

## What E3 Alliance Must be The Best At:

There are many things every organization – certainly every nonprofit – needs to be good at. Sustainable fundraising; leadership; prioritizing work; sharing credit for work with partners; the list goes on. But what are the few things that E3 Alliance – as a whole and across our staff – need to be *uniquely the best at* in order to achieve our mission?

1: Doing the Right Things. We exist to change the system of education (which is not really a system, but a set of often disconnected parts) in our region, cradle to career. There will NEVER be enough time or people or resources in E3 to do this. Therefore we must be *better than anyone else in the world* at picking what the RIGHT things to do are - innovative activities with the highest leverage for creating positive change. We will never be 100% correct. But we must be at least 75-80% right in picking those initiatives to spend our time on that can really make a difference in educational outcomes.

2: Delivering results. And doing so productively and efficiently. Change in education is often mind-bogglingly slow and ephemeral. We must build our credibility with partners and in the community by actually getting things done - delivering results and doing so with a sense of urgency. Not just talking but making things happen.

*These first two capabilities - picking the right things to do and then delivering results - will always be more important than completeness or quality. We can afford to do things imperfectly and incompletely so long as we are **making change happen on the right leverage points for positive change.***

*But what we are undertaking is **massive systemic change with utterly no structural authority over anyone to do it.** We cannot act through mandate or through traditional “command and control” reporting structures, so we must lead through influence. Leading through influence requires four more key capabilities:*

3: Building relationships of trust. Because we have no authority over partners, we must be able to quickly and effectively build relationships of trust in order to work together and lead to common action. This doesn't mean we need to be "liked." It means people can believe in our word, understand that we are trying to act objectively, know that we will deliver results, and know that we are acting to achieve the common good. Ultimately, it means that they must want to work WITH us to craft systems change and we must be willing and able to drive that change without necessarily getting the credit for it.

4: Having the best data. Data and research that is objective, trustworthy, accessible and understandable. Again, it does not have to be perfect, but it must be actionable. We must use our own data to determine “what the right things to do” are. Data can create our “burning platform” for change for external audiences and it can serve as a PUSH for action from partners. And it must be used to help us determine the right actions to take to make change happen and how to support continuous improvement.

5: Facilitating stakeholders with diverse missions and perspectives. To achieve our mission, we must actively engage and inspire many stakeholders to act for the common good - not just their own organization's mission or their individual job description. *Facilitating the action of collective impact* must be a core competency of ours.

6: Being doggedly persistent. The education “system” is a collection of huge bureaucracies that normally are averse to change. Sometimes, driving change means just not being willing to take “no” for an answer. We must be willing to challenge the status quo, look for alternative paths, build new relationships, find different solutions - whatever it takes to deliver on the results we know need to happen.