

PSO ENOUGH Strategic Visioning Session

Facilitators: Queenstar Akrong, David Blount, Rachel Warne, Subira Brown

Date: June 15, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 226 S Caroline Street, Baltimore, MD 21231

Attendance

Title	# of Representatives
Bridgspan	1
William Julius Wilson Institute (WJWI)	2
Residents	5
PSO Partners	10
USI Staff	8

Session Overview & Purpose

Objectives and agenda for our strategic visioning session



Objectives for today

- Understand what would it take to truly reduce childhood poverty in the PSO footprint
- Reach a shared understanding of PSO's **top needs**—and our partnership's **vision for the future**
- Brainstorm **strategic priorities for our neighborhood** based on these needs and vision

Agenda

Timing	Session	Focus areas
9:30 – 10:20	Welcome and Context	Introductions, norms, overview of PSO / ENOUGH, and session goals
10:20 – 10:50	North Star	Define our collective goal for our partnership's work in the neighborhood
10:50 – 12:15	Top needs and strategic priorities	Data walk, breakout group discussions, and share outs
30-min lunch		
12:45 – 1:00	Voting exercise	As a group, identify top priorities for community needs
1:00 – 2:00	Capacity and assets for implementation	Capacity within our partnership to achieve our strategic priorities
2:00 – 2:30	Decision-making	Proposed decision-making framework and governance structure
2:30 – 3:00	Closing	Follow-up expectations and next steps

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Figure 2: Objectives/Agenda slide

This strategic visioning session is part of the **Maryland ENOUGH Initiative**, which aims to **reduce childhood poverty and increase economic mobility through community-led solutions**.

The purpose of the session was to:

- Develop a **shared long-term “North Star” vision** for the PSO neighborhood
- Identify **key community needs and strengths** through a data walk
- Co-create **3–5 year strategic priorities** aligned to that vision
- Begin identifying **partner roles, capacity, and collaborative opportunities**

Session Flow:

- Introductions and context
- Cradle-to-career framework overview

- North Star development
- Data walk and insights
- Strategic priority breakout discussions
- Voting exercise
- Capacity and “phone-a-friend” collaboration discussion

Check-In

Check-In: **What’s one thing you’re proud of in the PSO neighborhood?**

In addition, please provide your name, organization, and current role
when sharing



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Figure 3: Check-in slide

WJWI Staff welcomed participants and opened with introductions.

Each participant was invited to share:

"What is one thing you are most proud of in the PSO neighborhood?"

Highlighted Replies:

- **PSO Partner and Resident:** Highlighted pride in the **collaboration of residents, leaders, and community partners** coming together.
- **PSO Partner:** Shared excitement about the **new City Springs Elementary School development**, which is expected to bring increased opportunity and community engagement.
- **USI Staff:** The upcoming **market** that will be implemented into the footprint.
- **USI Staff:** Residents having access to **support on the property from USI and neighboring partners** living right in the footprint.

Session Framing & Goals



Figure 4: Strategic Vision Slide

WJWI Staff clarified that the initiative is focused on the **entire PSO footprint**, not just Perkins Square, with the goal of ensuring **coordinated support for all families**.

Key guiding questions:

- What is our long-term vision “North Star” ?
- What does success look like?
- What should we prioritize in the next 2–3 years?

WJWI Staff emphasized defining **measurable success** and **actionable priorities**.

Cradle-to-Career Framework

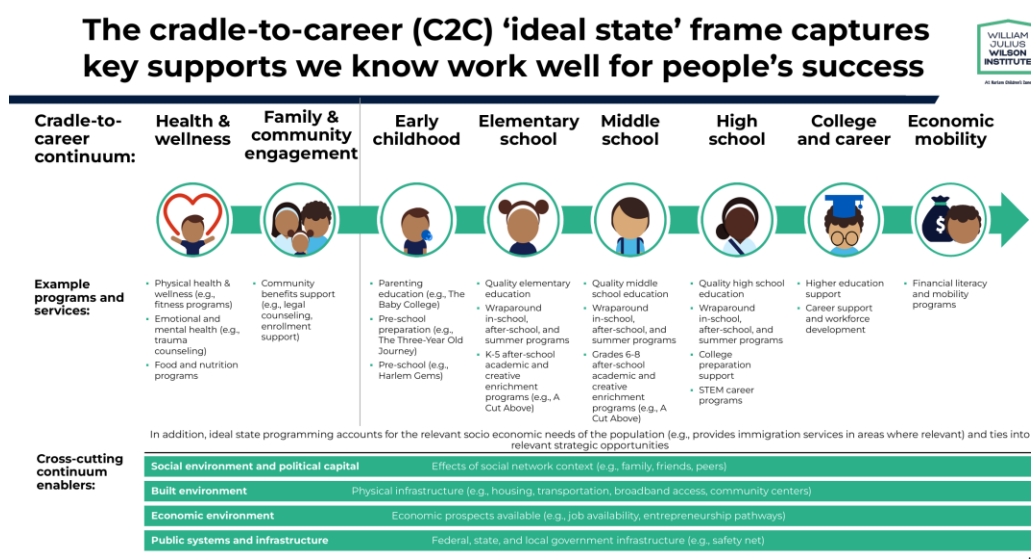


Figure 5: Cradle-to-Career Framework Slide

WJWI introduced the **Cradle-to-Career (C2C) continuum**, which emphasizes **continuous support from early childhood through adulthood**, including:

- Early childhood education
- K–12 education and enrichment
- Workforce development

- Economic mobility
- Family and community support systems

Key discussion points:

- **PSO Partner:** Framed it as ensuring children are supported “**from baby to adulthood.**”
- Emphasis on **consistent engagement across life stages**, addressing gaps where youth often lose support (e.g., between elementary and college).

North Star Development

A north star is a clearly articulated goal that guides an organization's efforts over time



It should answer four questions:

Who is the population of focus?

What specific outcomes do you wish to achieve?

What **key change** in the community will support achieving this impact?

What is the **timeframe** to achieve this impact?

Illustrative examples:

- **By 2035**, among **middle school students in our neighborhood**, we will **double the participation rate in STEM programs**, with **support and investment from local tech companies** through mentorship and hands-on projects
- Over the **next decade**, we will **improve educational and career outcomes** for **families with children aged 0-18 in our community** by coordinating services (e.g., housing assistance, healthcare access, financial literacy) to **improve family stability and well being**
- Over the **next 5 years**, we will **increase engagement in our schools** by **parents and community members**, **fostering stronger educational support networks** via workshops and volunteer opportunities

Figure 6: North Star Action Statement Slide

Bridgspan Staff facilitated the North Star activity.

Participants reflected on:

"By 2036, what do we want the PSO neighborhood to be known for?"

Individuals drafted vision statements before sharing with the full group.

Individual Themes from Participants

- **PSO Partner:** Improved **quality of life and community resources**
- **USI Staff:** Increased **pathways to employment readiness**
- **USI Staff:** Universal access to **early childhood education (0–5)**
- **USI Staff:** Focus on **health, nutrition, and school growth**
- **PSO Partner:** Expanded **enrichment opportunities through partnerships**
- **Residents:** Access to **technology, safety, and equitable resources**



Draft North Star Statement (WJWI)

"By 2036, the PSO neighborhood will be a place where every child has access to **a)** a great school where they feel like they belong, **b)** updated technology, **c)** and the support they need to succeed. Young people are proud to grow up here and come back, families earn more, and get the job training they need to get ahead. Residents of all ages in PSO are connected to the services and resources that make this a safe, healthy, and welcoming community for everyone."

Feedback on North Star

- **USI Staff:** Suggested replacing "tools" with **"resources" for clarity**
- **PSO Partner:** Emphasized that children should **fully belong in school environments**
- **Resident:** Highlighted need for **equitable access for all residents**

Data Walk & Community Insights

We will look together at quantitative and qualitative data from our community in a data walk



Instructions (15-20 min)

1. **Circulate and review** each of the data printouts around the room. Refer to the **questions below** to guide your reflections
1. As you review, use **sticky notes to jot down** answers to the guiding questions
 - *Ideally, answer all four questions at each station*
1. Be ready to **bring one key insight, question, or recommendation** to our breakout group discussions

Guiding questions for reflection

- What are some of our community's **other assets**?
- What **concerns you most** about these patterns?
- What **programs or strategies might we test** to move the needle in a positive direction?
- Where do we see **opportunities for early wins** or targeted interventions?

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Figure 7: Data Walk Activity Instructions

Participants reviewed data to identify **strengths, needs, and gaps**, reinforcing that **data requires community interpretation to tell the full story**.

Participants rotated through multiple data stations examining information related to:

- Education
- Health
- Safety
- Economic Mobility
- Community Voice

Participants recorded observations, questions, and possible strategies using sticky notes.

Key Reactions

- **Resident:** Felt **disappointed** by persistently low outcomes despite improvements
- **USI Staff:** Noted gaps in data explanations (e.g., test anxiety not captured)
- **PSO Partner:** Highlighted concerns around **low-income levels**

Major Themes Identified

- **Economic challenges:** Low income and unclear drivers
- **Access barriers:** Transportation and program eligibility requirements
- **Trust issues:** Mistrust of institutions and safety concerns
- **Community safety:** Over-policing vs. need for protection
- **Resource awareness:** Resources exist but are not always accessible or trusted

Key Partner Insights

- **PSO Partner:** “The issue is not resources; it’s strategy and trust.”
- **WJWI Staff:** Reinforced that communities can be **resource-rich but strategy-poor**
- **USI Staff:** Transportation is a significant barrier
- **Resident:** Eligibility thresholds create gaps in access

Strategic Priority Areas (Breakout Groups)

We will split into **four breakout groups** to brainstorm **strategic priorities** for our Neighborhood Action Plan

Instructions

1. **Small group discussion (~45 min):** Work in your small groups to answer the guiding questions below for your group’s ENOUGH pillar
1. **Share out (~15 min):** In 2-3 minutes per group, have a spokesperson share your strategic priorities with the full group

Guiding questions for small groups

- What surprised or stood out to you most in the **data walk**?
- Within your group’s ENOUGH pillar, what are the **neighborhood’s most critical needs**?
- What **2-4 strategic priorities** would help you address the most important neighborhood challenges **related to your group’s pillar**?
 - How can these **build on the preliminary strategies** from past meetings?

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Figure 8: Strategic Priority Breakout Group Slide

Participants worked in groups to develop **3–5 year actionable priorities** aligned with the North Star.

Strategic Priorities:

- Drive economic mobility by establishing a community career center that provides expert instruction, industry-relevant training, and direct pathways to living-wage employment.
- Empower students and parents through incentivized family engagement and robust wraparound services to drive daily attendance to 95% and cap chronic absenteeism at 20% in neighboring schools.
- Nourishing the Neighborhood: Broaden access to fresh produce and healthy foods for 100% of residents by utilizing local farmers markets and buddy grocery pick-up systems to directly reach residents.
- Cultivating Healthy Futures: Expand summer and year-round youth initiatives at City Springs, libraries, and parks to foster student interest in health and sustainability through connections to healthcare homesteading, local green spaces

Group Share-Out:

1. Healthy Families

- Expand access to **fresh food (community gardens, grocery access)**
- Build **community hubs** for engagement
- Increase **green space and neighborhood connection**
- Connect residents to **local job opportunities**

2. Education

- Increase **average daily attendance from 89% to 95%+**
- Reduce **chronic absenteeism to ≤20%**
- Expand **high-quality afterschool programming**
- Strengthen **school pipelines (elementary → middle → high school)**
- Increase **family engagement and use incentives**

Additional Input:

- **Residents/Partners:** Need for greater empathy and support for families struggling with attendance

3. Safe & Thriving Communities

- Focused on strengthening **community safety, trust, and engagement**
- Identified need for **organized, well-managed community events**
- Residents expressed desire for **safe, structured gatherings similar to AFRAM**

4. Economic Mobility

- Create **community-based career training centers**
- Provide **long-term workforce development (cohort-based models)**
- Improve **access to benefits (banking, insurance, financial literacy)**
- Focus on **sustainable economic growth and empowerment**

Priority Voting Exercise

Participants voted on the priorities they believe should receive the greatest collective focus moving forward.

The exercise helped identify the strategies that generated the strongest support across partner organizations.

Capacity & “Phone-a-Friend” Discussion

As a group, we will discuss key assets and capacity for each of our selected strategic priorities



Discussion questions

- What are **your organization's strengths**?
- What are some solutions that you would like to use a **“phone-a-friend”** for?
- **Who** in this room would be helpful for the issue that you are trying to solve for, and what strengths do they bring?
- How might these strengths and assets **support our strategic priorities**?

Figure 8: “Phone-a-Friend” Share Out Slide

This segment focused on **what partners can offer and where collaboration is needed.**

Key Opportunities Identified

- **PSO Partner (ELEV8):**
 - Interest in **family stability programs, adult high school, workforce development**
 - Needs **transportation support** and **uniform assistance**
- **PSO Partner (Living Classroom):**
 - Offered **donation of pre-owned City Springs uniforms**
- **PSO Partner (MOCFS):**
 - Provides **free school uniforms and supplies**
 - Needs support for **transportation to distribution sites**
- **PSO Partner:**
 - Offers **restorative community circles**
 - Wants to host **community engagement circles for trust-building**

Community Engagement & Environment Insights

Events & Safety

- Residents expressed concerns about **safety at community events**
- Emphasis on:
 - Proper **planning and organization**
 - Visible **security presence**
 - Setting the right **environment and expectations**
- Example: **Travis Street** shared a successful 100+ person event without violence

Need for “Third Spaces”

- Identified need for **community gathering spaces** (coffee shops, hubs)
- **PSO Partner:** Proposed using the **Power House space** for morning coffee/community engagement
- **USI Resident:** Supported this as a **small but impactful trust-building initiative**

Key Takeaways

- There is strong alignment around a **shared vision for long-term community transformation**
- The PSO neighborhood is **resource-rich but requires stronger coordination and trust-building strategies**
- **Top barriers:** transportation, trust, eligibility restrictions, and communication gaps
- There is a clear need for:
 - **Integrated cradle-to-career support**
 - **Community-driven engagement strategies**
 - **Actionable, measurable priorities with accountability**

- Strong willingness among partners to **collaborate and share resources**

Next Steps (Based on Session Flow)

- ☐ Finalize **North Star statement**
- ☐ Refine and prioritize **top strategic priorities**
- ☐ Align **partner roles and responsibilities**
- ☐ Begin development of the **Neighborhood Action Plan (NAP)**



Figure 9: Session Group Picture