

D.) ENSURE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION OR TRAINING OPTIONS FOR ALL

Every American child should have a postsecondary option. Often a lack of information and/or encouragement are all that stand in our children's way as they look toward their options beyond high school. Working with school boards, educators, and partners in higher education to make accurate and empowering information more broadly accessible, especially to potential first-generation-college students is an important first step. Students should know what is expected of them in order to be competitive at the next level, they should have the support they need to perform, and they should be provided the proper context as to how a post-secondary education will likely affect their career and economic options. Encouraging, facilitating, and monitoring FAFSA completion long before the deadline, and exercises to locate and fill out post-secondary applications and scholarship forms should be incorporated in learning programs throughout high school years.

E.) IMPROVE ACCESS TO JOBS AND VALUABLE WORK EXPERIENCE

A mere glimpse into a workplace or higher education setting can help youth begin envisioning themselves in fulfilling careers, and building plans to make those visions a reality. When community leaders underscore for employers the long-term workforce and economic benefits of empowering the next generation of workers, everyone wins. Investments in infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, job training and raising the minimum wage will pay dividends to the economy as a whole and improve employment prospects for all young people. Summer jobs, internships, and direct line-of-sight into local professional workplaces can provide motivation, structure, and encouragement for long-term career planning—as well as “soft skills” like punctuality, teamwork and interpersonal communication, all of which enhance job prospects.

A few specific ideas for action are: (1) Collect commitments from local businesses for summer job opportunities to cover a target percentage of youth between the ages of 16-24. (2) Reach out to public and private sector employers to urge them to develop job-shadowing and internship programs for low income youth. (3) Encourage local employers to host regular field-trips from classes and community programs from local low income areas to tour their work space and interact with staff. These can be important for children as early as elementary school.

F.) PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE AND PROVIDE SECOND CHANCES

No one is more acutely aware than local executives of how dangerous our streets can be, particularly for boys and young men of color. Violence too often leads to communities gripped by fear and heartbreak, lost lives, and incarceration. These problems reverberate through our neighborhoods and families in countless harmful ways.

Mayors, tribal leaders and county executives have unique access to the various players who must play a part in reaching young people and implementing strategies to avert tragedy. Specifically, they can embrace models for community engagement that promote constitutional and community oriented policing as core operational philosophies and provide training on racial bias and disparities to prosecutors, defense counsel, judges, probation officers and others involved as decision makers in the criminal justice system. And they can increase the availability of diversion programs to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system; increase the use of alternatives to incarceration, especially for status and misdemeanor offenses; and enhance educational and training programming for juveniles in secure placement.

Criminal histories keep many young people from getting jobs, securing housing, attaining higher education, or qualifying for loans or credit – even when they are otherwise qualified and have paid their debt to society. Local government executives can do a great deal to facilitate more successful reentries by addressing policies that saddle juveniles and young adults with excessive fines and permanent criminal records. A more effective approach is often to strengthen a community's focus on the potential and future of juveniles who have gotten into early trouble, while actively working to implement strategies that have proven to lower the likelihood of re-offense. This could include, for example, working with public housing authorities to reduce barriers for formerly-incarcerated individuals to obtain stable housing. Several communities are also exploring initiatives to modify requirements for the disclosure of juvenile or criminal records on job applications.

BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Plans for MBK Communities should take a “cradle-to-college-and-career” approach, and address as many of the 6 goals laid out in the MBK Task Force’s report as possible.

A.) ENSURE ALL CHILDREN ENTER KINDERGARTEN PREPARED TO SUCCEED

By the age of 3, children from low-income households have heard roughly 30 million fewer words than their higher-income peers. Studies show that achievement gaps, behavioral problems, health disparities, and much more can all be dramatically affected by improving children’s access to high quality early education. The unparalleled brain development and socialization that takes place in the first few years of life mean that any investment a city makes in early education is an investment in its own long-term economic success.

B.) GET ALL CHILDREN READING AT GRADE LEVEL BY 3rd GRADE

All children should be reading at grade level by age 8—the age at which reading to learn, and not just learning to read, becomes essential. Reading well at an early age is essential to later success in education, employment and life. When provided frequent, quality reading experiences in the home, and high-quality instruction in school, nearly every child can learn to read by the third grade.

A child’s literacy skills prior to kindergarten, as well as his or her reading skills at the conclusion of kindergarten, are highly predictive of future reading proficiency. During these critical years, reading with an adult is an especially important way to familiarize children with books and promote early awareness of written language and interest in reading.

Both school and community engagement are needed to support parents and other adult caregivers in strengthening home literacy and to provide students with broader opportunities to read with adults. Preschools and elementary schools can support all families by training parents and caregivers to use effective tutoring and joint book-reading strategies, such as listening to children read.

C.) GRADUATE ALL STUDENTS FROM H.S. – PREPARED FOR COLLEGE & CAREER

Researchers are making progress in identifying the underpinnings of school success, including: (1) effective leaders who work with staff to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success; (2) collaborative teachers who are committed to the school, participate in professional trainings, and work to improve the school; (3) involved families who have strong relationships with school staff and support learning; (4) supportive environments where the school is safe and orderly and teachers have high expectations and are engaged with their students; and (5) ambitious instruction where classes are academically demanding and engage students.

Research from the University of Chicago has found that schools that were strong on these essentials were 10 times more likely to improve student learning gains in math and reading than schools that were weaker in these essentials. Research has also demonstrated the importance of expanded learning time in schools to open new opportunities for students to grow, providing more time for student engagement and deeper attention to academics; greater enrichment classes and activities that complement school curricula; and more time for teacher collaboration and development. Summer learning loss is a significant contributor to lowered achievement, and certain high-quality out-of-school time and summer learning programs have been found to sustain or accelerate learning and reduce incidences of violence.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR AN MBK COMMUNITY

✓ **STEP #1: ACCEPT THE PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE**

Notify the White House that you will participate (localgovernment@who.eop.gov), provide a designated point of contact on your staff, confirm your pledge to build and execute a plan to accomplish as many of the goals listed below as possible, and announce your acceptance of the challenge with a press release or media statement.

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| A. Ensure all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally ready | D. Ensure all youth complete post-secondary education or training |
| B. Ensure all children read at grade level by 3rd grade | E. Ensure all youth out of school are employed |
| C. Ensure all youth graduate from high school | F. Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and receive second chances |

✓ **STEP #2: CONVENE A "LOCAL ACTION SUMMIT" TO BUILD AN MBK COMMUNITY**

This effort will require a coalition of partners with an ownership stake in the strategy, and a sense of empowerment to help lead the effort. **Within 45 days** of accepting the President's Challenge, host a Local Action Summit with key stakeholders to assess needs and assets, determine priorities, and set concrete goals.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

- University presidents
- Job training programs
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local business owners
- Faith groups & leaders
- PTA & parent groups
- Student groups
- Youth leadership orgs
- Non-profit orgs
- Local philanthropies
- Teachers, educators
- Banks/financial orgs

GOV'T STAKEHOLDERS

- School systems
- Law enforcement
- Child & Family Services
- Employment Services
- Public Health
- Public Housing
- Parks and Recreation
- State & Federal partners

✓ **STEP #3: CONDUCT A POLICY REVIEW & FORM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

Following your Local Action Summit, direct a working group of pertinent government stakeholders to scour existing local policies, programs, and practices in search of ways to introduce or expand on existing efforts to better serve the needs of the community's youth. The working group should assess the impact of both existing and proposed programs. **Within 120 days** of accepting the President's Challenge, this body should produce a report with recommendations for action on your selected areas of focus (from Step 1), standards for tracking and sharing data across public agencies and community partners, and structural recommendations for institutionalizing the effort until goals are reached.

SUGGESTED DATA FIELDS FOR COMMUNITY TRACKING (not exhaustive):

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| - Enrollment in quality pre-K | - School attendance | - Median earnings |
| - Children entering kindergarten ready to learn | - High school graduation rate | - Summer employment |
| - Adolescent births | - AP/IB/Dual Enrollment | - Arrest rate |
| - Low birth weight | - Advanced degree enrollment/completion | - Exposure to violence |
| - Child maltreatment | - STEM BA enrollment/completion | - Imprisonment/detention rate |
| - Youth developmental screening | - Youth in school or working | - Homicide rate |
| - Reading and math achievement | - Labor force participation rate | - Adolescent mortality |
| | | - Youth with effective mentors |

✓ **STEP #4: LAUNCH A PLAN OF ACTION, NEXT STEPS & A TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW**

Within 180 days of accepting the President's Challenge, convene key partners to publicly launch a plan of action for accomplishing selected goals based off the results of your policy review. It should include a protocol for tracking data, benchmarks and timelines for review to ensure the transparent assessment of progress towards goals, and the open examination and retooling of ineffective strategies. Include a blueprint for resourcing your efforts which outlines plans to use or redirect existing resources, new public or private sector commitments, and specific areas where additional commitments, investment, or partnership could help your community reach its MBK goals and help potential new partners target their involvement.