



How Funder Collaborations Flourish: Lessons from the Common Core Standards

A GUIDE FOR EDUCATION FUNDERS

On an issue as complicated as implementation of the Common Core State Standards, how can funders decide whether to collaborate—and how to do so successfully?

Education First developed this **guide to help funders create more effective collaborations**, focusing on how they can work together to advance implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or other significant, system-wide changes to education systems.

Funders can use the guide to reflect on their priorities, learn how to apply a **decision-making matrix** to shape collaborations with others and review brief case studies with lessons from our work supporting funder collaboratives.

Importantly, our ideas for how funder collaborations can support the standards moving forward can apply in any state committed to college- and career-ready expectations, including those states that have rebranded or added to the CCSS.

We appreciate the encouragement and support the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation provided to develop this guide.

In this guide, Education First draws on its experience managing and facilitating multi-year funder collaboratives.

Over the past five years, Education First contributed to several **collaborations among national and local funders to support the success of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)**.

The collaborations featured as case studies in this guide include a learning network, an initiative to align funder investments, a pooled fund and a new funder-created nonprofit organization.

About Education First:

Education First is a national, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with unique and deep expertise in education improvement. Our mission is to deliver exceptional ideas, experience-based solutions and results so all students—and particularly low-income students and students of color—are prepared for success in college, career and life. We work closely with policymakers, practitioners, funders and advocates to design and accelerate policies and plans that support strong systems, outstanding educators, engaged students and effective investments.

This guide covers:

- 1 The **context** for funder collaborations that support the CCSS, including past successes and pressing needs in the field
- 2 **Education First's decision-making matrix**, a tool for funders to assess how they can work together most effectively
- 3 **Case studies** of four recent funder collaborations and Education First's lessons learned
- 4 **Next steps and recommendations** for funder collaborations that can further help educators succeed with the CCSS

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The Common Core State Standards aim to help prepare all students for college and careers.

Finalized in 2009, the standards cover English language arts/literacy and mathematics in grades K-12.

As of 2016, 42 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity have voluntarily adopted and are using these standards.¹

What do the standards aim to achieve?

Prepare all students for credit-bearing introductory courses in two- or four-year colleges, and success in the workforce



Enable “deeper learning” through problem-solving, critical thinking, and extensive reading and writing



Create opportunities for collaboration and resource-sharing among educators across the country

Common Core standards have by design created a cascading series of changes in K-12 education that require attention.

Educators, policymakers and funders have identified some of the areas below as the **most critical to address for the long-term success of the standards:**

Professional development and ongoing support for educators and principals as they implement the CCSS in their schools

High-quality instructional materials aligned to the CCSS available to all educators

New statewide accountability systems and high-quality assessments to measure student progress against the CCSS

Community engagement with students, families and the public to deepen their understanding of the CCSS

Advocacy and communications to maintain policymaker commitment to CCSS implementation

Several funders formed collaborations to support states and districts through the transition to the Common Core.

These funder collaboratives have made important progress thus far:

Created new **classroom-ready instructional tools** for educators

Supported **alignment between state K-12 and higher education** systems

Diversified **advocacy coalitions** nationally and in multiple states

Informed the public about the CCSS and their implications for students

Strengthened **opportunities for teacher leaders** to shape CCSS implementation

Helped state policymakers manage the **transition to high-quality assessments**

As implementation continues, **how can funders build on these early successes for sustained change?**

And looking forward to continuing (and significant) needs in the field, **which kinds of funder collaboration will yield the desired results?**

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Education First's decision-making matrix helps funders identify the most effective ways to leverage collaboration.

The **decision-making matrix** raises three important considerations for funders to collectively support the ongoing implementation of the CCSS.

Funder collaborations need a clear purpose, but getting there can be a challenge due to competing demands and opinions.

Done well, collaboration allows funders to combine their reach, expertise, resources and connections in the field to amplify their impact.

Three considerations in the decision-making matrix:



There are both benefits and risks to any collaboration, which funders must weigh before initiating partnerships.



Opportunity to gain expertise in diverse issue areas beyond own specific grantmaking priorities.

Expanded impact to larger constituencies and/or across a wider area (state, region or the country).

Ability to combine investments to scale solutions for greater social returns.



Significant commitment in time and resources to establish and manage governance structure and decision-making process.

Continuous efforts to align collaboration activities to each funder's interests and grantmaking approach.

Reduced authority to make unilateral grant decisions in exchange for group deliberation and compromise.

Eight ingredients can help funder collaborations be successful.

- 1 **Definition of success, desired outcomes** and **expectations** for funder participation.
- 2 **Urgency** to achieve the collaborative's goals.
- 3 **Strong case for why collaboration is better than independent actions**, including why each funder is interested and committed to collaboration.
- 4 **Trust, mutual respect** and **sensitivity to each funder's internal culture**.
- 5 **Governance structure** that matches funder needs, facilitates nimble decision-making and enables funders to resolve challenges.
- 6 Willingness to **consider risky ideas, learn from the collaborative's activities** and **revisit priorities** as the education landscape evolves.
- 7 **Structure and process for managing the collaborative's activities**, such as developing overall strategy and identifying grantees (which can be led by a neutral third-party organization).
- 8 Shared agreement on an **exit plan** should any funder decide to leave the collaborative.

Researchers and practitioners commonly organize funder collaborations into four types.

Learning network

Funders build knowledge of particular issues to enhance their grantmaking

Pooled fund

Funders amass resources for collective grantmaking

Co-investment or investment alignment

Funders direct independent funding to jointly-identified grantees based on a shared strategy

Co-creation of a new organization

Funders establish a new entity to address a specific need in the field

While these types point funders toward possible options for their collaborations, they do not necessarily help **match funder goals and priorities to the type of collaboration needed.**

Education First's decision-making matrix elevates three considerations to support funders working together.

1

Define the *problem* to work on together

2

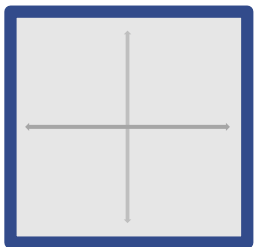
Decide on a *scope of action* to identify the universe of solutions

3

Determine a *strategy and timeline* for meeting collective goals



1 ■
2 ■
3 ■



First, ask: What problem or challenge are funders interested in tackling through the collaborative?

By defining the problem, funders clarify their purpose for working together, which should guide the collaborative's scope of action and strategy. For example:

A specific problem in the field: Funders work to impact how states, districts and schools adopt and implement the CCSS via the collaborative's direct actions.

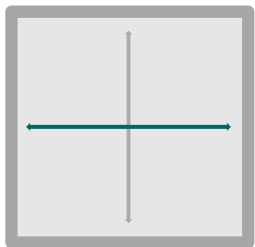
- ▶ *Example: Create better and readily accessible instructional materials aligned to the CCSS to ensure consistent high-quality teaching and ultimately improved student learning.*

A challenge that funders are facing: Funders seek to enhance their own potential to support the CCSS by gaining more knowledge of the field, cultivating stronger relationships with peer funders and developing new partnerships with organizations outside the collaboration, among others.

- ▶ *Example: Strengthen the collective commitment of funders to the success of CCSS and improve their ability to make informed grantmaking decisions in the future to help support educators.*

These are not mutually exclusive options: Funders that aim to influence a particular element of CCSS implementation may also gain knowledge through collaboration to inform their own grantmaking.

1 ■
2 ■
3 ■



Next, ask: Based on the problem funders want to address, should the collaborative's scope of action be broad or narrow?

A ***broad scope of action*** is preferred when funders have diverse opinions about what the problem is and/or prefer to pursue different solutions to investigate options.

- *Example: Build the capacity and reach of key, well-positioned organizations to raise public awareness about the CCSS.*

A ***narrow scope of action*** applies when there is strong alignment among funders about what the problem is and how best to address it through particular solutions.

- *Example: Ensure states use high-quality assessments to measure student progress against the CCSS.*

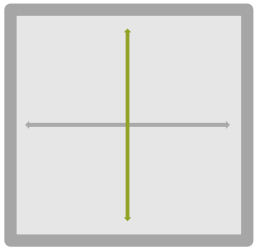
**BROAD
SCOPE OF
ACTION**

Funders focus on the
field at large to identify
trends and opportunities
for action

Funders advance **shared
solutions** to a **specific
problem** to achieve
well-defined objectives

**NARROW
SCOPE OF
ACTION**

1 ■
2 ■
3 ■



Finally, ask: To advance the solutions funders support, will the collaborative need an adaptable or a targeted strategy and timeline?

An ***adaptable strategy and timeline*** facilitates quick, nimble action by funders in response to evolving, unpredictable conditions.

- *Example: Help advocates respond to state-specific and emerging policy obstacles (and threats) to CCSS implementation.*

A ***targeted strategy and timeline*** involves funder actions to resolve well-known, clear and predictable challenges.

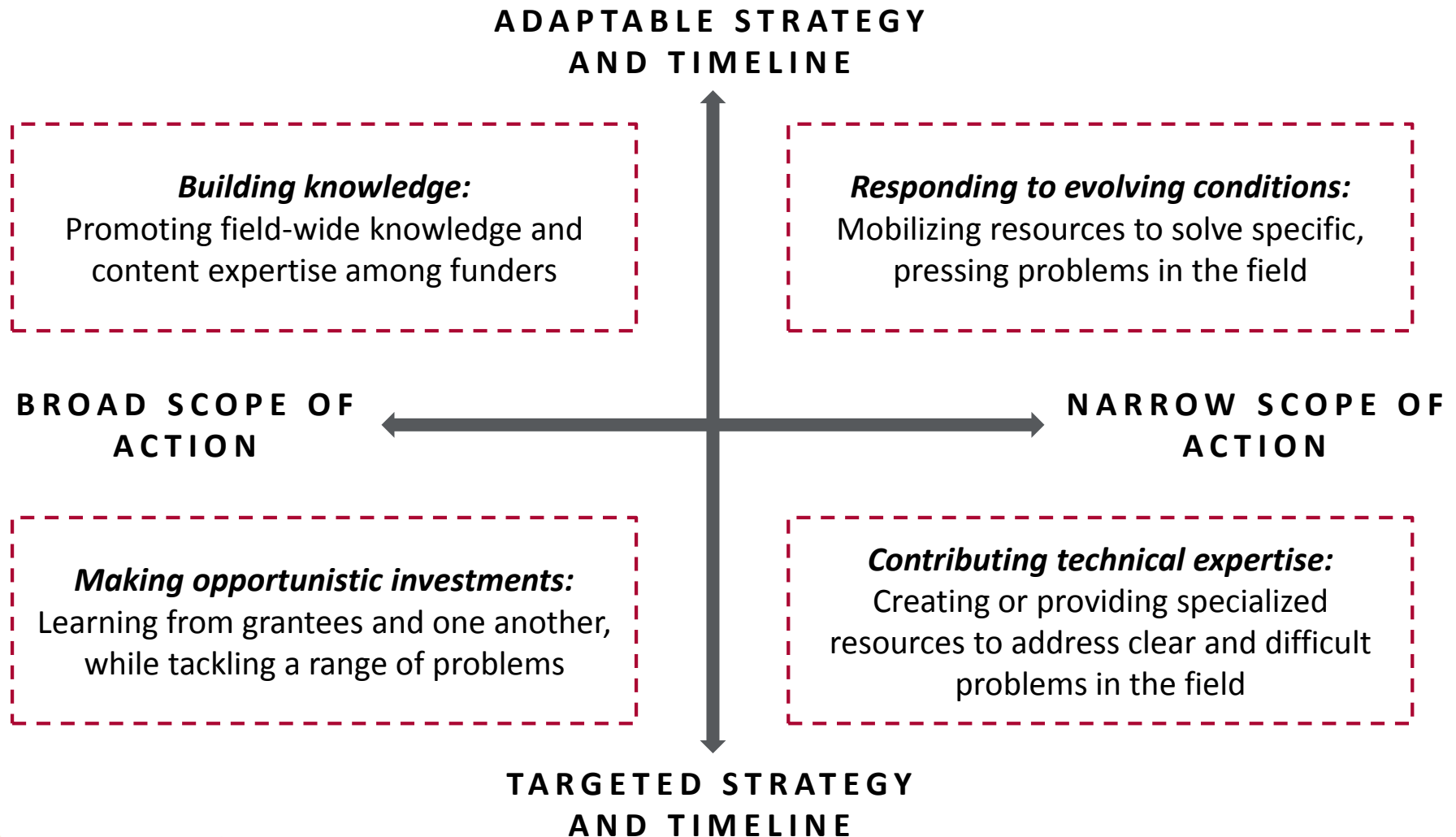
- *Example: Create more CCSS-aligned instructional materials that help educators address the unique needs of English language learners.*

ADAPTABLE STRATEGY AND TIMELINE



TARGETED STRATEGY AND TIMELINE

The three considerations help funders find the quadrant in the matrix that best translates their shared interests into opportunities for collaboration.



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Four case studies illuminate how the decision-making matrix applies to various types of funder collaboratives.

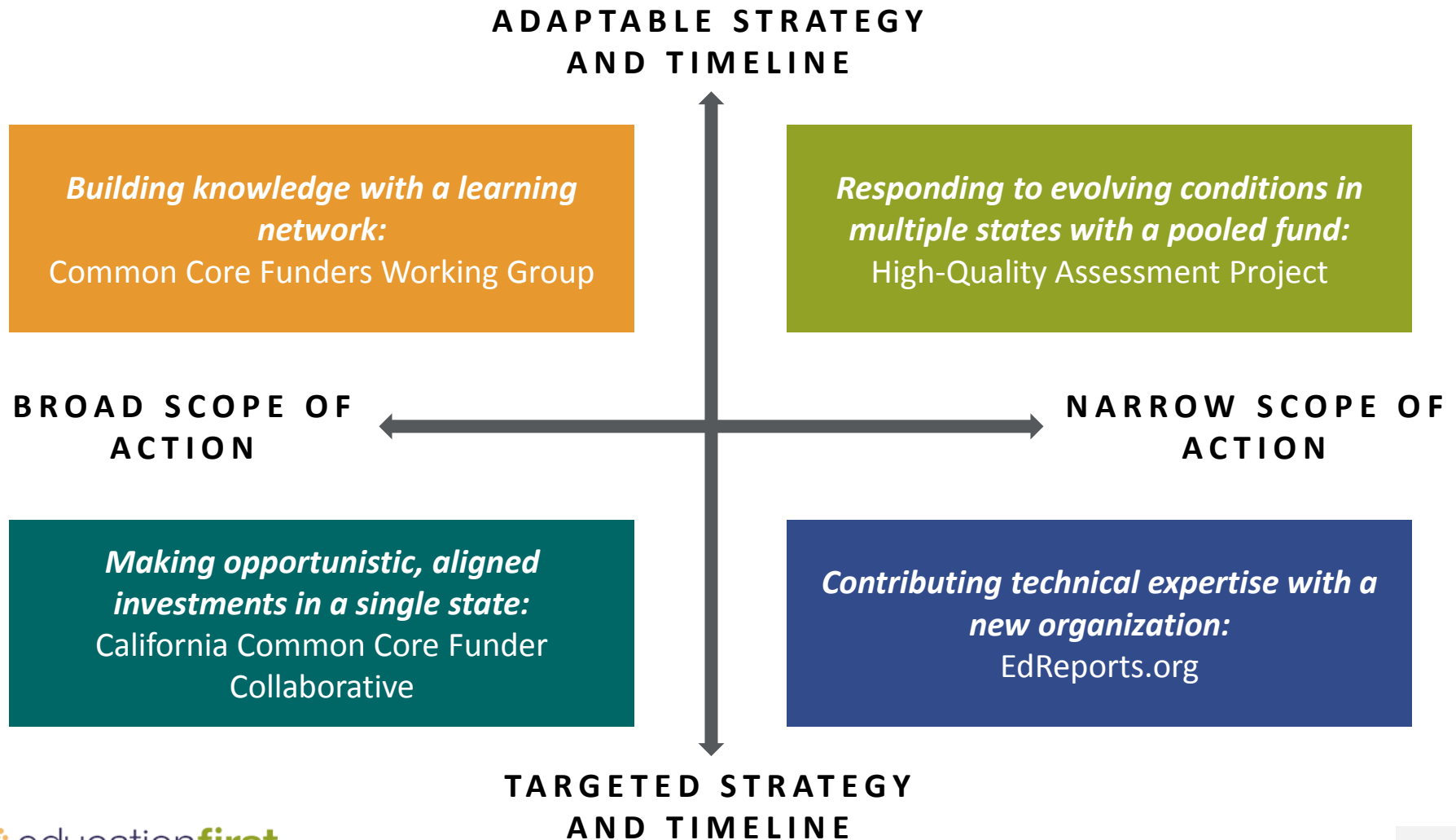
The case studies on the following slides highlight **lessons for funders** that Education First has learned from supporting the efforts of four collaboratives, which formed to take action on issues related to CCSS implementation.

These lessons describe **how funders can address the considerations in the decision-making matrix to enhance their work.**

Four Case Studies			
Common Core Funders Working Group	California Common Core Funder Collaborative	High-Quality Assessment Project	EdReports.org
A learning network	A place-based initiative aligning funder investments	A national pooled fund	A new funder-created organization

For more details about the case studies, including funders involved and estimated budget, see Appendix B.

Each case study demonstrates how the three considerations in the decision-making matrix can support different funder goals.



Building knowledge with a learning network:

Common Core Funders Working Group (CCFWG)

CCFWG's Background and Goals

Organized in 2012 to build knowledge and networks over three years, CCFWG worked to:

1. Equip national, state and local funders with **information to strengthen their own grantmaking strategies and choices** as they work with states, districts, schools and stakeholders on CCSS implementation

2. Encourage **coordinated grantmaking** among funders with similar interests and strategies

3. Develop **opportunities for funders at all levels** to respond to pressing implementation needs

Education First's Role

Strategy development

Information sharing & dissemination

Design of learning agenda

CCFWG's Key Activities

Created a **national "system map"** to identify the greatest gaps and needs for the CCSS

Developed **common tools**, such as a rubric to evaluate proposals for CCSS-aligned educator professional development

Shared **information, research and emerging intelligence** among CCFWG members

Created **opportunities to push lessons beyond national funders** to engage local and regional funders

Building knowledge with a learning network:

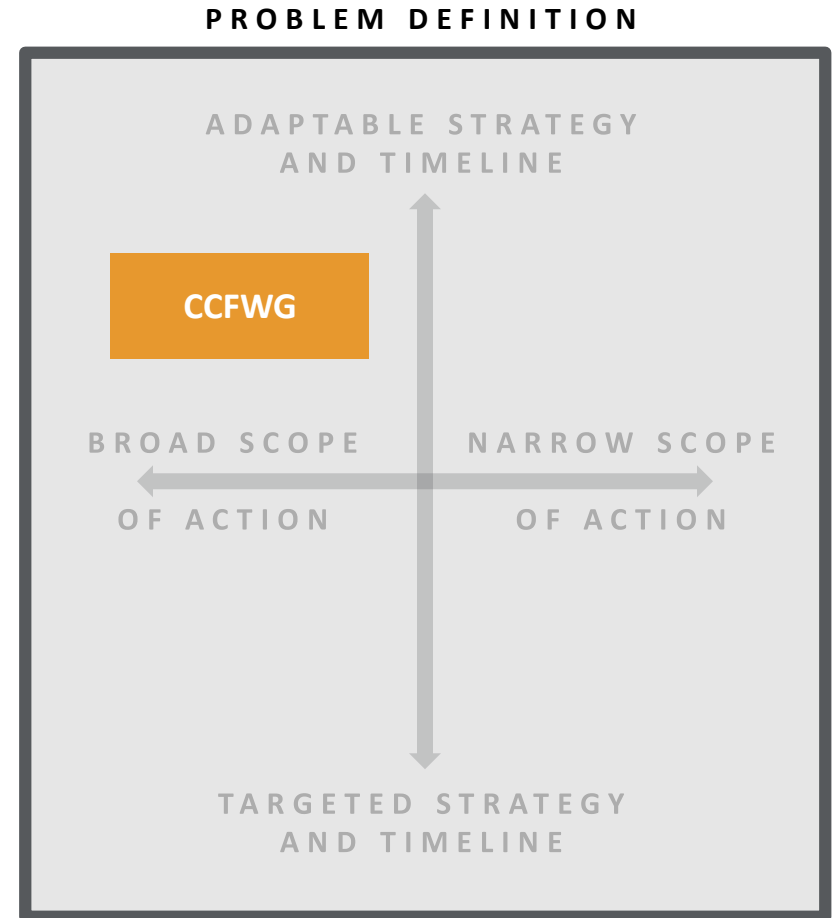
Lessons learned from CCFWG's problem definition

CCFWG's definition of the problem:

Funders need to gain more expertise and strengthen relationships with peer funders to make smart investments and collectively influence the implementation of the CCSS.

Lessons for *defining the problem*:

- ▶ In learning about gaps in the field and what funders can do about them, consider how much of the strategy design process should be led by participating funders who are underwriting the work vs. field leaders and practitioners who are in the trenches doing the work.
- ▶ Consider how much of the collaborative's success will depend on stakeholders in the field having a greater awareness about key issues and even supporting certain solutions.



Building knowledge with a learning network:

Lessons learned from CCFWG's scope of action

CCFWG's broad scope of action:

Funders sought to deepen their own (and the philanthropy sector's) content knowledge about a wide breadth of CCSS-related issues.

Lessons when pursuing a *broad* scope of action:

- ▶ Develop an early, shared understanding of needs and opportunities in the field, as the CCFWG did with its “system map,” especially when funders come to the work with different interests.
- ▶ When trying to engage as many funders as possible, design an inclusive decision-making process to recruit new funders and ensure the work stays relevant.
- ▶ Recognize that the field needs a better infrastructure to encourage partnerships between national and local funders, so prioritize finding ways to address this challenge in particular.



Building knowledge with a learning network:

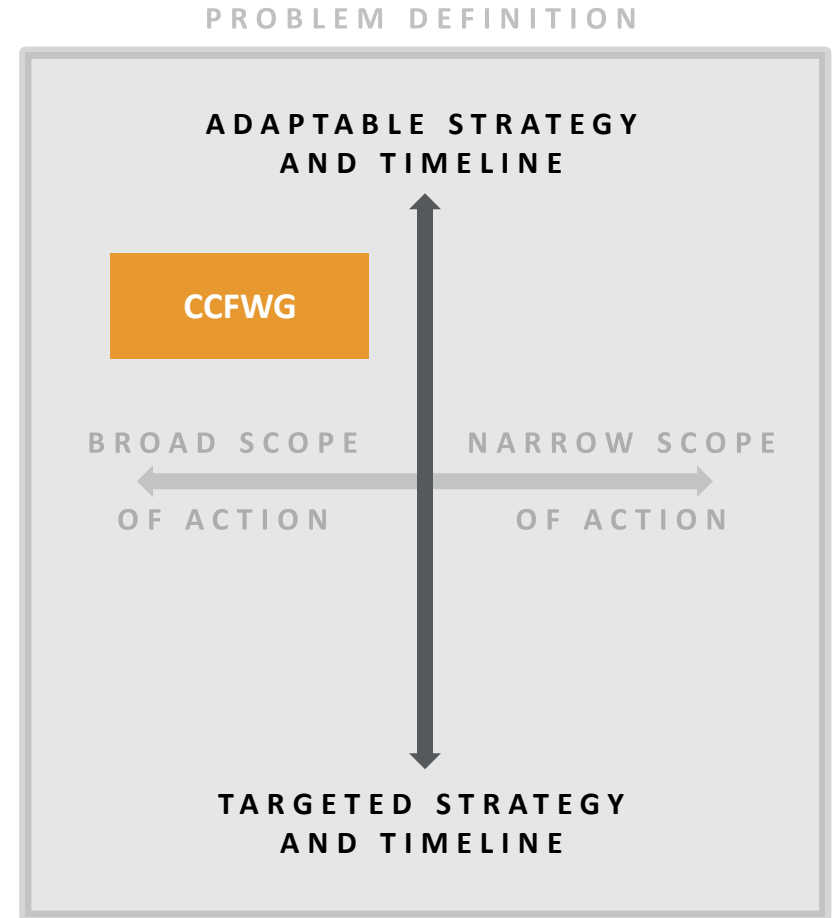
Lessons learned from CCFWG's strategy and timeline

CCFWG's *adaptable* strategy and timeline:

Funders learned about new research and intelligence to stay up-to-date on the evolving context surrounding the CCSS.

Lessons when pursuing an *adaptable* strategy and timeline:

- ▶ Be mindful of how well the collaborative is balancing action with reflection, and urgency with patience.
- ▶ Revisit and recommit regularly to the collaborative's goals to make sure they remain relevant.
- ▶ Reach agreement on what success looks like, which is especially important in a collaboration designed to be highly adaptable and responsive to funder interests.



Responding to evolving conditions in multiple states with a pooled fund: High-Quality Assessment Project (HQAP)

HQAP's Background and Goals

Created in 2013, HQAP pools resources from major national funders to **build the capacity of advocacy groups to support the successful adoption and implementation of high-quality CCSS-aligned assessments** in “bellwether” states, including PARCC, Smarter Balanced and other high-quality summative assessments

Education First's Role

Pooled fund design

Due diligence

Grantee technical assistance

Coordination with field

HQAP's Key Activities

Supported 24 state-based advocacy groups across 15 states (as of November 2015)

Developed **grantee content expertise** about high-quality assessments

Supported multi-state projects elevating **teacher leaders and civil rights advocates** on high-quality assessments

Commissioned **research studies** to review quality of different summative assessments

Created and disseminated **advocacy and communications tools**

Coordinated efforts with other national partners and organizations also promoting high-quality assessments

Responding to evolving conditions in multiple states with a pooled fund: Lessons learned from HQAP's problem definition

HQAP's definition of the problem:

CCSS supporters must advocate for states to use high-quality assessments to measure student progress against the standards.

Lessons for defining the problem:

- ▶ There will likely be other organizations outside the collaboration leading efforts consistent with funder priorities; address how the collaborative's work aligns to or builds on these other efforts to enhance the potential for impact on the field.
- ▶ Funders will typically continue making their own grants independently of the collaboration; define the collaborative's problem statement to complement the work of these grantees (or alternatively seed activities that participating funders will pick up on their own).



Responding to evolving conditions in multiple states with a pooled fund: Lessons learned from HQAP's scope of action

HQAP's narrow scope of action:

Funders focus exclusively on promoting the adoption and implementation of high-quality assessments aligned to the CCSS.

Lessons when pursuing a *narrow* scope of action:

- ▶ Clarify what the collaborative is specifically asking grantees to do to advance a desired solution in the field: what counts as a “win”?
- ▶ A narrow focus often also means a deeper focus; consider what content expertise funders (and/or the collaborative's dedicated staff and external consultants) need to have to make wise choices.



Responding to evolving conditions in multiple states with a pooled fund: Lessons learned from HQAP's strategy and timeline

HQAP's adaptable strategy and timeline:

Funders agree to a policy advocacy approach adapted to the changing political climate in each target state.

Lessons when pursuing an *adaptable* strategy and timeline:

- ▶ Policy change can take longer than expected; be willing to adjust the collaborative's timeline as needed to sustain early victories and build on any momentum.
- ▶ Because the policy context within and across states may change quickly, establish a highly flexible governance structure to facilitate opportunistic grantmaking.
- ▶ An adaptable strategy requires frequent monitoring of grantees; consider retaining a third-party entity to manage the pooled fund, create efficiencies and respond nimbly.



Making opportunistic, aligned investments in a single state: California Common Core Funder Collaborative (CCCFC)

CCCFC's Background and Goals

Begun in 2014, the CCCFC is comprised of national and local funders committed to:

- 1. Focusing efforts** on the greatest implementation needs and gaps in California
- 2. Facilitating collaboration** around high-leverage opportunities for success of the CCSS in a critical mass of districts across California
- 3. Providing information** to help individual funders **strengthen their own grantmaking strategies and learn from one another** as they each work in specific California districts and schools

Education First's Role

Strategy development

Information sharing

Coordination of aligned investments

CCCFC's Key Activities

Identified most **promising leverage points for collaboration in California**

Offered members **opportunities to learn** from California educators and partners, and draw lessons from the work of other states

Created **investment framework and rubric** for co-investments in three issue areas

Combined **targeted aligned-investments** in select issue areas with **opportunistic grants** to support member efforts

Making opportunistic, aligned investments in a single state: Lessons learned from CCCFC's problem definition

CCCFC's definition of the problem:

Funders need to align their investments opportunistically and support one another's individual investments. For example, CCCFC members convened educators through a project initiated by one participating funder.

Lessons for defining the problem:

- ▶ Funders active in the same state or region may share grantees outside of the collaboration; create venues to “compare notes” about these grantees before aligning investments.
- ▶ Conduct an inventory of related grants by participating funders to avoid duplicating efforts, or provide opportunities to share learnings across the same grantees.
- ▶ Funders may not want to direct more grants to an issue area where they already have major investments; give them the option to either join or turn down an investment.



Making opportunistic, aligned investments in a single state:

Lessons learned from CCCFC's scope of action

CCCFC's broad scope of action:

Funders agreed to align investments to increase access to CCSS-aligned instructional materials, improve stakeholder communications, and provide implementation supports for districts, schools and educators.

Lessons when pursuing a *broad* scope of action:

- ▶ Even if funders cannot reach consensus on a specific problem in the field to tackle together, collaboratively “map the system” to identify potential synergies or points of agreement among funders.
- ▶ Create an investment framework outlining priorities to guide the collaborative’s work.
- ▶ Equipped with a shared investment framework, conduct a proactive search for promising grantmaking opportunities.



Making opportunistic, aligned investments in a single state:

Lessons learned from CCCFC's strategy and timeline

CCCFC's targeted strategy and timeline:

Funders deemed stakeholder communications a clear and persistent challenge and aligned their investments to support organizations engaging in communications activities statewide.

Lessons when pursuing a *targeted* strategy and timeline:

- ▶ If funders are also interested in deepening their content knowledge, discuss how an investment framework can also support specific learning goals (e.g., to learn which messages resonate with audiences, invest in testing different communications strategies).
- ▶ To address far-reaching challenges, such as stakeholder communications, consider how the aligned investments might enable the scaling up of solutions (without necessarily requiring that all investments reach scale).
- ▶ Simplify the decision-making process to facilitate investment alignment.



Contributing technical expertise with a new organization: EdReports.org

EdReports.org's Background and Goals

Launched in March 2015, EdReports.org offers **free, web-based reviews of instructional materials** focused on alignment to the CCSS and other indicators of high quality; reviews are written by trained, experienced educators, and aim to inform the purchasing decisions of educators, schools, districts and states across the country

Education First's Role

Development of new organization

Management support

Design of review process

Funders' Key Activities

Engaged in **planning process** to develop a concept for the new organization, including a "listening tour" with over 500 educators and experts

Completed **strategy and business planning** to ensure new organization's sustainability

Worked with **fiscal agent** to set up the new organization

Recruited **board of directors** and **key staff members**, including Executive Director

Created **review tools** and trained **initial cohort of 46 educator-reviewers***

Released reports on 20 sets of year-long K-8 math instructional materials at launch*

Contributing technical expertise with a new organization:

Lessons learned from EdReports.org's problem definition

EdReports.org's definition of the problem:

Districts need actionable information to select instructional materials for classroom use. Also, publishers must face external pressure to create more high-quality and CCSS-aligned instructional materials.

Lessons for defining the problem:

- ▶ Consider starting with short-term grants focused on process outcomes to get the new organization up-and-running; but once the new organization launches, transition to longer-term grants focused on impact in the field.
- ▶ Define the new organization's unique contributions to the field vis-à-vis the work of the other funder grantees to avoid any confusion about roles; and share information about the new organization with these grantees.



Contributing technical expertise with a new organization:

Lessons learned from EdReports.org's scope of action

EdReports.org's narrow scope of action:

Funders collectively determined that educators, schools and districts lack the necessary information to select high-quality and CCSS-aligned instructional materials.

Lessons when pursuing a *narrow* scope of action:

- ▶ Take the time to follow a thorough process to define the problem or gap in the field that may require the creation of a new organization (e.g., by commissioning research and seeking stakeholder input).
- ▶ Secure buy-in from each funder's leadership for sustained support of the new organization.
- ▶ Clarify funder expectations for the new organization, including its mission, purpose and goals.



Contributing technical expertise with a new organization: Lessons learned from EdReports.org's strategy and timeline

EdReports.org's targeted strategy and timeline:

Funders continue to support EdReports.org to provide trusted reviews of instructional materials over the long-term, meeting an established need in the field.

Lessons when pursuing a *targeted* strategy and timeline:

- ▶ Consider inviting a third-party organization to facilitate funder deliberations, and turn those initial conversations into a viable plan and strategy for the new organization.
- ▶ Agree to step back at the end of the initial design process to give the new organization autonomy to launch and operate on its own.
- ▶ But even as the new organization begins to run independently, stay engaged (e.g., through an advisory committee or limited board seats).



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While there are bright spots on implementation, progress has been uneven thus far and challenges remain.

States

10 states are currently **reviewing the CCSS and considering changes**.¹

Fewer states committed to **administering the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments** in 2015-16 than in the previous year (21 vs. 30).¹

Districts

92% of districts report facing **challenges finding adequate resources** to implement the standards.²

89% of districts believe they **do not have enough time** to fully implement the standards before accountability consequences related to student performance on aligned assessments begin to take effect.²

Educators

58% of K-12 educators who responded to an *Education Week* survey reported that their **textbooks and main curricular materials are not aligned** to the CCSS.³

16% of these educators feel **very prepared to teach** the CCSS to their students.³

Parents

54% of parents **oppose having educators in their community use the CCSS** to guide what they teach.⁴

67% of parents believe there is **too much emphasis on testing** in the public schools in their community.⁴

Moving forward, Education First recommends that funder collaboratives consider five opportunities for action.

Using the **decision-making matrix**, the following slides present an analysis of how funders can act on five opportunities. Each of these opportunities aims to address an emerging need in the field that would benefit especially from the attention, alignment and resources that come from funder collaboration.

1 Provide advocacy and capacity-building to help states implement high-quality assessments

2 Help states design, pilot and implement new and innovative accountability systems

3 Support better educator training and professional development for CCSS-aligned instruction

4 Monitor implementation, coordinate funder supports and evaluate the effectiveness of new approaches

5 Create stronger incentives for publishers to produce more and better CCSS-aligned instructional materials

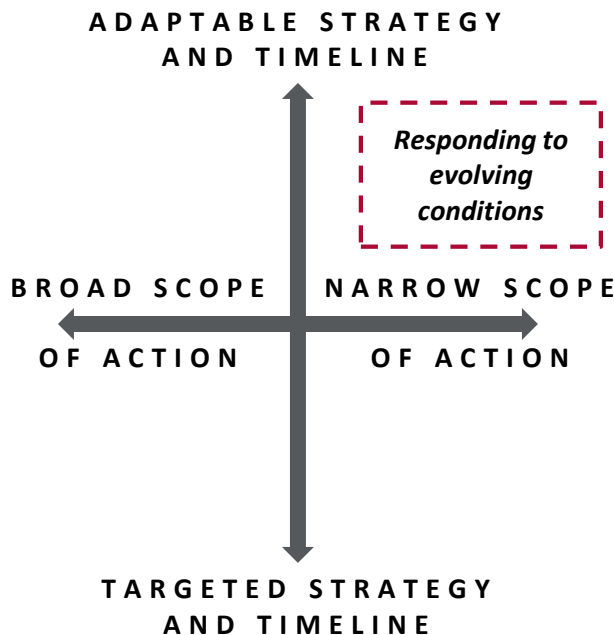
Suggestion #1:

Provide advocacy and capacity-building to help states implement high-quality assessments.

Challenge: More states are choosing to implement summative assessments that have not been independently validated as aligned to the CCSS. How do funders make sure these states use high-quality assessments?

High-quality summative assessments, like PARCC and Smarter Balanced, measure student progress against the CCSS.¹ But in 2016, over half of all states plan to use their own state assessments.² As the national assessment landscape becomes more fragmented, funders could collaborate to:

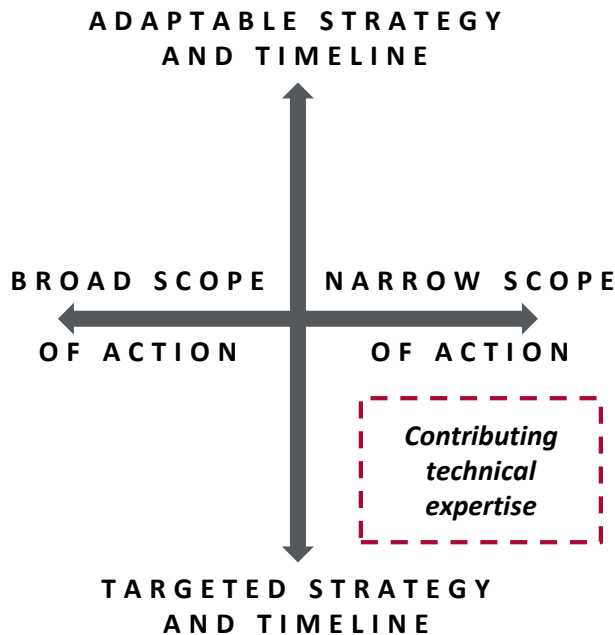
1. Help states access needed technical assistance to create new high-quality assessments;
2. Fund state advocacy groups and researchers to continue elevating the importance of quality and to apply pressure on state leaders to stay committed to high-quality assessments;
3. Build the assessment literacy of educators; and
4. Provide educators with more CCSS-aligned formative assessments to use during the year.



Suggestion #2:

Help states design, pilot and implement new and innovative accountability systems.

Challenge: Under the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states have more discretion over their own accountability systems. How do funders help states follow through on their commitment to equitable outcomes for all students?



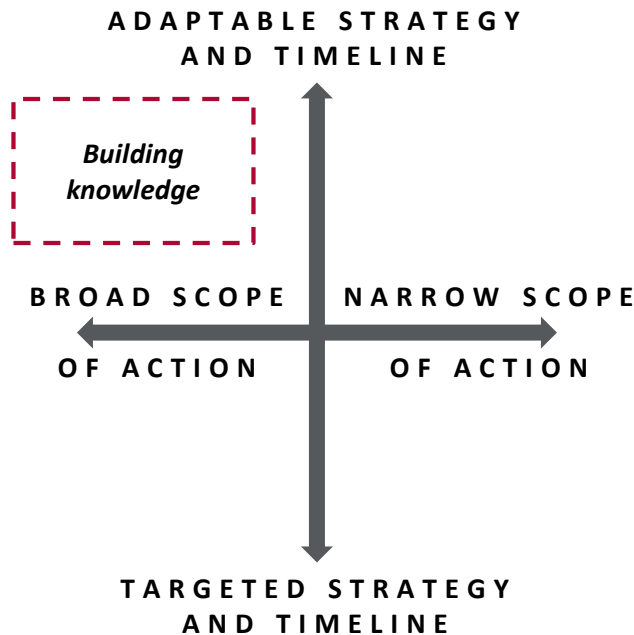
ESSA gives states more autonomy to create their own frameworks for holding districts and schools accountable and for reporting progress on state-designated measures. Funders can provide technical assistance to state leaders to:

1. Determine the most appropriate design features for their state's accountability system, including measures for student subgroups to ensure equity;
2. Balance academic and non-academic measures of student performance, as informed by evidence-based practices in the field; and
3. Pilot and implement new and more innovative systems, which incorporate mechanisms for continuous improvement.

Suggestion #3:

Support better educator training and professional development for Common Core-aligned instruction.

Challenge: Recent research suggests that traditional forms of professional development do not necessarily help educators improve their practice.¹ How do funders best support the growth of educators as they implement the CCSS?



Educators need effective training and professional development opportunities, particularly on content pedagogy required for college and career readiness. They also need special supports to meet the unique needs of English-language learners and students with learning disabilities.²

Funders may collectively:

1. Promote a common framework for effective professional development, which the field currently lacks;
2. Explore innovations that create and spread personalized, job-embedded professional development;³ and
3. Support new thinking on policies for educator training and licensure that prioritize teaching effectiveness.

Suggestion #4:

Monitor implementation, coordinate funder supports and evaluate the effectiveness of new approaches.

Challenge: States, districts and schools will continue pursuing new approaches to support implementation of the CCSS. How will funders know which of these approaches is effective?

Funders can facilitate communication among states, districts and schools to help them share lessons learned from their ongoing implementation of the CCSS. These knowledge-sharing efforts can also inform the kinds of supports funders offer to advance implementation moving forward.

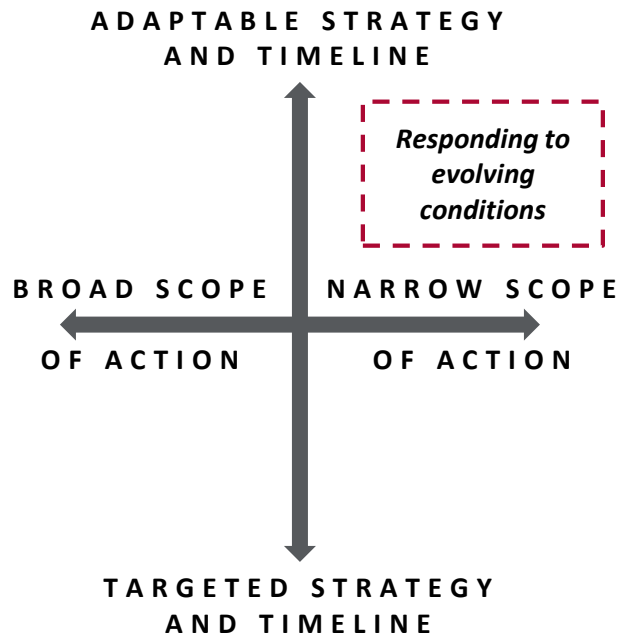
Funders should consider commissioning and disseminating to education leaders and other stakeholders evaluations that capture effective and scalable approaches. This research would be especially helpful in cases where the field is piloting new strategies to longstanding challenges, such as identifying the best professional development to improve educator effectiveness.



Suggestion #5:

Create stronger incentives for publishers to produce more and better CCSS-aligned instructional materials.

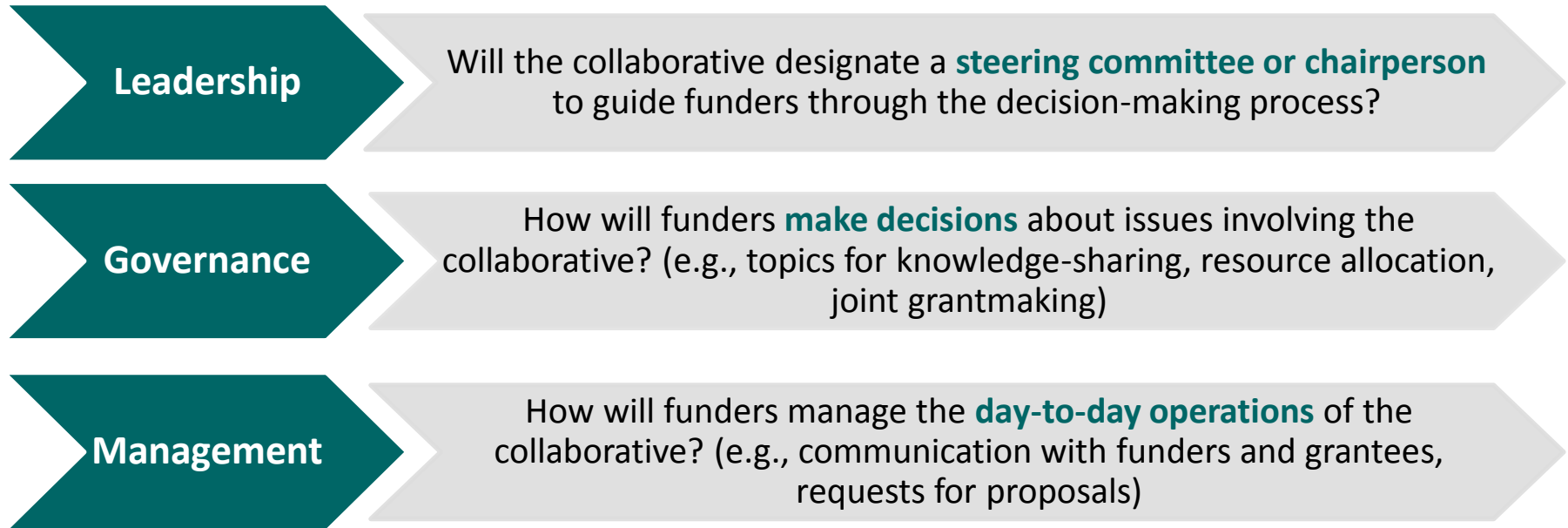
Challenge: Reviews by EdReports.org show that many instructional materials are not aligned to the CCSS.¹ How do funders encourage education publishers to create more classroom-ready materials?



Funders can seed collaborations of multiple districts and content experts to create or adapt open CCSS-aligned resources, enabling economies of scale as districts work together. For example, several funders recently supported the development of New York State's well-regarded EngageNY curriculum, which is available for free online.

By making possible high-quality alternatives to publisher-released instructional materials, funders can increase the pressure on the multi-billion dollar publishing industry to better cater to the needs of state and district customers across the country. This pressure can serve as a powerful incentive for publishers to create more instructional materials aligned to the CCSS.

There are other dimensions to collaboration not covered in this guide that funders should also discuss in the process of setting up their collaborative.



GrantCraft's *Funder Collaboratives: Why and How Funders Work Together* (2009), among other resources, offers a series of useful guiding questions on these dimensions and several others, such as the collaborative's approach to **new membership, grantmaking and use of resources, evaluation** and **exit strategy**.

Finally, funders should keep three takeaways in mind as they pursue future collaborations focused on the Common Core.

Problem definition: Explicitly state your goals

The impact of funder collaborations can take different forms, as the four case studies in this guide show. **Funders should negotiate up-front what success looks like and how they will know they have accomplished what they set out to do together.**

Scope of action: Let form follow function

Different collaboration structures can be powerful forces for change in their own way—but **each structure is unique and better suited to accomplishing different goals.**

Strategy and timeline: Follow through on what you started

As Mark Twain might say, reports of the Common Core's death are greatly exaggerated. Real work remains in every state to increase knowledge and capacity for sustained implementation of the standards—even in states that have rebranded the standards or modified them slightly to accommodate state-specific goals. **Funders have made progress in tackling this widespread challenge and now have opportunities to continue collaborating to finish this work.**

Appendix A:

Common types of funder collaboration

Funders have different options for organizing their collaborations.

Funders typically engage in four types of collaborative arrangements¹

Funders join a **learning network** to learn about the field, **co-invest or align their investments** to direct funding to jointly-identified grantees, **pool resources** to make grants together and **co-create a new organization** to fill a gap or need in the field.

The four types exist in a continuum of collaboration with a range of expectations for funder participation and investment

These expectations may require more **time**, greater **financial contributions** and higher levels of **risk-tolerance** from participating funders (e.g., collaboration can enable funders to make riskier bets than they would otherwise make on their own).

Funders move along the continuum based on their interests and needs

Collaborations are not static: In some cases, funders begin by exploring the field (in a learning network) and later proceed to deepen their work together (by pooling resources or co-creating a new organization).

The four types of funder collaboration require different levels of participation and investment from members.

FUNDER PARTICIPATION AND INVESTMENT

LOW

MODERATE

HIGH

Knowledge Network

The collaboration is a vehicle for **sharing information** about each funder's strategy and investment portfolio

The collaboration also can be a venue to **build knowledge** on a certain topic, **gather new information** and/or **convene leaders** from the field around relevant problems of practice

Co-Investment or Investment Alignment

Investments from individual funders are aligned with a **larger, multi-funder strategy**

Funders agree to support **jointly-identified projects** with shared grantee deliverables, reporting requirements and other grantee commitments

Pooled Fund

Funders contribute to a pooled fund, which is a **grantmaking entity** operating with input and advice from contributing members

This approach can be **more nimble** in responding to field needs

Co-Creation of New Organization

Funders **jointly identify a gap or need in the field** and agree to support the launch of a new organization to bring focus to that need

Funders may **manage the work** of the new organization, or **recruit a board of directors** or advisory group

Appendix B:

Additional background on case studies

Background on the four case study collaborations

Case Study	Major Contributors	Details on Collaboration	Estimated Budget
California Common Core Funder Collaborative (CCCFC)	Silicon Valley Community Foundation; Gates, Hewlett, Kabcenell, Bechtel, Cowell, Schwab, Silver Giving and Stuart foundations	Silicon Valley Community Foundation managed a portion of the CCCFC budget, including contract with Education First.	\$175,000 over one year
Common Core Funders Working Group (CCFWG)	Carnegie Corporation of New York; Helmsley Trust; Gates, Hewlett and Lumina foundations	Education Funder Strategy Group, Grantmakers for Education and Growth Philanthropy Network served as CCFWG conveners. The three conveners and six member foundations formed a CCFWG Coordinating Committee, which met regularly to steer the group's efforts. National Public Education Support Fund served as the fiscal agent and project manager. CCFWG engaged roughly 225 funders across the country over three years.	\$555,000 over three years
High-Quality Assessment Project (HQAP)	Helmsley Trust; Gates, Hewlett, Lumina and Schusterman foundations	All donor foundations participated in the HQAP Advisory Committee. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors managed the pooled fund.	\$1,359,000 over three years
EdReports.org	<p><i>Anchor funders:</i> Helmsley Trust; Gates and Hewlett foundations</p> <p><i>Additional funders at launch:</i> Samuel, Broadcom, Schwab and Stuart foundations</p>	Anchor funders provided incubation funding to retain Education First, communications consultants, executive search consultant and a fiscal agent. These foundations continue to fund EdReports.org at varying levels through mid-2017. EdReports.org also grew its budget with support from additional funders prior to its launch in March 2015.	<p>\$900,000 incubation funding</p> <p>EdReports.org had a \$1,500,000 budget for 2014-15</p>

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