

Change at the Speed of Trust

Advancing Educational Opportunity Through Cross-Sector Collaboration in Louisville

Practitioner Guide

JORRIT DE JONG AND GAYLEN MOORE

Overview

A case study is a story about how a person or group of people faced and dealt with challenges or opportunities. It is based on desk research and interviews with key actors but does not provide analysis or conclusions. Written from the perspective of the protagonist(s), it is designed to raise questions and generate discussion about the issues they faced. Cases are meant to help participants develop analytic reasoning, listening, and judgment skills to strengthen their decision-making ability in other contexts.

A case-based conversation is a way to anchor a conceptual discussion to concrete examples. It can bring a case to life and allow participants to place themselves in the shoes of the case protagonist(s), while also allowing a variety of perspectives to surface. This guide is designed to help you lead a conversation about the case, “Change at the Speed of Trust: Advancing Educational Opportunity Through Cross-Sector Collaboration in Louisville.”

Role of a Facilitator

The facilitator leads a conversation with a clear beginning and end, ensures that everyone is heard, and keeps the group focused. The conversation can be broken into three distinct segments: exploring the case, applying the central questions of the case to your organization’s challenges, and formulating takeaway lessons. Some facilitation tips and tricks to keep in mind are below.

BEFORE the discussion

Make sure everyone takes the time to read the case. Participants also have the option to fill out the attached worksheets to prepare themselves for the case discussion. If you choose to use the worksheets, make sure you bring enough printouts for all. When setting up the room, think about situating participants where they can see you and each other. Designate a notetaker as well as a place where you can take notes on a flipchart or white board. Plan for at least sixty to seventy-five minutes to discuss the case and takeaways and have a clock in the room and/or an assigned timekeeper. Mention that you may interrupt participants in the interest of progressing the conversation.

DURING the discussion

Encourage participants to debate and share opinions. State very clearly that there is no right or wrong answer to the case—cases are written so that reasonable people can disagree and debate different ideas and approaches. Be careful not to allow yourself or others to dominate the discussion. If the conversation is getting heated or bogged down on a particular issue, consider allowing participants to talk in pairs for a few minutes before returning to a full group discussion. Do not worry about reaching consensus, just make the most of this opportunity to practice thinking and learning together!

Case Synopsis

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Louisville, Kentucky, found itself in the middle to the back of the pack among peer cities along a number of key measures of prosperity and quality of life. Since then, two consecutive mayors advanced collaborative efforts across sectors to increase students' college and career readiness and address the City's significant achievement gap. This case tells the story of how that work evolved under the leadership of Mayor Greg Fischer into an effort to effect system change in education from "cradle to career" through wraparound services and scholarship guarantees for graduating high school students.

Conversation Plan

Part 1: Exploring the Case (20-30 minutes)

The goal of this part of the conversation is to review the case from the point of view of the people involved. Suggested questions:

- *Who were the primary stakeholders for the Cradle to Career/Louisville Promise Initiative?*
- *What problem was the cabinet trying to solve?*
- *What did cabinet members seem to agree on?*
- *What did they disagree on?*

Part 2a: Diagnosing Collaborative Challenges (20-30 minutes)

This part of the discussion should allow participants to analyze the challenges the collaborators in Louisville faced and the choices they made. Suggested questions:

- *What were the primary challenges faced by the group?*
- *Was the group moving too quickly, too slowly, or at the right pace? Why?*
- *Was the collaboration focusing too much on quality of outcomes, speed, or consensus, at the expense of the other two?*
- *What would you have done to ensure the future success of the cabinet's efforts?*

Part 2b: Application (20 minutes)

If time allows, participants may break into groups to apply the concepts discussed to their own collaborative challenges.

- *What is similar about the challenges you are facing in your collaborative work?*
- *What other challenges do you face in this work?*

- *What kind of trade-offs are you making?*
- *What kind of action or leadership will support progress?*

Part 3: Formulating Lessons (15-20 minutes)

This part of the conversation focuses on the lessons of the case that participants will continue to reflect on and apply to collaborative challenges in their work. High-level takeaways to review after a productive discussion might include:

- Collaboration is difficult; it helps to diagnose the particular challenges you encounter along the way—*with* your collaborators.
- Collaborative governance requires a broad repertoire of leadership behaviors, organizational capabilities, and continuous strategic adjustment.
- It is helpful to reflect on success and struggle across different collaborations.

Appendix

Optional Worksheet 1 Pre-discussion Questions:

1. *Who were the primary stakeholders for the Cradle to Career/Louisville Promise Initiative?*
2. *What problem was the cabinet trying to solve?*
3. *What did cabinet members seem to agree on?*
4. *What did they disagree on?*

Optional Worksheet 2 Trade-Offs in Collaborative Enterprise

In every collaboration, the goal is to come to some kind of consensus about desired ends and means and move as quickly as possible to a high-quality outcome. This kind of work is challenging, and as a result, there are often trade-offs between quality, consensus, and speed.

Please circle which **two** you think the collaborators in Louisville have focused on, at the expense of the third:

Quality

A robust collaborative
approach to solving the problem

Consensus

Stakeholder inclusion and agreement
on desired outcomes and preferred
means

Speed

Moving fast enough to deliver
results in the short term

