



Effective Strategies – Equitable Systems – Strong Communities

Strengthening the Ecosystem for Community Power Building: How to get Started



Meet Community Science

Effective Strategies. Equitable Systems. Strong Communities.



Community Science is an award-winning research and development organization that works with governments, foundations, and non-profit organizations on solutions to social problems through community and other systems changes fostering learning and improved capacity for social change.



A BCT Partners Company



Welcome

Your Host & Practitioner:



Jasmine Williams-Washington, Ph.D.
Managing Associate
Community Science

Your Panel:



Robert A. Carreau
Executive Director
The Schenectady Foundation



David Chavis, Ph.D.
Senior Fellow
Community Science



Agenda



Community-Driven Systems Change

Impact: The Schenectady Experience

The Ecosystem Approach

The 90-Day "Quick Win" Strategy

The Role of Funders

Lessons Learned

Community Voices



Impact: The Schenectady Experience



What is Community-Driven Systems Change?

Community-driven systems change occurs when members of a historically disadvantaged community lead and take collective action to achieve equitable system changes.

Why Community-Driven System Change?

- Gets systems to respond more quickly and appropriately to the needs and experiences of historically disenfranchised groups.
- Increases overall civic engagement (e.g., voting, volunteerism, etc.) and day-to-day democracy
- Advances equity and Inclusion
- Builds positive intergroup relations
- More sense of control and community among all people leads to greater physical, social, and behavioral health.

"Something great about this process is the diverse group of leaders of different backgrounds coming together to challenge each other to agree on a tangible goal... I believe in the City of Schenectady and its leaders and it's great to see we are in a position where we are willing to have conversations and hold each other accountable"

Challenges of Community-Driven Systems Change Work

- Capacity Gaps
- Alignment and Collaboration
- History
- Power Differences
- Sustaining Engagement
- Sustainability of Resources
- Institutional Resistance/Backlash



The Four Strategy Pillars

Core areas of the strategy to systemically *strengthen the infrastructure and culture of engagement*. Acting and investing in the pillars is the heart of the Community Drive Systems Change Strategy.

The Ecosystem Approach



Strengthen culture of powerful community and action by changing the narrative in public and social media.

Build capacity for transformative community engagement by creating a Power Building Intermediary (Capacity-Building Hub).

Foster collaboration among funders to sustain transformative community engagement through a Funders Table.

Bring Together Grassroots and other organizations to develop and take action on a common agenda through a Neighborhood Assembly.

The Big Picture: Quick Win Process

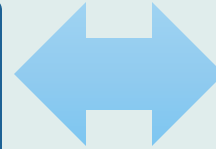
Community Change Council:
Strategy & Oversight



Power Building Hub:
Capacity Building
Capacity-Building Hub



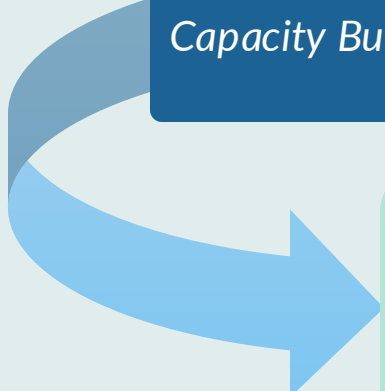
Funders Table:
Leverage Funds and Resources
Funders Collaborative



Neighborhood Assembly:
Community's Collective Agenda
Neighborhood Assembly



Community-Driven Initiatives:
Community's Collective Agenda to Act



Quick Win Strategy: Timeline

Consensus that we must not go back to policies and practices that weren't working!

From Covid Response to "One Schenectady"

2020

Fall 2021

2021-2022

2022

Winter 2023

1 Focus Group with Systems Leaders, 5 Community Conversations with Parents and Youth, Schenectady County Resident Survey (832 residents)

Community Engagement

Identified members for the inaugural Community Change Council to implement phase one of strategy.

Community Change Council

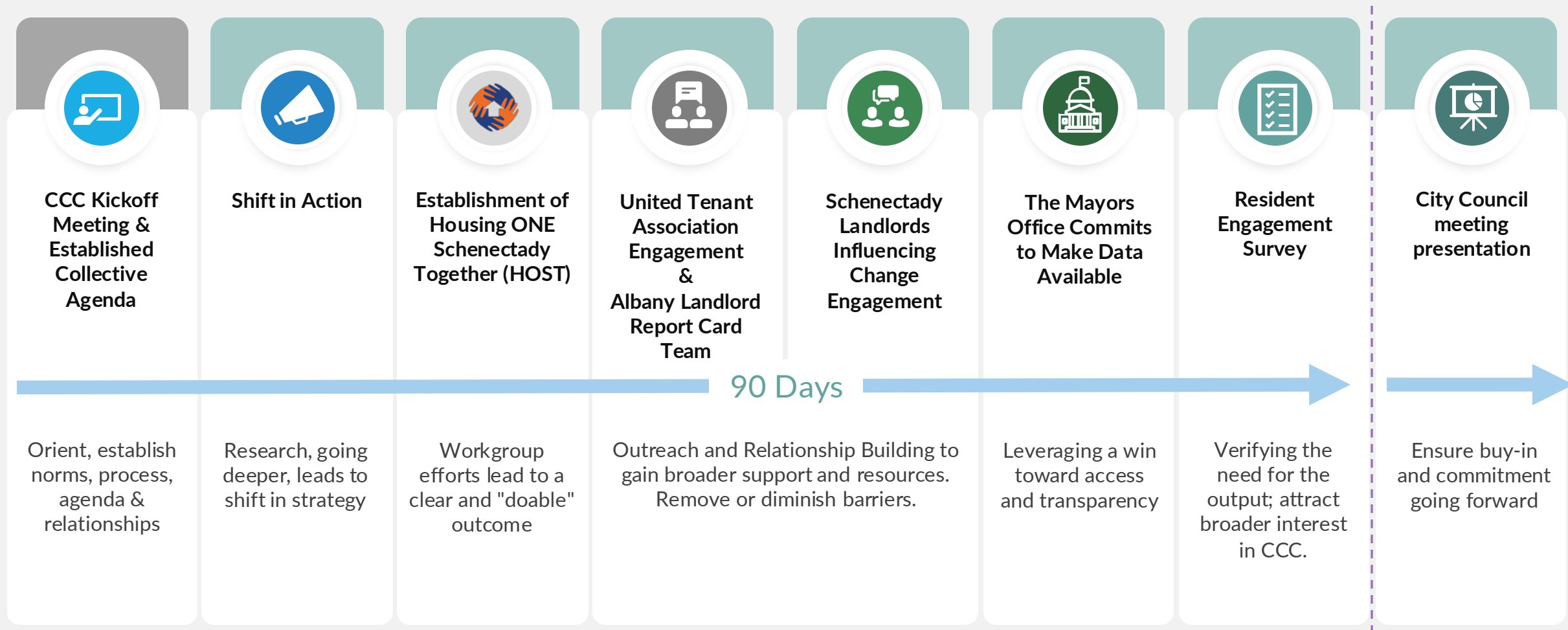
One Schenectady Strategy Working Group

Established One Schenectady Strategy Working Group to develop a strategy for Community Driven Systems Change

Community Driven Systems Change Strategy

Strategy delivered to Foundation governance for adoption

Quick Win Strategy: Community-Driven Systems Change in Action





Fueling Change: Establishing a Funders Table

- **Collaborative Success:** No single organization can achieve transformative change alone.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Involving the funding community and institutions to support local leaders.
- **Resource Mobilization:** Unite financial and other resources for community-driven change.
- **Capacity Building:** Empower resident-led organizations to implement effective strategies.
- **Learning and Innovation:** Explore successful initiatives locally and nationally to inform our efforts.



Fueling Change: Why Support Community-Driven Action

“People want and need a process like this! I can’t believe we pulled it off in 90 days!

Imagine what we can do next.”

- **Sustainable Impact:** Community ownership leads to lasting change.
- **Rooted Solutions:** Local insights drive effective, authentic strategies.
- **Equity Focused:** Amplifies voices of those most affected by systemic issues.
- **Builds Trust and Relationships:** Strengthens relationships between funders and communities.
- **Fosters Innovation:** Adaptive approaches tailored to real needs.
- **Systemic Transformation:** Catalyzes comprehensive change for broader impact.



Purpose and Role of Funders Table

- **Purpose:** To be a place for public and private funders to come together to learn about community power-building opportunities coordinate or collaborate on their support of these efforts.
- **Role:**
 - Presentations by experts and local leaders
 - Helping each other problem solve how to support these types of initiatives
 - Identifying common priorities for support
 - Sharing information on each other's work, opportunities in the local community to support, and sources of technical assistance.
 - Launching collective initiatives

Strategies to Sustain Progress

Do

- **Prerequisite: Build and sustain trust in the community** – relationships are key
- **Engage allied institution leaders who can support residents**
- **Bring your board along for the ride...** this is new and complex turf for many, so keep them informed.
- **Clarify your driving values** behind systems change work
- **Have a communications plan & be prepared for potential backlash**
- **Lean into your values** and bravely take this on.

Do Not

- **Underestimate the capacity building** needed to prepare residents
- **Expect notable impact** in a short period of time
- **Assume that you have** nothing more than money to offer
- **Try to control the process.** We're there to support resident leaders.

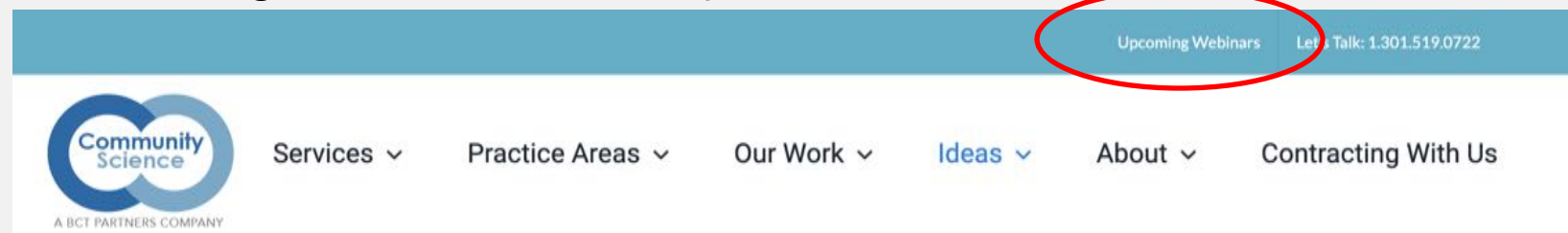
Access to Resources & Upcoming Talks

- Resources from this Webinar:
 - Available to newsletter subscribers
 - Emailed within one business week of the webinar
- Bringing Youth Voices to the Forefront: Using Research to Inform Responsive Practice and Policies
11/4/24 1pm ET
- Intergenerational Community Advisory Boards as a Tool to Support Research to Practice Efforts
11/14/24 1pm ET
- Find past webinars on our website under Ideas

The Schenectady Foundation

<https://www.schenectadyfoundation.org/>

Register Here: communityscience.com





THANK YOU