



EARLY LESSONS LEARNED

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COMMUNITY QUARTERBACKS: A NEW STRATEGY FOR FIGHTING POVERTY

Since President Johnson announced the “War on Poverty” in 1964, anti-poverty programs in America have multiplied, with many innovative programs in low- and mixed-income housing, early child development, workforce development, K-12 education, health care, and other sectors serving millions of people across the country. Yet, while the percentage of Americans living in poverty was 11% in 2000, it has risen to about 15% today – the same level as in 1964. In addition to increasing poverty levels, the Great Recession of 2007-2009 led to home foreclosures and abandonment in many low-to-moderate income communities, slashing billions of dollars in net worth from residents and reversing decades of progress in improving neighborhood conditions.

Although these challenges may seem overwhelming, the community development field has responded with a wave of experimentation and innovation, while exploring new strategies to reduce persistent poverty and increase economic opportunity in low income communities. This paper explores the Community Quarterback model, describes the Partners in Progress (PIP) program supporting community quarterbacks, and offers some early lessons learned as a guide to practitioners interested in building a collaborative and launching collective impact initiatives in their communities.

The Community Quarterback Model

The term “community quarterback” was introduced in the book *Investing in What Works for America’s Communities: Essays on People, Purpose and Place*, edited by Nancy O. Andrews, David Erickson, Ian Galloway, and Ellen Seidman. A core message in *Investing in What Works* is that because persistent poverty has complex roots that span multiple sectors, efforts to battle poverty must also be integrated across sectors. It takes more than affordable housing, high-quality education, or access to health care and jobs alone to move families and communities out of poverty – it takes all of these factors, and they must be coordinated around shared goals. In addition, anti-poverty strategies should integrate both people-based efforts, such as education, health care, and workforce development, and place-based efforts, such as housing, transportation, and community safety. By working together across sectors to achieve a common goal, partners are more effective than they would be separately – a concept known as collective impact.

The community quarterback’s role is to identify the organizations and individuals working in a particular community and bring them together to align objectives and coordinate efforts, creating a strong neighborhood and paths to economic opportunity. As part of this complex role, the community quarterback must:

- Build a **collaborative of cross-sector partners** to support integration, coordination, and ongoing communication
- Facilitate the creation of a **shared vision** of significant improvement in key outcomes for residents
- Develop a comprehensive **strategy that integrates people- and place-based approaches**
- Build the necessary infrastructure and processes to provide the collaborative with **timely, useful data** to guide continuous assessment and improvement

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When the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF), supported by the Citi Foundation, partnered with the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco to publish *Investing in What Works*, they hoped to engage the community development field in a dialogue about a new approach to community development. The book did more than that – it created an outpouring of interest, resulting in 50,000 copies distributed and more than 2 million people reached on social media. The overwhelming response encouraged the Citi Foundation and LIIF to pick up the challenge laid down in the book, and launch Partners in Progress, an initiative that funds community quarterbacks across the country.

The Partners in Progress Initiative

The Partners in Progress Initiative was launched in December of 2013, and since then the Citi Foundation has invested more than \$5 million to support 14 grantees who have served over a million people in 10 cities across the country. During the first year of the PIP program, the grantees were required to produce the following deliverables:

- Form a coalition of cross-sector partners structured to support integration, coordination, and ongoing communication
- Create a multi-year program/project plan, including a vision shared by members of the coalition
- Identify the key project outcomes and targets that will be tracked, the specific data elements that will be analyzed to determine progress, and the systems needed capture that data
- Draft a sustainability plan to support implementation of the program plan and ongoing coalition activities

This paper will reflect upon the grantees' experiences during first year of the PIP program, and share early lessons learned about creating a successful collaborative equipped to undertake an integrated collective impact strategy.

A list of the PIP grantees is included at the end of this paper. For a more detailed description of these community quarterbacks' projects, please visit the Partners in Progress website at partnersinprogressproject.org.



EARLY LESSONS LEARNED

The role of a community quarterback is complex, and the planning and creation of a collaborative that pulls together partners across sectors takes time. We hope the discussion below will help potential community quarterbacks work more effectively with their partners and set realistic expectations for what can be accomplished in a collaborative's first year.

Collaboratives: Cross-silo and Multi-level

The first step for a community quarterback is to identify and engage with the partners who will become members of the collaborative. Because the partnerships reach across sectors and typically involve organizations that have not previously collaborated together, building these relationships and establishing trust takes time. The PIP grantees reported that the most willing partners were generally those who realized from the outset that the participants could accomplish more for the community working together than separately. While most of the PIP grantees anticipated it would take three months to build their collaboratives, most found it took as many as six or even twelve months to achieve full commitment from partners, including signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs). Grantees attempting to engage government agencies often found that it could take close to a full year before the agencies would formally or informally commit to participating.

In addition to building relationships across sectors, the PIP quarterbacks sought partners at multiple community and political levels. Categories of potential partners include community residents and grassroots organizations, non-profit service providers, city and county organizations, and state and national agencies. Some PIP quarterbacks involved residents directly, for example having resident leaders co-chair committees, while others included community-based organizations to represent community interests. PIP grantees generally found it easiest to recruit nonprofit service providers as partners and engaged organizations whose missions aligned with the partners' goals for the community. While involving city and county organizations can be challenging, most PIP grantees were able to gain commitments by demonstrating how the PIP collaborative would address an issue that was already a high priority for the city or county. For example, one PIP grantee in Los Angeles received a commitment from the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services to participate in fund-

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ing a "housing and health" project. The community quarterback was able to demonstrate that the project, if successful, will reduce the county's cost of serving the homeless, while improving the quality of care and health outcomes. Finally, the PIP grantees found that state, regional, and national agencies were the hardest to engage in the collaborative projects, though a few of them were successful in attracting interest at the state level, particularly related to public transportation projects.



Though it can be challenging to achieve buy-in at all of these community and political levels, the community quarterbacks realized the value of spending the time and energy to bring partners to the table from as many categories as possible. As an example of an organization that has successfully engaged partners at multiple levels, one PIP grantee in Florida is working to revitalize the neighborhood along a major thoroughfare near Miami. Building on the idea of cross-silo and multi-level partners, the community quarterback is coordinating the effort of community residents and thirty-five public and private sector organizations working to improve the health, safety, and prosperity of the neighborhood. Because the neighborhood is located in an unincorporated area that belongs to neither the city nor the county and is divided among different council jurisdictions, it has been particularly challenging to bring the public sector to the table. After a year of work, the grantee has succeeded in engaging seven county-level public agencies in the collaborative, including economic development, transportation, and water and sewer agencies, all of whom are critical to the redevelopment effort.

Integrated Strategies Require Shared Goals and a Shared Vision

As the quarterback assembles the partners who will participate in the collaborative, the group works to develop a sense of community, agree on shared goals, and create a strategy for working together. The PIP grantees were required to sign MOUs with their partners, and create a multi-year plan that laid out the participants' roles and responsibilities. As with gaining partners' commitments, this process can be slow, but it is critical for partners to agree from the outset on their shared approach.

The cross-sector/cross-silo approach envisioned in *Investing in What Works* describes "a joint strategy or common set of strategies for working collectively toward a shared purpose." A key part of the quarterback's role is to facilitate the collaborative's discovery of the framework that will unite its multi-sector partners in a common vision for action. A PIP grantee in Oakland achieved this alignment with a creative, physical exercise. The collaborative began with working groups focusing on four areas: health and wellness, safety and community, housing affordability, and jobs and income. At a retreat bringing together representatives from the collaborative's partners, the facilitator assigned each of these priorities to a corner of the room and asked participants to move to the corner representing the topic where the collaborative could have the most positive impact. Almost the entire group moved into the health and wellness corner. This exercise concretely demonstrated that the partners' work could be aligned through a framework addressing the social determinants of health. This framework then helped the partners organize their roles and responsibilities and agree on shared goals for the community.



A second PIP grantee working in Flushing, New York has assembled a large collaborative that includes elected officials, service providers, civic and faith groups, small business groups, and anchor institutions such as schools and health centers. Organized into two working groups ("housing and human services" and "small business and economic development"), the coalition met monthly, during which time partners shared community needs and began shaping a vision and common objectives for the neighborhood. The partners eventually agreed upon a common vision of equitable development of

the area, using the imminent rezoning of an underutilized part of the neighborhood to agree on shared goals related to developing new affordable housing and creating local jobs. Working together towards this shared vision, the partners in the coalition will be in a much better position to improve the rapidly changing neighborhood than each would be alone.

Nimbleness and Patience Are Required

Building a collaborative is often described as a linear process characterized by recognizable stages – from identifying partners to building trust and commitment to creating a shared vision to undertaking work in the community. However, because the quarterback model involves multiple stakeholders,



factors such as economic conditions, elections, and neighborhood politics can dramatically affect what's possible to accomplish, the strategies for getting there, and the anticipated outcomes. Community quarterbacks must stay flexible in the face of external, unpredictable challenges, and be ready to change course as circumstances require. This type of adaptive leadership, pivoting nimbly in response to evolving community conditions, is critical for a sustainable collective impact model.

As an example, a community quarterback in Dallas was well into planning for its PIP initiative when it learned that the mayor was launching a new initiative with similar goals, in a geographic area that overlapped with the PIP project. The grantee was able to adjust its work and eventually come to agreement with the leadership of the mayor's initiative to coordinate the activities of the two initiatives.

This was implemented in part by having the committee chairs of each initiative sit on the other project's committees. By adapting quickly, the quarterback turned a situation of potential conflict into a cooperative effort, which strengthened the PIP initiative by connecting it closely to an initiative with strong mayoral support.

In another example, a community quarterback working to address challenges facing the immigrant community in Langley Park, Maryland initially engaged several stakeholders who agreed to participate in a joint application for federal funding. The funding did not materialize and some stakeholders left the collaborative. This required the community quarterback to refocus on gaining commitments from partners who were committed to achieving common social goals rather than short-term funding. A year later, the collaborative's work has gained national traction and secured a \$3 million Investing in Innovation grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

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external, unpredictable challenges.

Managing Data Across Silos Requires New Capacities

Although partners may share a common vision and strategies, the work of a collaborative involves coordinating multiple organizations and moving parts. Collecting and managing data across silos is critically important for collaboratives to measure progress and respond to residents' needs in real time. Many prospective community quarterbacks start off with the capacity to manage their own data and outcomes, but must shift to managing data across multiple organizations, partners, and stakeholders to maximize impact. Although managing data across multiple organizations is a demanding task and requires a higher level of technical expertise and more staff time, the value of using data to drive the collaborative's work outweighs the additional effort.

For example, a PIP grantee is working to reduce poverty in Los Angeles by ensuring families have access to high quality schools and wraparound technology and education services. The collaborative's work involves partnerships with health and school systems – both of which are governed by privacy laws designed to protect students and patients, and which limit data sharing. The collaborative executed data-sharing agreements among partners, allowing the community quarterback to collect information on individual students and families served by the partners, measure the collaborative's impact in real time, and support data-driven decisions. Using its data management system, the collaborative now benefits 22,000 residents each week.

A PIP grantee working to increase employment and revitalize a low-income neighborhood in New York City provides a good example of the use of data to inform systems change. The quarterback's collaborative had committed to an aggressive goal: placing 5,000 local residents into employment within four years. The collaborative collected data from residents, employment centers, workforce development providers, the city's small business administration, and many other sources, and made the data available in real time to the teams working on prototyping new designs for moving residents into the workforce. Through this work, the collaborative was able to develop clear data that led to a startling conclusion: in order to successfully get 5,000 residents into jobs, the collaborative members would need to reach 124,000 residents. This clear target allowed the group to rethink how and where resources should be deployed in the process of helping residents get jobs.

LOOKING FORWARD

As Partners in Progress begins its second year, the grantees will use the lessons learned in the first year to move forward with their collaboratives by implementing their multi-year plans, measuring outcomes, and maximizing their impact. We hope that the early lessons learned from the first year of PIP



will help illuminate the process of building a collaborative for others seeking to use the collective impact model to benefit their communities. LIIF and the Citi Foundation plan to continue engaging practitioners across the community development field in a dialogue about the critical role played by community quarterbacks in developing and implementing integrated community development strategies, seeking to pursue the most effective approaches that will increase opportunity for all Americans living in poverty.

List of PIP Grantees

For more specific information about the PIP grantees and their initiatives, please visit partnersinprogressproject.org.

Asian Americans for Equality

BRIDGE Housing

Carrfour Supportive Housing

Community Solutions

CASA

Chicago Community Loan Fund / West Humboldt Park
Family and Community Development Council

East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation

Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Frazier Revitalization, Inc.

Jubilee Housing

LINC Housing

Little Tokyo Service Center Community Development Corporation

Neighborhood Housing Services of South Florida

Youth Policy Institute

Resources

Partners in Progress partnersinprogressproject.org

Investing in What Works whatworksforamerica.org

Collective Impact Forum collectiveimpactforum.org

About the Partners in Progress Initiative



Partners in Progress (PIP) is an initiative created by the Citi Foundation in partnership with the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) to advance economic progress in low-income communities. It's on the leading edge of a movement to tackle big, complicated urban challenges in cities across America.

PIP builds on the concept of the "community quarterback," which is a trusted local organization that aligns objectives, resources, and efforts among stakeholders to create strong, resilient neighborhoods and paths to economic opportunity. The "community quarterback" model, introduced in the book *Investing in What Works for America's Communities*, is based on the knowledge that partners focused on solving complex problems in an intentional, coordinated way can produce remarkable results.

Since 2014, the Citi Foundation has invested more than \$5 million in PIP, supporting 14 grantees who have served over a million people in 10 cities across the country. As quarterbacks, these grantees are developing and expanding local cross-sector networks that connect efforts to improve places- for example, housing, transportation, and community safety-to opportunities for people-such as jobs, childhood development, educational opportunities, health care, and other services.

In 2014, PIP community quarterbacks convened coalitions of city leaders, local nonprofits, businesses, and community residents to develop shared agendas for creating economic opportunity. In 2015, they will continue leading these coalitions and implementing plans that create progress for their communities, making local urban transformation efforts more efficient and effective.

PIP projects are some of the most promising examples of community development efforts occurring around the country today. They are tackling challenges ranging from engaging hospitals, the city, and community organizations to improve health outcomes in Oakland, California, to uniting city officials, employers, and the community around jobs in Brooklyn, New York, to promoting transit as a hub for health, housing, and economic development in Dallas, Texas.

About the Citi Foundation

Citi Foundation The Citi Foundation is committed to the economic empowerment and financial inclusion of low- to moderate-income individuals and families in the communities where we work so that they can improve their standard of living. Globally, the Citi Foundation targets its strategic giving to priority focus areas: Microfinance, Enterprise Development, College Success, and Financial Capability and Asset Building. In the United States, the Citi Foundation also supports Neighborhood Revitalization programs. The Citi Foundation works with its partners in Microfinance, Enterprise Development, and Neighborhood Revitalization to support environmental programs and innovations. Additional information can be found at citifoundation.com.



About the Low Income Investment Fund



The Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) invests capital to support healthy families and communities. Since 1984, LIIF has served 1.7 million people by investing \$1.7 billion. Over its history, LIIF has provided financing and technical assistance to create and preserve affordable housing, child care centers, schools, healthy food retail, health clinics, and transit-oriented developments in distressed neighborhoods nationwide. LIIF's work has generated \$45 billion in family income and societal benefits. LIIF has offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington, D.C. For more information about LIIF, visit liifund.org.

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