Tackling Intention-Impact Gaps

The Upshot

- Over the last decade, we've heard from so many campaign and initiative leaders about how their efforts haven't converted to impact in the ways they had hoped and expected.

- Addressing this pervasive issue—what we call "intention-impact gaps"—demands a different approach to planning and collective action.

Key Issue Unpacked

The last decade of early literacy work is unparalleled:

- The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading launched in 300+ communities, and birth-to-eight initiatives became a key community-based strategy for literacy improvement.

- Private-public partnerships became a vehicle for major investments in boosting early literacy rates.

- Communities and school districts organized for learning experiences to prepare students for college and career, driven by new standards.

- States took legislative action around 3rd grade reading levels, including screening to identify young, at-risk readers.

States

Philanthropists

School Districts

Communities
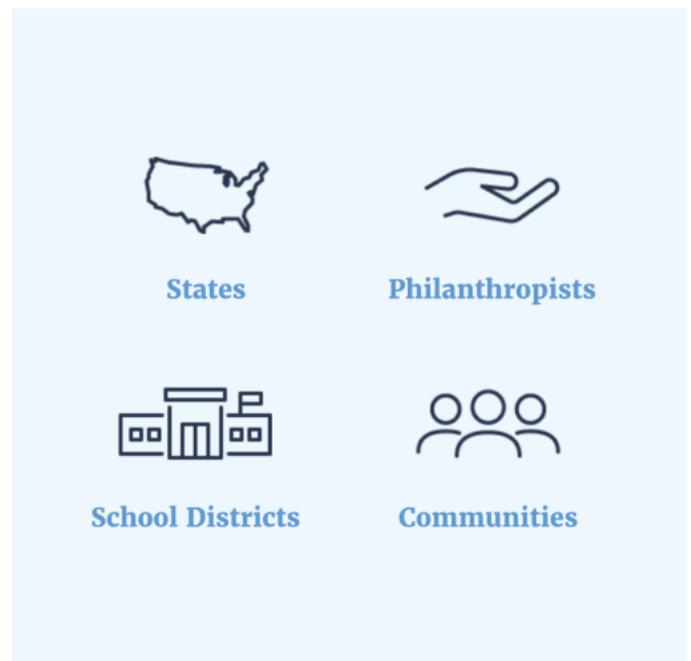
Key Issue Addressed

So how does the field move forward? Through our work with hundreds of partners, we have identified 5 core challenges that fuel intention-impact gaps:

1.
There is too much activity and/or too many loosely connected parts, and yet the impact strategy is to keep adding to the landscape.

2.
The literacy goals are too broad and visionary to deliver on.

3.
If there are measurable goals, a plan for monitoring and sharing progress is often missing.

4.
Many campaigns and initiatives rally around a 3rd grade goal, but their resources and activity aren't sufficient to get there. (see below)

5.
There is limited attention to identifying key ingredients that may be driving measurable change.

Reading Campaigns and Initiatives

*Infrastructure demands (e.g., planning, staffing, funding, leadership) increase as the work moves along either axis

Chart: vertical axis "Awareness Raising & Coordination Functions" (low to high), horizontal axis "Systems-Building Functions*" (low to high). Three circles: Broad, Visionary Goals; Data-Based Measurable Goals; Results-Based Goals for Scaling.*
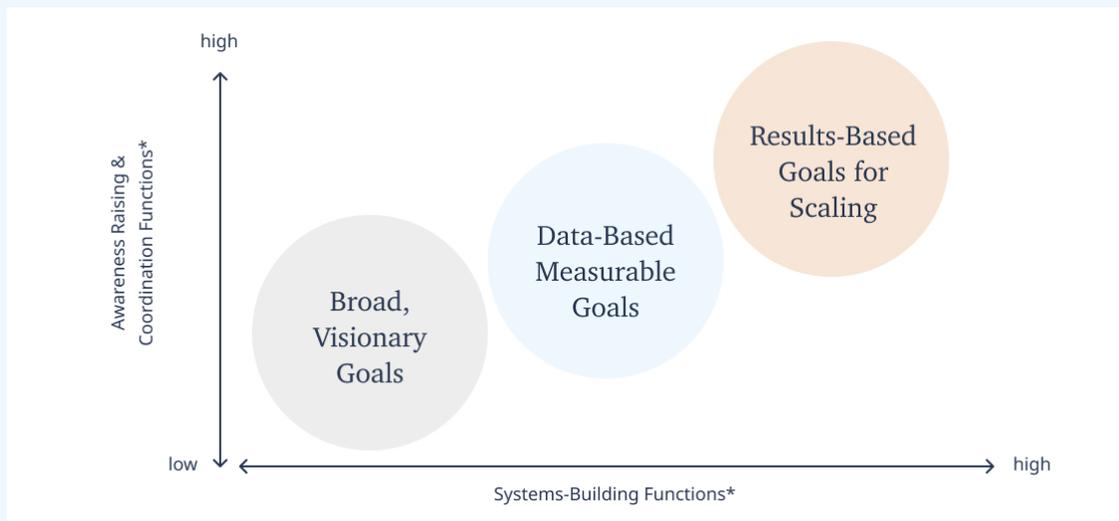
Take Action

1 Identify any intention-impact gaps that surface in your work.

2 Review the 5 core challenges.

3 Is there one that jumps out? Or are there two or more working in combination against meaningful results?

Find our impact briefs and case studies here