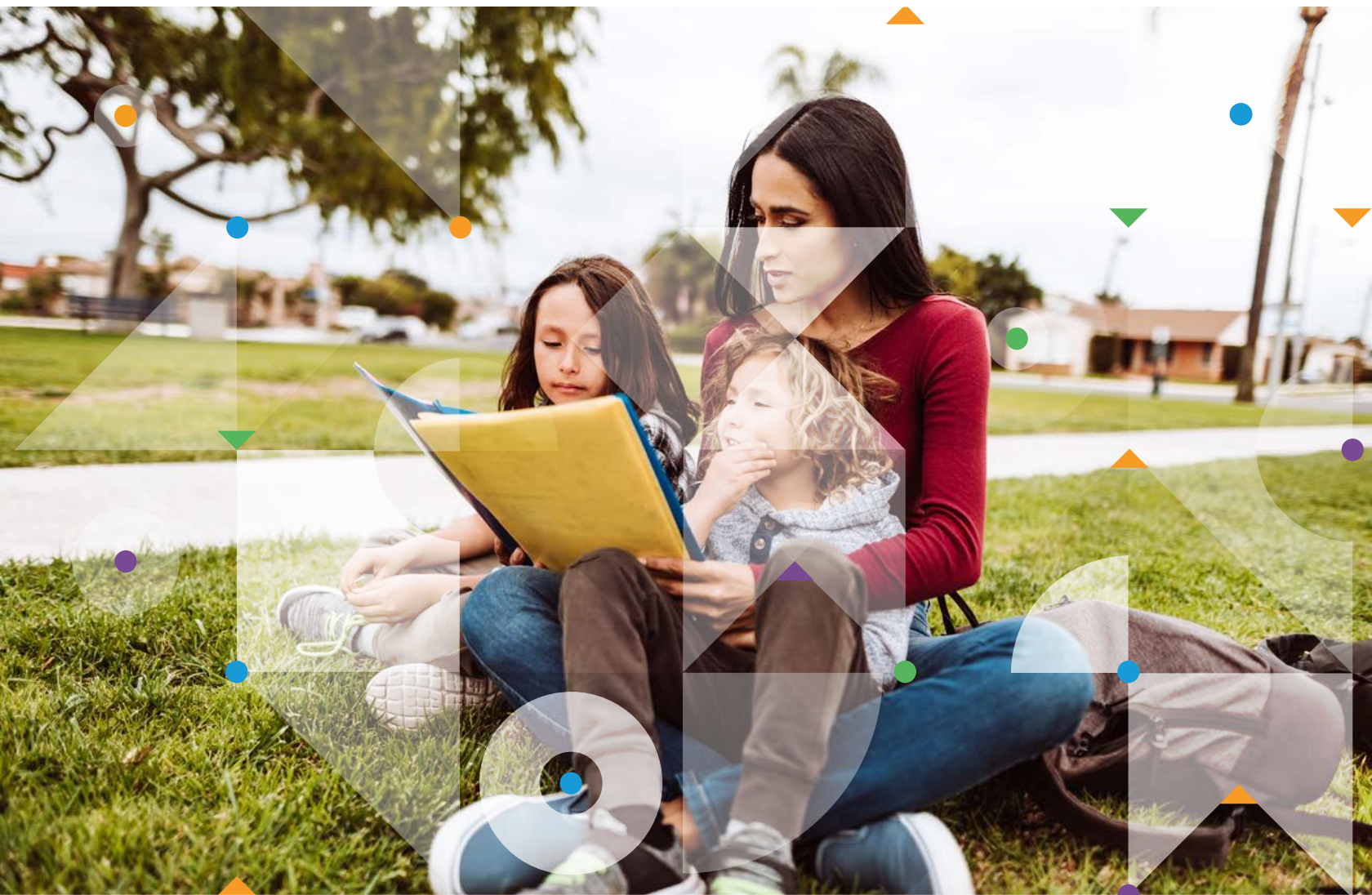# FRAMING TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Guidance from the FrameWorks Institute

WE ENVISION AN AMERICA IN WHICH A LEGACY OF ECONOMIC SECURITY AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS PASSES FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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MOVING FROM A SERVICE DELIVERY FRAME TO A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FRAME

For America to eliminate poverty and advance broader well-being, significant changes are needed to the ways in which public policy, public programs, and support services are arranged, funded, and implemented. "Two-generation" or "whole family" approaches have emerged as a way that governments can better deploy public resources devoted to early learning, education, employment, health, housing, income supplements, nutrition, and so on, making the most of these funds by using them more strategically. The two-generation approach involves identifying the factors that undermine a family's overall well-being, then working with the family to solve problems, access new resources, and sharpen existing skills. A responsive, holistic, family-centered mindset differs significantly from the dominant approach to public anti-poverty efforts, which rely on a dizzying array of discrete programs, each focused on a specific piece of the poverty puzzle (housing, health, nutrition, employment, etc) and each limited to people of a certain age, a certain income level, or other chacteristic.

While an integrated approach makes intuitive sense to families – who know well, for instance, that there are connections between secure employment and the ability to get enough healthy food – there is much work to be done to align and intertwine the policies, funding streams, and programs that are currently separate and disconnected. To build a bigger constituency for innovative and more robust approaches to social policy and social services, two-generation advocates will need to communicate clearly, and carefully.

This framing playbook is intended for "the choir" – the agency leaders, social service professionals, and advocates, including families, who are leading their communities and constituencies toward two-generation approaches to supporting families. It offers guidance on how to make intentional choices about where to start, what to emphasize, and what to leave unsaid. The evidence-based advice is grounded in original social science research and analysis conducted by the FrameWorks Institute, a nonprofit that investigates the communications aspects of social issues and builds capacity to lead productive public conversations on important policy issues. Ascend at the Aspen Institute commissioned this playbook, with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Packard Foundation, because communication shifts are part and parcel of shifting the culture of organizations, the emphasis of programs, and the support for refined policies. With the right framing, the model can begin to resonate beyond "the choir," attract new adherents, and lift up new voices.

Two-generation advocates should embrace a frame that focuses neither on delivery nor on disruption, but on human development.

Frames are powerful. They advance a set of ideas about the causes and consequences of social problems and who bears responsibility for addressing them. As such, frames shape opinions, attitudes, and policy preferences. The public understands social issues depending on how they are framed. If finanicial stability is framed as a problem that primarily concerns families struggling to make ends meet, the public will see the solution in individual terms, too. If framed as a matter of collective concern, then the public is more apt to see a shared stake in fostering people's capacity to learn, work, and achieve financial stability. As the two-generation field grows, the opportunities for leading conversations also grow, as do the risks that come with being misunderstood. Ineffective framing leaves issues mired in public apathy and partisan bickering.

To frame two-generation work more powerfully, advocates should move away from a *service delivery* frame that focuses attention on the inner workings of program administration. When talking with non-specialists, the field should lose the lexicon of "determining eligibility" for services, justifying recipients' "level of need," "providing benefits," and showing that efforts achieved narrow objectives. These concepts — even if they are being rethought and reworked within the field — connote that the problem to be solved boils down to *who gets what and why*. In this frame, recipients are reduced to takers, everyone else is glorified as makers, and the human services sector is painted as merely facilitating the transfer of resources from the "worthy" to the "unworthy." In this narrow frame, racial and gender equity become more difficult to pursue.

In addition to staying out of the weeds, the field should stay out of the clouds. A transformation frame — which emphasizes the radical nature of a proposed direction — comes with its own vulnerabilities. The American public is prone to classifying possible outcomes of change efforts into a romanticized "ideal" vision and a pessimistic (and much more likely) "real" result. When descriptions of two-generation approaches are pie-in-the-sky ambitious, they trigger "ideal vs. real" thinking, which sparks skepticism about what public agencies can realistically accomplish. This frame causes people to think that government support will likely make matters worse, not better, and that the sensible, humane response is to evacuate innocent bystanders from the immediate vicinity of the blast radius of public policy. Thus, framing two-generation approaches as an extreme government makeover will likely backfire.

Instead, two-generation advocates should embrace a frame that focuses neither on delivery nor on disruption, but on human development. A human development frame advances the idea that people grow and change over

their lives, in an ongoing process shaped by environments and experiences. It establishes that society has a role and a stake in ensuring that the vital conditions for optimal development are available to all, not just some, across the various stages of development. This frame elaborates a robust vision of what constitutes well-being, articulating the multiple factors that contribute to families that are "doing well."

Accomplishing this major shift involves adopting a set of framing guidelines. These include:

1. **Back up to open up:** Before introducing two-generation ideas specifically, frame *why people matter* and *how people develop*.

2. **Go high:** Lead with an affirmation of *human potential* to lay out an aspirational goal.

3. **Talk process before people:** Explain the role of human services using the metaphor *building well-being*.

4. **Distribute responsibility:** Emphasize that constructing well-being is a team project involving families *and* professionals as equal partners.

5. **Talk the walk:** Advance equity by talking about policies as ways to reset power relationships.

6. **Widen the lens:** Zoom out to show the policies and processes that create inequities rather than zooming in on the people and groups that are affected by them.

7. **Make it concrete:** For non-specialists, stick to the simplest examples of programs that clearly and directly support both children and adults.

8. **Share the science:** Appeal to insights into brain development to bolster the case for two-generation approaches.

9. **Embrace the methodical:** Emphasize rigorous continuous improvement as a hallmark of two-generation approaches.

10. **Manage the myths:** Anticipate and navigate misconceptions but do not restate or rebut them.

Each adjustment makes a difference on its own, but together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Read on to learn more about the evidence behind these recommendations and how to put each into practice in communications.

The two-generation approach involves identifying the factors that undermine a family's overall well-being, then working with the family to solve problems, access new resources, and sharpen existing skills.

1. BACK UP TO OPEN UP: BEFORE INTRODUCING SPECIFIC TWO-GENERATION IDEAS, FRAME WHY PEOPLE MATTER AND HOW PEOPLE DEVELOP.

Proponents of two-generation approaches view the innovation as both a mindset (i.e., a commitment to thinking more holistically about how to better support families) and as an emerging model for better design, coordination, implementation, and evaluation of such efforts.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

It is not easy to get this multifaceted idea across to professionals in neighboring sectors and related agencies — and it is even more difficult for the public to grasp. Professionals working in health, human services, or education are likely to assume they are *Already Doing It* — that "2Gen" is simply a different name for approaches that are already under way. Thus, 2Gen's innovative nature is lost.[1] For the public, the roles of human services in general, and of family support services in particular, are unfamiliar and misunderstood. Americans equate human services with *direct* services (like food banks and shelters) and more specifically, with financial assistance for "poor people."

These assumptions generate unproductive conclusions. When the full spectrum of human services is reduced to financial assistance, people reason that such help should be limited to providing only the bare essentials in times of acute crisis, and only if recipients "truly" cannot provide for themselves. They further assume that these needs can be met in multiple ways, such as through individual acts of charity, and may therefore question the use of public resources to provide financial assistance. Importantly, the public's existing associations with human services do not include the field's advocacy, policy, or prevention work, which are essential parts of this approach.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To understand two-generation approaches to supporting families in multiple ways, newcomers to the issue first need to grasp a multifaceted definition of family success and a way to appreciate why public resources are appropriate and required. They need a way to understand services and supports not as a simple transfer of tangible resources but instead as efforts to build people's skills and social capital. They need to understand that this approach demands significant reworking of existing policies and programs, and therefore, unfold over time and require skilled professionals. Finally, and importantly, they need a way to think about "the problem" as one that originates in *society* — not in the failures or flaws of the individuals experiencing it.

What Helps

To build a strong frame, order the ideas in your communication so that two-generation approaches are presented as a reasonable solution to a problem you have set up. This involves:

- Do not lead with "your" issue; this means you may have to hold back your favorite definition, your theory of change, or a "perfect list" of the hallmarks of your approach for a few beats.

- Do not start by evoking familiar policy domains, like children, families, or poverty. These all trigger unhelpful mental models in the public mind.

Instead, build a foundation that supports the vision of two-generation approaches, beginning with a broadly resonant value and moving into a metaphor that redefines the goal and how to reach it.

> To consistently frame human development as a collective concern, ask this question as you review your communications: "Does this framing position human development as an issue that matters to all of us — or only to those families that are immediately affected?"

Instead of This:

2Gen is breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty by breaking down silos in human and social services, so that children and their parents are supported together.

Try This:

We're updating the way our state's programs work, so that the ways we build the well-being of adults are connected to supports for children, and vice versa. We call this kind of thinking a two-generation approach, or 2Gen.

2. GO HIGH: LEAD WITH AN AFFIRMATION OF HUMAN POTENTIAL TO FRAME AN ASPIRATIONAL GOAL.

Proponents see two-generation approaches as opening up the possibility for breakthrough outcomes on the long-standing problems of poverty — as a new way to advance social equity and inclusion.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

Public thinking relies on assumptions about the supposed deficiencies of people in poverty. A widely shared belief in the "culture of poverty" diagnoses lower-income communities as places saturated with "bad values" that drive unwise personal choices. In this line of thinking, poor communities exist because they are inhabited by people who do not take education seriously or work hard at legitimate jobs — choices that ensure a continued state of deprivation.[2] Surrounded by these poor examples, more and more community members get "stuck" in this "culture of poverty." This model is often bound up with stereotypes about particular social groups, especially the rural poor and urban Black communities.

In addition, the public sees "poor people" as an isolated segment of society — tacitly assuming that different groups live in distinct worlds and are shaped by different forces. Because the concerns of marginalized groups are seen as disconnected from those of the broader society, people assume that poverty is unfortunate for "them" but has little to do with "us." This *Separate Fates* thinking makes it all too easy to conclude that publicly funded benefits penalize "hard-working taxpayers" and reward those who "choose" to avoid work.

Reasoning this way, Americans quickly arrive at fatalistic attitudes, deeming the problems faced by people who live in a "culture of poverty" to be intractable and fearing that the supposed solution of "government programs" will only make matters worse. In the end, people conclude that poverty is a regrettable but unavoidable part of society.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To reframe, advocacy communications must move away from language and images that "otherize" the families and children engaged in two-generation services or settings. Instead of reinforcing the notion that different groups have separate fates through "us vs. them" language, framing must consistently advance the collective "we." In addition, advocates must work to counter fatalistic beliefs that poverty is too big a problem to solve.

What Helps

Instead of starting communications with a description of the problem (e.g., poverty) or the population (e.g., children and families), lead with an aspirational appeal to the public's sense of possibility. FrameWorks' research has found that the value of *Human Potential* effectively orients the public to both social welfare policy and to the issue of racial equity, and thus recommends it to the two-generation field. See the next page for more details and examples of how it might be used.

MESSAGING WITH HUMAN POTENTIAL

FrameWorks recommends that advocates for two-generation approaches consistently lead with an aspirational appeal to the value of *Human Potential* — and to stick to this theme throughout communications. This positive goal sets a more inviting and asset-based tone than focusing on the problem to be solved, such as eliminating the harsh realities of poverty. In controlled message testing experiments with a nationally representative sample, *Human Potential* outperformed other values appeals common in the field, such as *Opportunity for All*, *Compassion*, and *Self-Sufficiency.*[3]

"When people's potential, talents, and skills are fully realized, our communities grow stronger and more vibrant, socially and economically."

"When we support well-being, we make sure that everyone can reach their full potential and contribute to our communities. Maximizing people's potential helps our communities thrive."

"Our state's greatest resource is our people — and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. When we create the conditions that invite children to learn and allow adults to apply their skills, we tap into the hidden human potential all around us."

"Beautiful things bloom when we nourish people's potential. See what's growing from our #2Generation approach to working with children and the adults in their lives."

Time to Give Up the "V Word."

Many public programs focus on "vulnerable" populations, building policies and programs to meet the needs of groups who experience more severe versions of a problem. That makes sense from a policy perspective, but the word "vulnerable" comes with some downsides from a communications perspective. Phrases like "vulnerable families" and "at-risk children" strengthen the public's associations between public assistance and personal failure or weakness. In short, the public interprets these terms as being about fixing *people*, not *systems*. To reframe, focus instead on the gap or problem that is blocking equal access to essential resources and services.

Instead of This:

Our two-generation approach serves vulnerable families, with a particular focus on children at risk of academic failure, families living in poverty, and people of color.

Try This:

Our two-generation approach boosts the power of our education and employment systems, working closely with communities whose connections to these resources have become frayed and patchy over time.

3. TALK PROCESS BEFORE PEOPLE: COMPARE THE ROLE OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONSTRUCTING WELL–BEING.

Two-generation proponents have ambitious goals: rather than focusing solely on parents' immediate earnings or on children's access to basic needs, two-generation proponents are looking to build a family's capacity for sustained stability. To reach this goal, two-generation approaches consider multiple factors affecting whether families thrive in the face of economic, racial, and social marginalization. These typically include attention to a family's financial stability, social capital, and access to health care and quality educational experiences. This broader view requires changes in the the ways funding, programs, and cross-agency collaboration currently work.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

In contrast to the field's holistic understanding of poverty and what it takes to equip families to thrive, the public relies on a narrow definition of what it means to "support families in need." When thinking about the needs of program recipients, the public relies on a *Just the Basics* model, asserting that public assistance of any kind should be limited to *temporary* provision of *minimum* supports needed to survive. In addition, Americans' deep belief in *Individualism* (the idea that individuals determine their own destinies) presents a major obstacle to building public and political will for more robust approaches to family services. The public assumes that the causes of unmet needs lie with individuals (i.e., their personal effort and ability, or lack thereof), and they think that the consequences of unmet needs are also individual, not shared. This makes it hard for people to think about why we need any services at all, much less "holistic" services.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To attract more support, proponents of two-generation approaches must reframe the issue to help the public see holistic, integrated, and equity-focused models as sensible solutions. Instead of defining the problem as one of resource distribution (e.g., some people do not have enough; remedial resources are dispensed inefficiently), the field must redefine the problem as the nature of human development and focus on the essential experiences, supports, and resources that all people need to survive and thrive. This universal view positions the two-generation model as a targeted way to ensure that families with children are supported in a pragmatic, effective manner.

What Helps

It helps to compare the delivery of human services to the construction of a building, as this metaphor broadens people's understanding of what is required for people to thrive. When FrameWorks tested the *Constructing Well-being* metaphor with members of the public, people drew on the comparison to building materials to understand that well-being includes financial, social, mental, and spiritual aspects — a good fit for the holistic view of two-generation approaches. The metaphor also reinforces that individual well-being depends on context, resources, and the support of others, which leaves less room for "us vs. them" thinking and the stigmatizing attitudes that flow from it. Finally, the different functions involved in the construction and maintenance of a building — planning and initial construction and ongoing service and repair — can be used to explain connections across the many different programs that come under a two-generation umbrella. See below for examples of how the *Constructing Well-being* metaphor might be used.

Using the Constructing Well-being Metaphor
Building Well-being in Our State

This communication starts by articulating an aspirational goal – maximizing human potential – and positions government as a thoughtful, essential partner in achieving that goal.

Our state's greatest resource is our people — and our state's policies can either block or unlock the full potential of our neighbors and community members. Devoting the resources, time, and energy to building the well-being of our people will help our communities thrive economically and socially.

The wording here frames greater well-being as a benefit to everyone – not only to program participants or specific populations. This framing reduces Us vs. Them thinking and generates broader public support.

Well-being is built from many materials. Quality education, clear career pathways, and economic assets are essential, as are physical and mental health. Social capital (helpful connections to people, information, and opportunities to both give and receive support) may be intangible, but it is no less critical to well-being.

When using the term social capital, be sure to include a plain-language definition, like the one suggested here. Without explanation, the public is unlikely to understand what the phrase means.

Just as houses can't build themselves, individuals can't build their own well-being. Constructing well-being across a state requires a team. Health professionals and social service providers are important members of the construction team: they shore up children's health and nutrition, strengthen adults' connections to employment opportunities and support networks, and much more.

Because they understand the complex nature of well-being, officials in our state agencies, counties, local organizations, and tribal nations came together to update the way we build, maintain, and restore well-being in our communities.

A Strong Structure for Children and Adults

When health and human service programs are designed to build the well-being of children and the adults in their lives together, the resulting structure is stronger and better for both generations. That's why our state is updating its way of engaging children and their caregivers so that families are treated together — as a whole unit rather than two separate categories of people. For example, if parents qualify for a tuition grant to go back to school, then it makes sense to see if a child care program is available to support them. This is a "two generation approach" to constructing family well-being.

Rebuilding after Life's Storms

Constructing well-being is a lifelong process for everyone; indeed, ongoing maintenance is needed. Yet there are times and places when storms hit hard and urgent repairs are required. It's important to shore up mental and emotional well-being after the loss of a loved one or a job or to recover from family violence or substance abuse. Two-generation approaches to supporting well-being help families weather difficult circumstances. It provides supports like counseling services that work with both children and their parents together. And it offers flexible program regulations to accommodate special circumstances, such as temporarily waiving co-residency restrictions, so grandparents in subsidized senior housing units can take in a child or grandchild who needs a safe place to stay.

Join the Conversation about Our Renovation

Our state is working hard to update how we build and maintain family well-being. To make sure that any adjustments or extensions work well for everyone, our agency is listening to all partners in the system: counties, tribes, social service organizations, and families. We invite you to join the conversation:

- *Take a look at the strategies we're using to redesign structures so they work better for families as a whole.*

- *See our calendar of upcoming listening sessions for opportunities to share your perspective.*

- *Find us on social media @BuildingWell-being and join the conversation at #FullPotential.*

Help the public make sense of the abstract concept of a two-generation approach by offering a simple, sensible example alongside the definition.

2Gen approaches provide direct supports to people who experience multiple severe stressors. To talk about this aspect of the work, compare adversity to a storm, well-being to a building, and social programs to repair. This focuses the public on social context and social supports, rather than on the choices or characteristics of people experiencing a problem.

By replacing words with connotations of charity — like serve, beneficiaries, or recipients — with the language of co-construction, this communication subtly reframes the relationship between the public sector and the public.

A program like this might be targeted toward families experiencing domestic violence, a substance use disorder, or homelessness. By making a strategic choice not to name these issues, the communication avoids triggering the Culture of Poverty model and thus stays away from the negative, unproductive, and often racialized associations bound up in that way of thinking.

4. DISTRIBUTE RESPONSIBILITY: EMPHASIZE THAT CONSTRUCTING WELL–BEING IS A TEAM PROJECT INVOLVING FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS.

The hallmark of a two-generation approach is a comprehensive consideration of the barriers between families and well-being. This means both taking stock of a family's situation as a whole, rather than focusing exclusively on either children or adults, and considering a variety of ways to promote positive outcomes, considering and addressing multiple dimensions of family well-being. In addition, two-generation adherents consciously reject paternalistic approaches to service recipients. This challenges the usual relationship between human service professionals and families, typically focused narrowly on case management and program compliance, and which too often involves the expression of biases against families in poverty. Instead, two-generation adherents insist that eliminating poverty involves eliminating such attitudes, and replacing them with mutual respect grounded in a recognition of the legal, institutional, and structural causes of poverty and the resourcefulness that families have demonstrated in navigating them. The relationship is thus transformed into one focused on

Pro Tip: Maximize Metaphor Power

Anti-poverty advocates have long understood the power of metaphor. After all, this is the field that coined phrases like "safety net" and the "cycle of poverty," both of which evoke concrete and memorable images. FrameWorks' research suggests that these once-fresh metaphors have reached their expiration date. A safety net is a device that should be used rarely, if ever. The comparison therefore reinforces the idea that public assistance should be limited, temporary, and used only as a last resort. What is more, the phrase has become closely associated with partisan politics and is therefore more likely to remind people of their existing political beliefs than to spark re-consideration of the issue. As a reframing tool, the phrase "safety net" is dangerous.

FrameWorks also recommends that the field break up with the phrase "breaking the cycle of poverty." People think of cycles as natural and continuous; by definition, they repeat themselves. This association can activate fatalistic attitudes, reminding people of the widespread belief that little can be done to alleviate poverty. Moreover, the metaphor focuses attention on those who are experiencing poverty rather than its structural causes. As such, it does not disrupt default thinking about why people are poor — but it does leave plenty of room for people to assume that the cycle continues because parents "pass on" self-defeating habits and deficient values to their children.

listening to families' goals, identifying structural barriers to reaching them, and facilitating access to tangible and intangible resources needed to move the family forward. Thus, the two-generation movement not only centers families, but also seeks to redefine the terms of engagement with them.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

Members of the public think about parents as the primary — and virtually exclusive — influence on how their children turn out. Furthermore, people think about parenting as if it were impervious to external factors and actors. This widespread belief (known as the *Family Bubble* model) obscures the role that outside supports play in promoting family well-being. From here, people find it easy to conclude that parents in poverty are unworthy recipients of assistance; this model also fuels fatalistic attitudes, because people reason that social services will not make much difference because they operate outside the *Family Bubble.*

The public also models human services as a *Charity Work,* in which the noble or self-sacrificing "haves" magnanimously give to the "have nots" — but only to those who are "worthy" of largesse. It focuses on the moment of need, not on the conditions that led to that moment. The assumptions bound up in this *Charity Work* model are at odds with the two-generation movement's commitment to equity, which includes a critical perspective on how power is held and withheld along racial, gender, and class lines. Moreover, because the public pictures *Charity Work* as handing out tangible goods, they have difficulty grasping why the sector needs resources for professionalized staff, research, or advocacy.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To reframe, advocates must show how influences outside the *Family Bubble* threaten or promote well-being, and move from the language of charity to the language of partnership. Communications should paint a picture of how specialists partner with families to drive positive outcomes, and they should offer a variety of examples that illustrate the creativity and comprehensiveness of two-generation approaches. Finally, advocates should position the work as a team effort — with both professionals and families making important contributions — rather than as a one-way transfer of services from provider to recipient.

What Helps

Extend the *Constructing Well-being* metaphor to illustrate the idea of co-constructing well-being with families. The metaphor allows communicators to replace the vocabulary of charity — like *serve, beneficiaries,* or *recipients* — with the language of co-construction, which suggests a mutually benefcal relationship between the public sector and the public.

See the example on the following page:

Well-being, like any complicated construction project, requires a team of people with different specialties. Just as different types of contractors take on different aspects of building a house, different types of people — family members and professionals — construct family well-being. Imagine families that need to retool to support a child with a serious disability or health problem. Family caregivers know their children better than anyone else — and know where their family is well equipped to address the challenge, and where they may need support. Professionals who specialize in different areas — be it mental health or parent coaching — know how to make the most of the family's skills and strengths.

Watch Out for These Synonym Traps:

When advocates use words like "success," "self-sufficiency," and "wellness" to talk about positive family outcomes, they may not realize that these terms have negative frame effects. The term "self-sufficiency" comes from and reinforces the foundational American belief in individualism, which undermines support for public programming and government intervention. FrameWorks' researchers found that Americans equate the concept of "success" with financial security, which limits support for programs aimed at other goals. Americans also see "success" as highly personalized, assuming that it is a state that people define for themselves — an attitude that is incompatible with advocates' views of equity. The word "wellness," meanwhile, connotes lifestyle activities like yoga and meditation among members of the public, and can be interpreted as referring to "anti-obesity efforts" among policymakers. Our advice: even though it may be a bit repetitive, stick to "well-being" to describe the ultimate goal of two-generation approaches.

5. TALK THE WALK: ADVANCE EQUITY BY TALKING ABOUT POLICIES AS WAYS TO RESET POWER RELATIONSHIPS.

Two-generation strategies seek not only a different approach to program design, but a different mindset and approach to anti-poverty policy and programs. The field is challenging the dominant paradigm of policymaking, in which the attitudes and assumptions of those making policy are given far greater weight than the needs, preferences, or experiences of those affected by the policy. This analysis is rooted in an understanding of structural

and institutional racism and sexism, which have translated social bias into inequitable policies and programs that have excluded women and people of color from sharing in America's prosperity.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

Americans readily reach for entrenched assumptions already described — like *Individualism* and the reduction of anti-poverty efforts to *Charity Work* — to explain why poverty exists and reassure themselves that society has already provided for the needy. When issues of racial or gender inequities are raised, people additionally appeal to a model of *Historical Progress,* which holds that legal or institutional discrimination is a thing of the past in the US. Reasoning from this model, people find it easy to conclude that advocates who call out racism or other forms of bias are probably self-interested, pandering for votes or making excuses for one's own failings. Another challenging pattern of thinking is *Fatalism,* the idea that social problems are so intractable that efforts to change them are doomed to fail and that change-makers are pursuing unrealistic goals.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To reframe, advocates must deftly navigate both the opinion that America does not have a racism problem and the opinion that America cannot solve its racism problem. To accomplish this, two-generation advocates must highlight both contemporary harm (how current policies or institutional practices are having unfair consequences) and innovative solutions (how new ways of addressing the issue can yield unexpected results.)

What Helps

The two-generation field has at least two novel ways of redressing long-standing power imbalances: attending to social capital as an aspect of well-being, and insisting that citizens are meaningfully engaged in designing and redesigning public policies and programs that affect them. Highlighting these two innovative themes can help to ward off the assumption that the problem cannot be solved. Moreover, these two solutions-oriented themes offer fresh ways to talk about the shortcomings of current policies. It can help to lead with a two-generation practice — such as listening to families — and then contrast it with the old way of doing things.

Our whole family approach is involving families of color in analyzing where existing efforts are falling short and what needs to be changed for the programs to work for all families, for their families. The alternative — which we have tried for decades — is to assume that government understands the problem and can plug in a solution. Hungry family? Give them some food assistance. This is short-sighted, as it doesn't engage the knowledge that families bring about the real nature of the issue. We've heard families point out the lack of grocery stores in Black neighborhoods and that public transit is less reliable on the side of town where they live. Those are different directions to pursue, policy-wise. We have given up the assumption that we know what's best, and that instead, good policy and good governance is made by, and with, the people.

6. WIDEN THE LENS: ZOOM OUT TO SHOW THE POLICIES AND PROCESSES THAT CREATE INEQUITIES, RATHER THAN ZOOMING IN ON THE PEOPLE AND GROUPS THAT ARE AFFECTED BY THEM.

Economic experts locate the source of poverty in policies, not people, and note that current policies are widening economic inequality rather than narrowing it. Accordingly, two-generation approaches include advocacy for policies that create a more equitable, more inclusive economy.

Equity, in turn, demands that greater resources be devoted to groups that have been disadvantaged or damaged by the status quo. To accomplish this, many two-generation approaches advocate to disrupt structural racism and sexism — systems wherein public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms perpetuate inequality. Others work toward equity by differentiating models of service delivery; for instance, in taking a trauma-informed approach, human services models acknowledge that past adversity shapes not only people's lives but also appropriate ways to respond to their needs.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

The public has a thin understanding of the complicated web of factors that create and perpetuate poverty and the causes and effects of income inequality and lack of access to resources.[4] As a result, people fall back on familiar, little-picture explanations like *Individualism* and the *Culture of Poverty*. To further complicate the communications scenario, the public holds a model of *Economic Naturalism,* viewing the economy as shaped by mysterious market forces beyond individual or societal control. This model makes it difficult for the public to grasp how and where policy changes can reduce overall levels of poverty and instead primes fatalism about the possibility of reining in "the economy."

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To build support for policy and systems change, advocates must build the public's sense that change is possible — that poverty need not be a permanent feature of society. Reframing this issue also requires a vocabulary that is not interpreted as partisan or polemical. When communications come from a recognizable political point of view, "myside bias" is likely to kick in, leading people to orient themselves to information and attitudes that are consistent with their existing political identities rather than to open themselves up to new ways of thinking.

What Helps

By unpacking the specific ways in which inequities are created, reproduced, and maintained, advocates can help the public understand the societal causes and consequences of poverty and to see two-generation approaches as sensible solutions. A list of policies that exacerbate or alleviate poverty will not suffice. Instead of merely naming anti-poverty policies, advocates must explain how they work. Carefully crafted "what-affects-what" sequences, known as explanatory chains, provide the public with alternative ways to understand social problems and lead them to embrace advocates' suggested solutions.

Because the problem to be solved is both complex and a matter of political debate, a pragmatic, reasonable tone is important. Lofty language that makes bold claims about radical transformation may inspire the choir — but will not resonate much beyond it. Condemnations of specific elected leaders or interest groups will likewise narrow the constituency.

The following examples illustrate how tone and explanation work together to invite the public into a meaningful dialogue about the connections between policy and poverty.

POINTING TO POVERTY'S ROLE IN POLICY – PRODUCTIVELY

Two-generation approaches seek to advance racial, gender, and class equity. To work toward equity, advocates need to offer alternative explanations of how disparities arise. These examples show how explanatory techniques illuminate the underlying causes of economic and social inequality.

Be sure to explain how multiple social stressors pile up on marginalized families. The *Constructing Well-being* metaphor can help here. Translating the concept of vulnerability into a "lack of building materials" helps people understand the problem as a lack of resources, not of willpower. And comparing social stressors to "unpredictable weather" helps people understand the external, or societal, nature of adversity and recognize that it affects families in the same way that strong storms threaten the stability and integrity of a building. The metaphor can be extended to explain the "weathering" effects of systemic racism, implicit bias against marginalized groups, and other institutional and social norms that maintain inequities.

"All families encounter problems: anyone can lose of a job, encounter a legal problem, or a face a big increase in rent. But not everyone is in the same position to weather these life storms. Some families don't have access to the materials it takes to build well-being; some people grow

up without access to medical care and develop lifelong health problems as a result; some attend schools that don't prepare them for today's economy, and are locked into lower-wage jobs now. Others have a history of trauma, abuse, or neglect, which weakens their emotional and physical health."

"Some families are on shaky foundations and need a great deal of support. Others may have overcome hard times in the past but need support now; their well-being, in other words, has weathered so many storms that repair and maintenance are in order. This is especially true for people who experience discrimination on a daily basis: people of color, immigrants, LGBT families, and others who are unfairly judged based on harmful stereotypes. Our state's health and human services departments are shoring up the foundations of well-being for families experiencing instability and making sure that parents and children can thrive together. We call this a two-generation approach."

While the *Constructing Well-being* metaphor helps people reorganize their thinking about the causes and effects of poverty, the metaphor is not the entire message. Explanatory chains help people see how larger economic policies and forces affect people and their lived experiences. Note how the middle paragraph example elaborates on the role of housing in overall well-being, while the final section mentions a few other relevant policy domains. This mix of depth and breadth is more effective than a comprehensive list that gives all domains equal weight, which does not build understanding but does fuel fatalism.

"We all recognize the bricks and mortar of well-being: social relationships, opportunities to maintain physical and mental health, meaningful work that can sustain a family, safe homes, enough healthy food. When these materials aren't available in a community, the foundations of well-being are weak."

"In our state, the cost of renting or buying a home has increased faster than local wages, putting affordable housing out of reach for many workers. When housing costs are high, people move away from job centers, and then face long commutes. This unravels our civic and social fabric — fraying community life and pulling parents away from their children. The cost of housing also affects health. When housing is expensive, it's harder to pay medical bills and eat well, which leads to chronic disease and other health problems. All of this is to say: one area of well-being affects others."

"A good home is one essential building block of well-being — but it is also built by healthy food, quality education, and accessible transportation. If we allow our policies to block access to these foundational elements, we're resigning our communities to higher levels of poverty and eroding well-being. On the other hand, by updating our policies so that families can thrive, we'll unlock the potential of our state. That's why our Thriving Together Initiative is taking a look at the many factors that affect families, and making sure that our programs are taking them all into account, to truly build well-being."

7. BE THE CHANGE: POSITION TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES AS AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO APPROACH PROBLEMS.

The anti-poverty policies developed in the middle and late 20th century generally modeled poverty as a lack of tangible resources (e.g., inadequate food, clothing, or shelter) and approached these visible symptoms of poverty as discrete problems with obvious solutions. Anti-poverty programs of this era were designed in isolation, and over time, each developed different funding streams, eligibility requirements, outcome measures, and impact evaluation practices.

Today's experts agree that different aspects of poverty, in areas such as health, education, and housing, do not operate in isolation; rather, they are a web of interdependent factors. Understanding this, two-generation approaches integrate systems to improve impact. This means streamlining and coordinating programs to make it easier for families to apply for and receive resources for which they are eligible. But these approaches are not limited to simply removing bureaucratic barriers. The strongest apply the principle of integration holistically at every stage in the policy implementation process, from budgeting to evaluation.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

Americans — both policymakers and citizens — are quick to assert that *Government Is Inefficient*. They understand government as both bloated and incompetent. This fatalistic stance toward the public sector leads many to reject any initiatives that smack of program expansion. Neither mild appeals to "reform" nor bold calls for "transformation" do much good in the face of a widely shared, oft-voiced belief that previous attempts at improvement have largely failed.

In addition to skepticism of government in general, public thinking about human services in particular imposes additional barriers to communicating about two-generation programs. Americans think of human services as "people helping people": service providers, in this way of thinking, give

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people in need tangible goods like food and clothing. Americans lack understanding of the network of programs and policies that comprise federal, state, and local health and human services systems. And, when thinking of direct services, Americans reason from a model that *Supports Should Be Temporary* — that human services should provide tangible benefits for limited periods of time and only when people are in dire circumstances. Two-generation approaches, however, are characterized by a focus on systems, a holistic approach, and longer periods of service — all of which are at odds with how people typically think about social services.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To reframe, two-generation advocates need to offer an alternative view of government that highlights its unique position in providing critical infrastructure and in solving problems that provide a public good. Advocates also need to channel public attention toward human development and away from direct services so that people can productively consider comprehensive approaches to working with children and families.

What Helps

Two-generation approaches ask for bold changes to health and human services systems and more sensible alignment between programs and policies. Expressing the need for systems change — without condemning government in one breath and suggesting it as the solution in the next — is challenging, but doable. Mechanistic metaphors and practical examples allow communicators to tap into the American culture of problem-solving. See the next page for examples of explanatory techniques that can do this work.

FRAMING THE CHALLENGE OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

CHOOSE AND USE CLEAR EXAMPLES

When communicating with audiences new to the two-generation model, it is important to illustrate the concept in a way that makes it clear *and* steers clear of communications traps. To accomplish this, stick to the simplest examples of programs that clearly and directly support both children and adults. If you only have the time or space to give one example, choose one that is unlikely to trigger negative stereotypes about recipients of public benefits. Our advice: the field's go-to example should be connecting supports for student parents with supports for early childhood development.

"Our state is updating our programs and services so that the needs of both children and their adult caregivers are addressed together. For example, if the state offers tuition grants or education loans for young adults enrolled in college or career training programs, it makes sense to see if participants have children and connect those who do to child care programs on the weekends or in the evenings. That way, parents can focus on making the most of their educational opportunities while their children's development is being supported. The community benefits in the near term from a more highly skilled workforce, and in the long term from the future contributions of children whose potential is fostered from the start."

When communications space allows, a "life stage" example that highlights specific needs at specific times helps reinforce the overall human development frame.

"Two-generation approaches to building well-being considers the supports and resources that are needed at different stages of family life. When a newborn arrives, nature begins to rewire the brains of both babies and parents, making changes to brain architecture that could last a lifetime. During this sensitive period of development, families need fewer sources of stress and more time for positive interaction. When life's storms hit — such as the loss of a job, a death in the family, or a traumatic event — families may need guidance as they cope with severe stress. At other points, families may need help figuring out how to find programs that fit their needs, such as early learning centers or parenting support groups. By taking into account the particular moment in the family's life, a two-generation approach ensures that families have the right materials at the right time to construct, maintain, or repair well-being."

Expressing the need for systems change — without condemning goverment in one breath and suggesting it as the solution in the next — is challenging, but doable.

ALIGNING AND EXTENDING THE TRACKS FOR DEVELOPMENT: A METAPHOR FOR SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

When talking with audiences that want or need to consider the process of systems integration, compare the task of aligning programs or agency efforts to ensuring that train tracks line up well: *Train systems depend on solid, coordinated tracks. In the same way, our communities depend on systems that strengthen and align the programs that serve children and families.* This metaphor has been shown to redirect the assumption that programs should only operate for short periods of time. By focusing attention on high-quality, well timed, and coordinated services, communicators can navigate around the idea that public sector involvement in anti-poverty efforts only makes matters worse. The Tracks metaphor also gives people language and tools to consider what makes certain programs effective by focusing attention on goals and destinations.

"Over time, our state has built a human services system that works a lot like a system of train tracks. This system is designed to move our community forward. Its various initiatives support the well-being of children and families, which makes our communities more socially and economically vibrant. These initiatives include quality early learning programs that help children move smoothly into elementary school as well as supports for adults pursuing postsecondary training or other employment-related education."

"At times, however, these tracks lack the function of a good junction. A family breadwinner, for example, might be eligible for an education grant but unable to take advantage of it because quality child care is too expensive. Our state's employment assistance efforts should line up with its child care supports. This might involve a subsidy, but it might be as simple as a case worker starting a conversation about friends and family who might be reliable help. Aligning these programs, connecting them when needed, and extending or rerouting those that need it makes our work more effective. Lining up the tracks that serve children and adults is a two-generation approach to human services, and it is getting our state where it needs to go."

WHAT ABOUT SILOES?

Finally, if the goal is to expand and create, avoid metaphors that draw on the domain of destruction. Consider "breaking down siloes," a field favorite. Most people either do not understand how public agencies function or assume that they are dysfunctional. As a result, people are likely to consider "siloed" funding,

services, or programs as either a problem that cannot be solved or one that is not worth solving. And after all, siloes are *meant* to keep the things inside them separate and apart, are they not?

The field's habit of talking about "breaking down siloes" communicates that something needs to be fixed, which begs the question: Why did the government build disconnected systems in the first place? *Tracks* are more effective metaphors for the need to integrate and coordinate support systems. Both involve the imagery and language of "moving parts," which focuses attention on how to coordinate programs and why they create a more holistic system.

8. SHARE THE SCIENCE: APPEAL TO BRAIN DEVELOPMENT TO BOLSTER THE CASE FOR TWO–GENERATION APPROACHES.

Two-generation approaches support healthy child-adult interactions, which are vital to positive child development outcomes. It builds on scientific discoveries about early brain development, such as the incredible speed and extent of brain development in the earliest stages of life; the critical role that attuned, consistent interaction plays in fostering healthy development; and the serious negative impact of adversity in the early years. But, in keeping with its commitment to simultaneous attention to children and the adults in their lives, two-generation approaches integrate the science of early childhood with the science of parenting. For instance, two-generation approaches look to new evidence, like neuroimaging studies, that demonstrate that the early stages of parenting are a time of change in adult brains.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

Americans have grown tremendously in their appreciation of early childhood as an important developmental period. Nevertheless, they still generally assume that children develop automatically, following "natural" trajectories of physical growth and maturation. Without a way to think about development as a neurological process, people fall back on little-picture or vague explanations for how it works, like the influence of "loving parents" or the need for "good environments." What is more, the public has yet to absorb the latest insights into the neurobiological changes that occur later in life, such as the recent discovery that new parents' brains also undergo significant neural rewiring as they experience new events, emotions, and challenges.[5]

Without an understanding of *how* brains change, people find it difficult to believe that brains can change and misunderstand the kind of interventions that support healthy development at this stage. What is more, the public lacks ways of thinking productively about how adversity affects human development. People toggle between dismissing the impact of adversity and overstating it. At times, they model children and parents as virtually invincible; at others, they think of trauma as causing damage that is virtually irreversible. In both scenarios, Americans easily dismiss the need for mental health supports as part of anti-poverty efforts; they think that "people should just overcome their struggles" or that "no amount of support can repair 'damaged goods.'"

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

The conversation about health and well-being currently rests on pop psychology, such as the belief that people's attitudes determine their outcomes. Advocates need to reframe it around human biology. Communications should help the public understand that parents and children are both undergoing sensitive developmental periods and that experiences and environments — both positive and negative — influence developmental trajectories, for better or worse. Communications should also help the public understand what well-timed supports look like by offering examples of how programs and policies positively influence the growth of children and adult caregivers in an integrated way.

What Helps

The two-generation field can benefit from the science translation techniques that have helped propel advances in early childhood policy.[6] The big idea advanced by the "brain frame" is that brains are built, not born — and that this recent scientific insights has critical implications for our policies and practices. Intentionally designed metaphors have enabled advocates to translate complex scientific concepts into everyday language, providing a foundation for understanding better approaches to early learning and family supports. Other framing techniques remind the public that families are part of a larger social context, which makes it easier to appreciate why public policy has a legitimate role in supporting them. See the next page for examples of how to apply some of these techniques to communications about two-generation approaches.

APPLYING THE BRAIN FRAME TO TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES

From a communications point of view, appealing to brain science is a no-brainer for the two-gen field. It offers a way to steer discourse away from the tired tropes that have constrained welfare policy for decades and toward the theme of human development. By focusing on new evidence that new parents experience significant neurobiological changes, advocates can position two-generation models as a sensible way to update the way family programs work. Here is one example of how to structure such messaging.

Early Parenthood: A Great Time to Build Well-being

Every day, about 10,000 babies are born in the United States, each with immense promise. As these newborns take their first breaths, about 20,000 Americans become new parents. They come to the role with a diverse set of experiences and circumstances, but new research suggests that all have one thing in common: Their brain architecture is about to be remodeled.

Over the past 30 years, scientists have shown that the first three years of brain development are foundational, changing the way we understand early childhood. In the earliest stages of life, babies' brains develop rapidly, forming more than 1 million new neural connections per second. Now, neuroscientists have evidence that becoming a *parent* permits new construction in the brain. For example, the neural connections that handle social information, like the ability to interpret others' emotions, are rewired as parents learn to make sense of babies' cries. The brain circuits that affect motivation and emotional regulation can be rewired during this period, too.[7] For young adults whose home or school experiences did not hard-wire these kinds of skills, becoming a new parent offers a second chance to build them in. On the other hand, depending on the circumstances, there is a risk of missing the opportunity.

Parents have long talked about how children change their perspectives on life, but we now have a deeper understanding of exactly how this works. It is time to update the policies and programs that focus on families, so they recognize early parenting as an important stage in the life course. Because this is a moment when important and lasting changes can be made, health and education programs stand to have greater impact. The brain is also highly sensitive to stress during this period. Without the essential materials for well-being, like time to bond, financial security, and supportive relationships, this "brain" construction project can take place on shaky ground. There is even the risk that severely stressful early parenting experiences end up strengthening undesirable circuits in the adult brain, like those for fear, anger, or poor coping mechanisms. Policies and programs that reduce stressors on new families, like paid family leave and parent support groups, are critical. With two busy brain construction projects are happening simultaneously, we need to pay special attention to this stage of life. Our state is taking a "two-generation approach" to families by developing policies and programs that consider the developmental stages and needs of both children and their caregivers.

9. EMBRACE THE METHODICAL: EMPHASIZE RIGOROUS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AS A HALLMARK OF TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES.

A sound two-generation approach uses data to drive decisions in multiple ways. By assessing what has or has not worked elsewhere, advocates can design evidence-based programs that absorb lessons from prior efforts. Its distinctive characteristic is an emphasis on the interconnected aspects of life, whether the problem at hand is the daily challenges of family life, the redesign of government funding streams, or the persistent effects of systemic racism. Two-generation approaches also consistently identify and remove barriers to program participation — a process that requires compiling multiple forms of data and especially family experiences and perspectives.

What Makes It Hard to Get This Idea Across?

The theme of improving public programs is difficult to advance given widely shared American beliefs that government is slow, inefficient, and inept. The task is complicated further for two-generation advocates because many states are embracing the idea of consulting families, so their experiences can inform solutions. While sound, this practice is easily misunderstood. Practitioners are likely to hold a *Subjective Experience* model of implementation, believing that local conditions and individual experiences differ so much from one context to another that there is little that can work across a system or across different contexts. Put another way, the idea of *data-driven systems change* comes up against the assumption that there is no way to establish a meaningful systems-level "target" and that, no matter the goal, government will not reach it.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

To reframe, advocates must find ways to elaborate on the theme that *progress is possible, and it is happening.* This may involve data but will require strategies that go beyond attempts to "prove" it and include framing techniques that channel attention to the desired interpretation of the data.

What Helps

To ward off fatalism, elaborate on the value of *Progress.* Messages that appeal to this value help both policy stakeholders and practitioners express optimism that improvement is possible despite challenges. To advance this theme, draw on phrases like "changing with the times," "forward-thinking," "moving ahead," "moving forward," "updating what we do," and "creating next-generation models."

Talk about using "improvement science" to arrive at careful, thoughtful solutions that are built through a test-and-learn approach. This can shift policy stakeholder thinking away from the unproductive understanding that *Subjective Experience* is an inherently limited source of data.

Avoid highlighting only qualitative data or giving the impression that the model is built on subjective impressions of the problem and its solution. (Talking about "listening to families" or "meeting families where they are" in isolation could trigger this kind of thinking.) Instead, hew toward the empirical with phrases like "careful decision-making," "methodical approach," "step-by-step approach," "test-and-learn," or "thoughtful course of action."

Give simple examples of how data can drive better government: "Surveys show that 22 percent of college students are parents, but colleges have been slow to provide on-campus child care options or course schedules that work for people with children. Our public community colleges can improve both both early childhood development and career pathways by developing great child centers on campuses."

10. MANAGE THE MYTHS: ANTICIPATE AND NAVIGATE MISCONCEPTIONS, BUT DO NOT RESTATE OR REBUT THEM.

Toxic narratives have long circulated about public benefit programs, such as the notion that they are rife with waste, fraud, and abuse; the idea that providing people with resources saps their motivation to work; and the conclusion that America lost its "war" on poverty. Experts note that these themes, though oft-repeated, are not well supported by evidence. Advocates offer facts that should speak for themselves: some of the greatest systemic waste comes from misguided approaches to verifying program eligibility; rates of child poverty have hit an all-time low.

What Makes It Hard to Change Minds?

Due to the way people process and recall information, repeating misconceptions can reinforce them — even if the intended effect is to correct or negate the misconception. Chalk this phenomenon up to *familiarity bias,* the cognitive pattern that leads people to perceive information that they have encountered before as more likely to be true than new information.

What Reframing Needs to Accomplish

Reframing is not rebutting. A reframe must offer a genuinely alternative way of thinking about an issue; it must shift the narrative the sector tells, and that the public hears, rather than operating within the narrow limits of the existing narrative.

What Helps

Shifting the narrative is the major reframing challenge lying before the human services sector in general and the two-generation movement in particular. As long as advocates continue to communicate within its current frames, the sector's status and funding will remain at risk — and will be insufficient to support a robust approach that not only provides vital services but also does the hard work of driving systems change.

To reframe, take notice of — and avoid — framing adopted by the human services sector to defend against the widespread myths about public programs and their participants. Phrases like "working families," "low-wage earners," "on the path to self-sufficiency," and "building financial stability" all assert the *worthiness* of recipients by foregrounding their efforts to engage in the workforce. The prime placement of certain types of data, such as statistics demonstrating low rates of fraud or high rates of movement from *welfare to work,* aim to counter toxic narratives about people who abuse the system. Both, and many other counterpoint techniques, operate within a larger frame that concedes that two-generation work is "about" service delivery.

When you notice that a communication proceeds as if it is part of an ongoing argument with the "other side," stop, rethink, and reframe. Use the other recommendations in this playbook, such as centering the need to build well-being, to advance a compelling, complete counternarrative about what we can accomplish, together, by rethinking how we support families.

When you notice that a communication proceeds as if it is part of an ongoing argument with the "other side," stop, rethink, and reframe.

ABOUT THE EVIDENCE BEHIND THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

To distill key assumptions about two-generation principles and practices, FrameWorks researchers reviewed approximately 1,500 pages of reports, pamphlets, presentation slides, and other printed material supplied by Ascend at the Aspen Institute. This material included Ascend publications as well as documents from other organizations and networks that promote two-generation approaches. Analysts looked for recurring themes and unspoken assumptions to identify the central tenets of two-generation approaches.

With the field's core concepts in mind, analysts then queried FrameWorks' voluminous database of studies on the communications aspects of issues related to two-generation approaches, including studies of public thinking and frame testing on the following topics:

- Early childhood development (brain development, early learning, child maltreatment, child mental health, childhood adversity and resilience, executive function, parenting, systems of care)

- Education and education reform

- Human services (adult mental health, government, human services)

- Evidence and implementation (improvement science, implementation science)

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