶ Can fizzle after novelty ▶ Slow, less predictable ▶ Systems may block ▶ Hard to fund ▶ ▶

Examples of Top-Down, Bottom-Up, and Middle-Out Orientations for Accomplishing Key Strategies for Community Change

Search's Five Action Strategies*	With a Bottom-Up Orientation	With a Middle-Out Orientation	With a Top-Down Orientation	Four Ready by 21 Strategies
<p>MOBILIZE YOUNG PEOPLE</p> <p>Mobilize young people to use their power as asset builders and community change agents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Motivate youth to support each other ▶ Honor youth who volunteer in the community ▶ Encourage youth to speak up about what matters to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide youth leadership opportunities ▶ Train youth in leadership and advocacy skills ▶ Coordinate youth volunteer and job opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Include youth voice in advocacy efforts around critical issues ▶ Advocate for policy roles for youth throughout the community ▶ Form state or city-wide youth councils 	<p>ENGAGE YOUTH</p>
<p>ENGAGE ADULTS</p> <p>Engage adults from all walks of life to develop sustained, strength-building relationships with children and adolescents, both within families and in neighborhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Send messages to encourage all adults to notice and greet kids ▶ Encourage stronger parent-child relationships ▶ Provide peer support groups for parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Organize community family night without competing activities ▶ Encourage adults to volunteer with youth (sports, arts, academic, religious) ▶ Conduct background checks to minimize risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mobilize adults to support youth-focused policies ▶ Pass city-wide resolutions to support Ready by 21 ▶ Encourage companies to give employees paid time off to volunteer 	<p>ENGAGE FAMILIES AND INCREASE DEMANDS</p>
<p>ACTIVATE SECTORS</p> <p>Activate all sectors of the community to collaborate and to contribute fully to young people's healthy development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focus on increasing the quantity, quality of relationships in organizations ▶ Network champions in each sector for mutual learning ▶ Encourage everyone in each organization to play roles in youth development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop and monitor annual work plans to support a vision of Ready by 21 ▶ Facilitate collaboration between sectors ▶ Coordinate youth activities and information across sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Engage the key leader in each sector to motivate the whole sector to get involved ▶ Provide funding to support sector engagement ▶ Integrate the Ready by 21 goals into strategic plans 	<p>IMPROVE QUALITY, REACH, AND COORDINATION OF PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND SYSTEMS</p>
<p>INVIGORATE PROGRAMS</p> <p>Invigorate, expand, and enhance programs to become more asset rich and to be available to and accessed by all children and youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Train staff and volunteers to work with youth ▶ Emphasize strengthening adult-student relationships in programs ▶ Encourage program leaders to share their innovations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide training to front-line staff ▶ Introduce new curricula that align with overall strategies ▶ Establish a youth leadership group to design and monitor programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establish program benchmarks ▶ Collect data on current programs to identify strengths and gaps ▶ Set incentives to reduce burnout among teachers and youth workers 	
<p>INFLUENCE CIVIC DECISIONS</p> <p>Influence decision makers and opinion leaders to leverage financial, media, and policy resources in support of this positive transformation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Train youth and adults in media and policy advocacy ▶ Urge youth and adults to write letters to the editor ▶ Organize walks, marches, and other events to raise awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Host candidate forums on youth and family issues ▶ Provide workshops and training on civic involvement for youth and adults ▶ Prepare briefs for the media, public policy, and funders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Release "report card" on how policy issues affect kids ▶ Urge foundations to direct funding to support goals ▶ Organize a youth philanthropy board to make decisions on funding 	<p>ALIGN POLICIES</p> <p>PRIORITIZE RESOURCE USE</p>

* Benson, P. L. (2006). *All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

