



Community-Led Change: How the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation Builds the Capacity of Nonprofits and Communities to Shape Neighborhoods Together

To make community change that sticks, the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation (WFRF) turns to those who know best what a neighborhood needs: community members themselves.

For more than 20 years, the foundation has invested in improving the quality of life for children and families living in low-income communities in Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. The foundation works toward this goal by giving multiyear grants and capacity-building support to nonprofits that plan and implement neighborhood revitalization initiatives.

The foundation takes a robust approach to grantmaking that is long-term, resident-driven, and data-driven, integrating capacity-building support throughout partnerships with grantees that often last over a decade. This approach has resulted in significant development including new homes, strengthened commercial corridors, renovated community centers, safer parks, and more. The foundation has facilitated these outcomes by building the capacity of nonprofits and residents alike to continue to plan for and make lasting change in their communities even after the initiatives are complete.

INVESTING FOR THE LONG HAUL

Long-term investing is in the foundation's DNA. When two legacy banks—CoreStates Bank and First Union—merged in 1998, the endowed foundation was created to ensure that local communities didn't lose the generous and focused support provided by CoreStates, which was known for its commitment to philanthropy and community development.

The merged entity was eventually acquired by Wells Fargo, which currently employs all five of the foundation's staff members and carries on CoreStates' legacy of community support.

WFRF initially experimented with different types of community development grants. The foundation knew that communities in their geographic footprint faced deeply rooted challenges like poverty.

"We knew that we were addressing a long-term problem, so we needed a long-term solution," said Lois Greco, senior vice president and evaluation officer at the foundation. "You wouldn't buy a house with a one-year loan. So why would you make a one-year grant to fund a 20-year solution?"



Parkside Business and Community In Partnership (PBCIP) leads a neighborhood planning session during the planning grant phase.

Today, the foundation awards a continuum of grants intended to provide nonprofits with support for 11+ years:

- **Planning grants:** 12- to 18-month grants that go up to \$100,000 for a nonprofit to create a resident-driven neighborhood revitalization plan
- **Implementation grants:** Five-year grants that reach up to \$750,000 for a nonprofit, or \$1,250,000 for a collaborative, to implement programs identified in the neighborhood revitalization plan
- **Renewal grants:** Five-year grants that can go up to \$500,000 for a nonprofit, or \$825,000 for a collaborative, to continue and improve on implementing the neighborhood revitalization plan

Throughout the continuum, the foundation connects grantees to consultants that help nonprofits build their capacity to engage community members, collect and use data, become financially sustainable, and collaborate effectively. This includes consultants that are selected by the grantee and funded through the grants as well as consulting services that the foundation provides to its entire grantee portfolio on top of the grant. The consulting support is curated over the course of the grant lifecycle and has evolved over time to meet grantee needs. It also helps grantees meet the foundation's requirements: If the foundation requires something from grantees, like neighborhood revitalization plans or evaluation results, it gives grantees the additional resources and consulting support they need to fulfill that requirement.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO SET A SHARED VISION

Each year, WFRF selects five or six funding applicants to receive a planning grant and begin what could be a more than decade-long partnership. When reviewing applications for planning grants, WFRF looks for nonprofits that demonstrate a long-term commitment to strengthening a neighborhood in four areas:

- **Children and families**
- **Economic development**
- **Affordable housing and housing counseling**
- **Neighborhood building**

The foundation seeks partners who are in it for the long haul and prioritizes the following when reviewing applications:

- **Organizations that have strong relationships with residents and other stakeholders**
- **A focus on a neighborhood not currently in the midst of a WFRF-funded revitalization initiative**
- **The capacity to assemble and steward significant financial resources, garner political will, and develop consensus**
- **A commitment to carry out a neighborhood revitalization initiative**
- **A belief that residents should be at the center of a neighborhood's transformation**

The nonprofits selected for a planning grant go through a comprehensive process to engage neighborhood residents in co-creating a revitalization plan. They are typically supported by an independent consultant who they use their grant funds to hire. The lead consultant will often pull together a team of consultants with experience in understanding and mapping neighborhood demographics, building conditions, land use, trends in population growth, and other community conditions. The team works with the nonprofit to form a steering committee made up of human service providers, government officials, staff of nearby schools, leaders in neighborhood advisory committees or city development groups, and others who play key roles in the community. The steering committee ultimately decides what initiatives the nonprofit will lead if it receives an implementation grant, a decision heavily informed by a community engagement process.

"We know that brick and mortar projects, while important, must be complemented by community-driven strategies that transform individual lives and strengthen social fabric," said Charles Bergman of New Brunswick Tomorrow, a nonprofit grantee leading a revitalization effort in the Esperanza neighborhood in New Brunswick, New Jersey. "Everyone needs to feel that they have a voice and a role in building up their neighborhood." The foundation echoes this statement. "Residents need to be at the core for sustainable change to happen for them," Greco said.

The community engagement process—led by the planning consultant, the nonprofit, and the steering committee—is primarily made up of stakeholder interviews, focus groups,

door-to-door resident surveys, and community meetings, all working toward the goal of clarifying community needs and building consensus around priorities. To build this clarity and consensus, the planning consultant uses various creative tactics. For example, Lamar Wilson, principal of Wilson Associates, often leads this process for grantees. As a planning consultant, he asks community members to write postcards from the future describing changes they envision in their neighborhood, or he asks them to use Monopoly money to demonstrate how they would invest across various potential initiatives.

One key tool for understanding community needs that is used in all planning grants is a survey on residents' quality of life. Nonprofit grantees work to customize this survey with Success Measures, an evaluation resource group based at NeighborWorks America, a national housing and community development intermediary. The random sample survey includes questions about residents' quality of life, including satisfaction with their neighborhood, how connected they feel to the community, housing conditions, and feelings of safety. The survey results provide a baseline against which to measure progress in future years.

While the survey results are useful, the process of conducting the survey can be valuable, too. For one, residents are often engaged in conducting the survey, which can help raise the profile of the organization and strengthen relationships in the community. Also, physically visiting neighbors can shine light on opportunities replace with: for future programming of which the nonprofit might not have been aware. For example, The Enterprise Center, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit focused on high-potential minority entrepreneurs, engaged young residents not currently employed in conducting the survey. The young residents reported that while doing so, they encountered many older neighbors who held a unique understanding of community needs and wanted to talk for hours, in part because they didn't have the opportunity to interact with many other people throughout the day. This led to an idea: the nonprofit could create an outreach team of residents who would regularly check in with these older neighbors, inform them of services and initiatives, and ask for their input on community supports. As an added benefit, that outreach team could go through a community leader training program that would help them build entry-level job skills, simultaneously addressing the neighborhood's employment needs. The idea was ultimately prioritized by residents, selected by the steering committee, and implemented by the nonprofit.

Open For Good

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By working closely with the consultant team and the steering committee in this process, the nonprofit grantee—which is often referred to as the backbone agency—learns how to create a community engagement plan and tactics for meaningfully engaging and listening to residents. At the end of the process, residents come to a consensus around their priorities, the steering committee uses those priorities to settle on a comprehensive set of initiatives across the four required areas, and the nonprofit grantee is then tasked with implementing the initiatives if it receives an implementation grant. "It's not a plan by the backbone agency and for the backbone agency, but by the neighborhood and for the neighborhood," Wilson said.

Throughout the course of the planning grant, nonprofits learn by doing. They build their capacity to engage residents and conduct surveys by working side-by-side with professional technical assistance providers. For example, the Camden, New Jersey-based Parkside Business and Community In Partnership (PBCIP) led a planning process in 2005. During the process, PBCIP realized that focusing on those directly in the neighborhood wasn't enough; it needed to engage those in the surrounding communities too.

"There can be a project just three blocks from where someone lives," even if they're not technically in the neighborhood, said Bridget Phifer, executive director of PBCIP. "We can engage people in adjoining communities, inviting them to community meetings and having them at the table, so they have a sense of what's happening that could directly or indirectly impact them over the long term."

Once the nonprofit has a strong, resident-driven revitalization plan, they can apply for a grant to implement that plan. Implementation grants are awarded on a competitive basis. WFRF works to be very clear throughout the planning grant that implementation grants aren't guaranteed and communicates what exactly will make for a strong implementation grant application, such as strong methodology and use of data. If a planning grantee doesn't receive an implementation grant, the foundation spends time with the organization's leaders to help them understand why, share how they might be successful if they applied again, and highlight how the plan that they just created can be used to get funding from other funders.

At this stage, some nonprofits apply alone for an implementation grant while others apply as part of a collaborative made up of at least three organizations, including a nonprofit that serves as the lead. If they receive the grant, all implementation grantees have access to support in three key areas: data, sustainability, and collaboration.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

Foundation support for conducting evaluations and collecting and analyzing data is not standard practice across the nonprofit sector. In the 2016 report [Benchmarking Foundation Evaluation Practices](#), two-thirds of foundations said they fund evaluations for less than 10 percent of individual grants. Yet at the same time, nonprofits report they don't have enough funding or capacity to do evaluation: 52 percent of nonprofits in the [State of Evaluation 2016](#) report cited insufficient financial resources as a barrier to evaluation, and 48 percent cited limited staff knowledge, tools, and/or resources.

The data and evaluation support that WFRF grantees receive is robust and provided across the continuum of grants. During the planning grant, the foundation provides each grantee and consulting team with a subscription to PolicyMap, an online data and mapping system. Grantees then get support from Reinvestment Fund, an organization that uses capital, data, policy, and strategic investments to bring high-quality grocery stores, affordable housing, schools, childcare, and health centers to low-income communities. The Policy Solutions group within Reinvestment Fund helps grantees use data from a range of sources to inform a set of practical and achievable strategies

that they develop for their community-driven neighborhood revitalization plan. Reinvestment Fund and PolicyMap also produce several webinars on relevant topics each year open to grantees in all program phases.

"This data is vitally important to ensure that the planning areas and the plans—which are sometimes far too large or unrealistically aspirational—are sound and identify actions that can be achieved with the resources available," said Ira Goldstein, who is president of the Policy Solutions group within Reinvestment Fund.

At the end of the planning process, grantees work with the planning consultant to identify specific milestones and activities they need in order to implement the first five years of their plan. This helps grantees create a project plan, which serves as a roadmap to turn their vision into clear action steps they can take. It also provides a baseline for what grantees will be held accountable for; grantees will later evaluate themselves by their progress on these milestones and activities.

During the implementation phase, grantees first work with Success Measures to develop a theory of change that outlines shorter- and longer-term outcomes of the neighborhood revitalization initiative. Then, they develop an evaluation plan that identifies specific activities they'll engage in to understand progress toward those outcomes. For collaborative grantees, the evaluation plan clearly outlines the role of each collaborative member in collecting and analyzing data. The evaluation plan guides what the grantee does—and when—and serves as a working document that evolves over the life of the grant.

The Success Measures and Reinvestment Fund teams are steady resources to grantees throughout the five years of the implementation grant, working to provide the right tools at the right time. Success Measures staff train grantees on strong primary data collection practices, check in with them to support the regular reporting they must do for the foundation, guide them in documenting exactly how they're conducting surveys and evaluations in order to institutionalize that knowledge, and support them in inputting their data into an online system so they can easily access it.

Meanwhile, Reinvestment Fund helps grantees as they create a series of Community Change Reports through PolicyMap. The reports compare select secondary data sets within the neighborhood to three other peer neighborhoods,

which are either comparable or somewhat aspirational. Reinvestment Fund works with grantees to select those peer neighborhoods and provides guidance to ensure each grantee gets maximum value out of the reports. Reinvestment Fund staff remain on-call to help grantees understand evolving demographics, changing real estate markets, and how to refine their strategies in response to these shifts.

All of this is done in partnership with nonprofits. “It isn’t labeled as support. It’s, ‘we’re doing this together,’” said Maggie Grieve, vice president of Success Measures.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN A LONG-TERM INITIATIVE

Implementation grantees have applied to take part in a sustainability capacity building program with Community Wealth Partners, a social impact consulting firm. The program began in 2011 after the foundation went through a listening exercise to understand what additional support grantees wanted.

“Grantees wanted guidance on sustaining their impact long-term,” said Amy Farley, director at Community Wealth Partners. “They wanted to walk out with tangible outcomes at the end, so we designed the program to make sure they get that, whether it’s a strong pitch they can use to increase their funding or a clear understanding of the resources they need to reach their goals.”

During the sustainability program, cohorts of five or six grantees work to create and execute a plan to maintain their neighborhood revitalization initiatives long after the WFRF grant has ended. Participants have one key financial goal coming out of the program: raise at least \$100,000 in new funds within two years for their respective neighborhood revitalization efforts.

To help them accomplish that goal, Community Wealth Partners works with participants to think about both financial sustainability and more broadly about what they need in order to sustain their initiatives, such as a clearly articulated



Neighbors work to renovate the Parkside Learning Garden as a part of revitalization efforts.

vision, the right talent, effective processes, an ability to measure progress, and adaptability to changes in community needs. Community Wealth Partners leads participants through a series of working sessions and one-on-one coaching to articulate the social impact they seek, create a focused business strategy, strengthen their fundraising pitch, and develop a document they can use to make their case to prospective funders and investors. Then, after the program concludes, Community Wealth Partners provides six additional months of coaching to help participants work toward their fundraising goal.

The sustainability program “provides the opportunity to take a step back and think about your past, present, and future strategies in a different way to provide a compelling story,” a participant shared anonymously in a post-program survey. “You rarely get that opportunity when buried in our day-to-day work, and this is what takes revitalization efforts to the next level.”

This process helps participants more clearly understand their goals and what it will take to accomplish them. It increases their comfort with telling their story in a way that builds a strong case and sets them up to comfortably ask for funding. And it works: 88 percent of sustainability program participants succeeded in raising \$100,000 in new funds after the training. Further, it gives participants an opportunity to build relationships with other grantees leading similar work.

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“Place-based work can be lonely,” Greco said. “Grantees often don’t know others facing similar struggles. They appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other and build a peer network.”

BUILDING CAPACITY TO COLLABORATE EFFECTIVELY

Another optional capacity building program led by Community Wealth Partners, the collaborative training program, similarly lasts nine months and is made up of six to eight grantees. It was created in response to grantee requests and results from a 2014 evaluation of the impact of the foundation’s grantmaking. The evaluation showed that collaborative grantees were struggling more than individual organization grantees.

“Intuitively, we believed that organizations working together, each focused on their core competencies, should yield good or better results than organizations working alone,” Greco said. “So the results were disappointing and we wanted to understand them better. We engaged a consultant to undertake a listening exercise, much as we did with the sustainability program, to hear from grantees why collaborative work was so difficult.”

Some of the biggest challenges grantees raised were around culture, distrust, divides between community members and nonprofit staff, power dynamics, lack of clarity among partners, and the need for leadership skill development. Many of these issues tied back to conflict that can bubble up in collaboration. “Our challenge isn’t finding neighborhood leaders” to collaborate with, one grantee shared anonymously during the listening exercise. “Our challenge is group dynamics and how to manage a group of people working together. There’s always a risk of conflict and I’m not sure we’d know how to handle it.” These insights informed the development of the collaborative training program.

In the program, Community Wealth Partners leads participants through a process of identifying collaboration needs and then intentionally growing in those areas. The program is rooted in nine building blocks that are seen as critical for collaboratives to reach their goals:

- **A unifying vision and strategy**
- **A strong structure**
- **A strong culture based on trust**

- **Stakeholder engagement and community inclusion**
- **Operations, administration, and facilitation capacity**
- **Clear outcomes and systems to measure success**
- **Short- and long-term action-planning**
- **Consistent communication and messaging**
- **Strong fundraising and data sharing**

Participants first take a diagnostic survey to understand their strengths and opportunities for growth among the nine building blocks. Using the survey results, participants select two or more areas to focus on and then work with Community Wealth Partners to create an action plan around those areas. For example, a program participant that wants to strengthen its collaborative structure might create a process to clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making among the partners. Through working sessions, monthly calls, and coaching, participants receive tailored, in-depth support in creating and implementing their action plans. Participants also receive group training on needs that are most common across the cohort.

In addition to this tailored support, all grantees—regardless of whether they participate in the collaborative training program—have access to a knowledge hub with templates, tools, guides, and resources related to collaboration. The knowledge hub includes trust-building tools, sample action plans, sample collaborative structures, a community engagement toolkit, and many other resources designed to help groups improve their culture, strengthen their structure, operate more effectively, and reach their shared goals.

“We know how messy collaboration is,” said Walter Howell, senior consultant at Community Wealth Partners. “When groups come together—each with their own ways of doing things—it takes time, intentional culture-building, and hard conversations to work well together. But it’s necessary to achieve lasting community change. The foundation is giving additional support to help with the complexity and messiness of collaboration.”

TAKING THE WORK FURTHER WITH A RENEWAL GRANT

In the final year of the five-year implementation grant, nonprofits conduct another door-to-door random sample survey to understand changes in how community members

When groups come together—each with their own ways of doing things—it takes time, intentional culture-building, and hard conversations to work well together. But it's necessary to achieve lasting community change. – WALTER HOWELL

experience the neighborhood. The quality of life survey is typically the same as the one conducted during the planning phase, enabling nonprofits to see changes in the neighborhood's quality of life over the previous five years. In addition, Reinvestment Fund helps grantees revisit their Community Change Reports to inform priorities and adjust strategies. When paired with stories that both nuance the data and bring it to life, the survey results and comparative secondary data can indicate how the grantee is progressing toward its goals—helpful information if the grantee applies for a renewal grant.

WFRF awards five-year renewal grants based on an organization or collaborative's application, data gathered from resident surveys and physical observations, intel gathered during annual site visits, conversations with community stakeholders, and the six-year relationship that the foundation and grantee have built together. The foundation looks for grantees that made strong relative progress on their milestones, built deep trust with community members and stakeholders, and have sufficient resident and staff capacity and buy-in to take their initiative to the next level. The foundation doesn't want grantees to maintain the status quo of what they've achieved in the first five years; instead they want them to deepen their work into lasting community change, something that often requires stronger partnerships and greater collaboration. Usually, the nonprofits want the same.

If an organization or collaborative receives a renewal grant, they continue to receive support from Success Measures, Reinvestment Fund, and other service providers as they need it. At the end of the renewal grant, they conduct another resident survey to understand changes in residents' experience of quality of life in the community. Organizations also receive a capstone report developed by Success Measures, and sometimes a video that captures the significant contributions the organizations have made in strengthening their communities over the previous 10 years.

For some, the journey doesn't end there. A few nonprofits have applied for a planning grant to start the process again in either the same or a different neighborhood. For example, after PBCIP went through the continuum of grants that it began receiving in 2005, there was still important work to be done to improve the community's safety, local businesses, and housing, among other things. PBCIP applied for and received another planning grant and, subsequently, implementation grant to build on the initial work.

"We looked at the second planning process differently, with a larger scope that's more holistic and more comprehensive," Phifer said. "We want to make sure that at the end of this cycle, we really have transformed the community."

This time around, PBCIP is deeply focused on building meaningful collaborations. The organization has been engaging with banks and Community Development Financial Institutions to support the work, the Latin American Economic Development Association to lead entrepreneurship training programs to incubate talent from within the community, the New Jersey Conservation Association to support awareness and maintenance of community trails, and others.

WFRF sees this long-term approach to grantmaking as fundamental to grantees' ability to create greater impact. "Having relationships with organizations and leaders over a 10-year-plus timeframe has allowed our staff to become deeply rooted in understanding a neighborhood's complexity, understanding how far a grantee has come, and empathetic to the journey yet to be traveled," Greco said. "Our grantees have confidence that the foundation is with them for the long run, through the good times and the challenges, which has enhanced their willingness to be forthcoming with difficult issues and allowed our team to collaborate with them about solutions."

WHAT THE DATA SHOW

In 2014, Success Measures and Reinvestment Fund evaluated the impact of the foundation's grantmaking over the previous decade, as shared in the Foundation Review's article **"Investing in Community Change: An Evaluation of a Decade of Data-Driven Grantmaking."** In short, the results indicate that it's working. Among the many factors the evaluators used were home sale prices as a measure that encompasses neighborhood demand, quality, and desirability. They found that 60 percent of the neighborhoods that grantees were working in measurably improved home sale prices during the course of the grants, compared to similar neighborhoods. Sometimes this meant that increases in home sale prices were greater than comparable areas; other times, it meant the prices did not fall as severely in the grantee area compared to other areas. Even two years after the grant ended, 54.5 percent of these neighborhoods had stronger home sale prices compared to similar neighborhoods.

While increasing home sale prices can be a strong measure of impact, increasing those prices too much can displace residents who can no longer afford to live there. Reinvestment Fund developed an analytical approach to assess displacement risk and helps grantees understand when and where rising prices may pose problems for residents. With this support, grantees can better adopt context-sensitive strategies to help neighborhoods improve without forcing out longtime residents. The evaluation results did not uncover instances where grantee efforts yielded price increases that most would associate with gentrification.

"There are well-established intervention strategies for dealing with gentrification pressures," Goldstein said. "Typically, the solution is not found in a single strategy. Data indicative of the market helps grantees craft a proper set of strategies to address the adverse consequences of gentrification."

The foundation has been intentional about understanding market forces around a neighborhood before investing so residents can remain in the community they're working to revitalize.

Evaluators also found that grantees were more likely to be successful if they possessed—and more likely to stall before full implementation if they lacked—a key set of capacities and characteristics:

- **Capacity to raise funds**
- **Capacity to provide back office support**
- **Capacity to manage cash flow**
- **Capacity to assemble and finance physical development projects**
- **Capacity to maintain strong, trusting relationships with residents**
- **Openness to communicating with the foundation as they confront organizational and other challenges**
- **Strong fiscal management and leadership**

In other words, strong organizations led to strong outcomes.

Data also showed the value of making grants—and pairing those grants with sufficient support—to nonprofits initially assessed as "high risk." Before awarding grants, the foundation assesses risk based on various factors including the complexity of neighborhood demographics, how long the nonprofit has been functioning, the relationship between the nonprofit and the neighborhood, and more. The 2014 evaluation found that in the two years after grants ended, 66.7 percent of "high-risk" grantees achieved advantageous results compared to 46.2 percent of "lower-risk" grantees. The foundation believes this is in large part due to ongoing support to the organizations. Once the foundation decides to provide a grant, it commits to giving grantees the support they need so that they have the best possible chance for success. This includes support from consultants but also long-term funding that enables nonprofits to hire or maintain quality staff members who can be developed over the course of the grant continuum.

"The evaluation results suggest that the foundation's willingness to take informed chances with some initially riskier grantees yielded more impactful community rewards," Goldstein said. "In other words, with risk came reward."

Context was critical in understanding the data. At times when communities struggled with opioid addiction or when the foreclosure crisis was at its height, staying steady was a victory. The results gave the foundation staff and board confidence that the funds are being carefully stewarded, even when impact is not immediately apparent.

Upon seeing these results, the foundation made changes based on what it learned. For example, they lengthened the renewal grants from three years to five years and expanded dollars available to both renewal and collaborative grantees.

“The foundation is reaping the benefits now of their early vision and willingness to stay with a well-thought-out strategy,” Grieve said. “They’ve made a significant difference because they innovated and then remained steady, while still evolving the programs to meet grantee needs and goals.”

While the 2014 evaluation demonstrates collective progress across grantees, many grantees can report great individual progress as a result of their neighborhood revitalization efforts. PBCIP has helped create 246 units of housing, restore a 72-acre park, stabilize and grow local businesses, and more. New Brunswick Tomorrow supported advocacy among residents of the Esperanza neighborhood and partner organizations that led 6,900 city workers to get paid sick time and more than 40 properties to be rehabilitated. Their work has also strengthened neighbors’ commitment to remaining and investing in the neighborhood.

“Esperanza is the first community I have seen where people have the will and interest in staying where they are,” said Dani Rosen, Director of Operations—CAPC at New Jersey Community Capital, a partner of New Brunswick Tomorrow. “Residents have built social capital for years; now people want to invest their time, family, and funds here.”

WHAT COMES NEXT

The foundation is constantly learning and adapting in response to grantee needs, shifting its capacity building support as needs change. Even as it adapts, the foundation remains steadfast in its overall approach to long-term, resident-driven, data-informed grantmaking and consistent capacity-building support. The foundation has repeatedly seen that its visible investment compounds: The more the foundation shows that it’s willing to heavily invest in these nonprofits and neighborhoods, the more others likewise invest in them.

“It has been our willingness to stay with grantees through economic and political cycles that has provided the continued focus and staff necessary to develop and implement these longer-term projects and nurture resident

leaders,” Greco said. “We are seeing the neighborhoods now attract large dollar investors to implement the projects at scale because of the capacity these organizations and communities now have.”

These investments are helping residents change their neighborhoods’ infrastructure and opportunities—the parks, community centers, artwork, renovations, job training programs, community groups, and other things that make up a neighborhood. But more than that, they’re helping nonprofits and community members build muscle memory for what it takes to create change, because even if the foundation stays in a neighborhood for 10 or 20 years, the residents remain after it’s gone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions to spark discussion within your own foundation to explore ways you might be able to support your grantees’ capacity to engage residents in achieving their visions.

- What from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation’s story resonates with what we have learned from our work with grantees? What about their approach is different from what we have done in the past? What is something we might consider trying based on this approach?
- How many of our grantees are engaging communities to understand what their needs are? What are we already doing to equip grantees to work more closely with communities, and how might we ramp up those efforts?
- Do we provide multi-year grants? To whom do we need to make the case for increasing the length of our grants, and what arguments would they find most compelling?
- Who are the service providers we rely on to help build capacity among grantees, and where are the gaps? What are grantees’ respective capacity needs, and how might we support them?
- What are the barriers within our foundation to increasing investment in grantees’ capacity to work more closely with communities, and how might we address those barriers? To whom do we need to make the case, and what arguments would they find most compelling?

This case study is one of five in a suite of case studies focused on building grantee capacity using the support of consultants. Each case study has been developed in partnership Community Wealth Partners, drawing on their capacity-building work with various funders and grantees. The case studies showcase varied approaches taken to address the long-term capacity needs of grantees, giving insight to the philanthropy landscape and strategies for foundations, consultants, and practitioners.

This suite pilots an approach for GrantCraft to tap the wisdom of technical assistance providers in making sure learnings from foundation projects are shared. We would benefit from your feedback on this approach, and also expressions of interest from capacity building providers who would like to be considered for future efforts. Please email info@grantcraft.org.

Written by Lauri Valerio, Community Wealth Partners
Photos: Parkside Business and Community In Partnership



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