

BETTER together



BETTER
TOGETHER
FUND

Collaboration is the heart of the matter

Our name says it all: The Better Together Fund (BTF). We exist to help nonprofits maximize their impact by supporting and encouraging formal collaborations.

The initiative is a pilot, and we've received a lot of questions about what BTF has funded and what we're learning. Which is why we're committed to sharing it with you here.

Since our launch in June 2017, BTF has awarded 42 grants worth over \$1,500,000 to 32 unique collaborations, representing 141 organizations. One has completed implementation, five are implementing their collaborations, 23 are in the planning and development stage, and three have chosen not to move forward.

The Project Profiles in this report are case studies in action - offering a rare glimpse into learnings, challenges, and peer-to-peer advice.

With everything we've learned, one thing has become abundantly clear: our nonprofit community is ready, and willing, to explore formal collaboration as a means to strengthening the sector.

This Year in Review will not only enhance our future efforts, but also serve as a resource for others seeking to support or explore deeper collaborations in the nonprofit sector.

Please join us on our journey of helping our community become better, together.

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BTF Overview

Better Together Fund is a pilot program designed to encourage and support nonprofits in exploring formal, long-term collaborations as a way to maximize impact. Sponsorship and oversight are provided by its founding Steering Committee: The Dallas Foundation, Lyda Hill/LH Holdings, Inc., The Meadows Foundation, and the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas.

Grants are approved by the Steering Committee and awarded through The Dallas Foundation. Recognizing the importance of nonprofits being able to seize unpredicted catalytic moments, the Fund will consider applications on any issue, at any time - until the dollars run out.

For Us, Success Looks Like

1. **Big ideas.** Multiple organizations creating significant impact by coming together to do what they could not do individually.
2. **Efficiency.** The region's nonprofit sector is made better by aligning complementary strengths and resources.
3. **Exploration only.** It excites us if organizations merely explore coming together formally, and then strategically elect not to. Because we know they'll move on with a better understanding of the landscape and their unique roles in it.
4. **The new norm.** When conversations at the board and leadership level about considering formal collaboration as a way to solve problems and have greater impact become more routine.

Defining Collaboration

We see **formal collaboration** as a relationship between one nonprofit and another nonprofit, corporation or governmental agency that:

- changes the way participating organizations do business for the long-term
- has board involvement and endorsement
- preserves, expands, or improves efficiency/services to constituents

What We Provide

1. Encouragement and thought partnership for nonprofit leaders to explore a range of formal collaborations with other nonprofits or key strategic partners that focus on solving a big need with minimal overlap. Including, but not limited to:
 - strategic alliances
 - back-office consolidation
 - long-term programmatic joint ventures
 - strategic restructuring
 - mergers
2. A repository of tools, research, and best practices that arm nonprofits with the "why and how" to formally collaborate.
3. Grant funding from \$3,000 to \$600,000 to pay for costs associated with exploring, designing and/or implementing a formal collaboration. Grants cover staff, facilitator, consultant time, and resources associated with feasibility assessment, planning, implementation and successful collaboration.
4. Better Together Fund aims to stretch these grants by pairing grant seekers with pro-bono or reduced-rate facilitators, consultants, and professional service providers.

Types of Support

Exploration		Implementation	
1	2	3	4
Grant Types		Grant Types	
Readiness Assessment & Feasibility Grant	→ Planning Grant	→ Implementation Grant	→ Better Together Grant
Grant Purpose		Grant Purpose	
Organizational Readiness Feasibility with Partners	One-time costs to assess, negotiate and design a formal implementation plan, timeline and business model	One-time costs associated with executing a formal collaboration between two or more organizations	Awarded post-implementation to pursue mission-based growth and innovation
Grant Size		Grant Size	
Up to \$15,000	Up to \$60,000	Up to \$200,000	Up to \$350,000

Application Process



Preliminary consultation

→ Submit 1-page LOI

→ Receive invitation-only application & submit materials

→ Proposal compliance & review

→ Funding approval

Scheduled on a rolling basis. Contact any steering committee member

Includes submitting detailed budget narrative, outlining deliverables, and proposed consulting partner(s)

Applications reviewed quarterly, but can be expedited upon request

For more information on how to apply, visit www.bettertogetherfund.org/howtoapply

First-Year Facts

- **Demand exists.** Over 385 organizations participated in proposing collaboration ideas, and 100% of grantees found the BTF grant experience to be valuable.
- **We're responding to that demand.** Since its launch in June 2017, BTF has funded nearly 50% of applications, which has resulted in awarding 42 grants worth over \$1,500,000 to 32 unique collaborations, representing 141 organizations.
- **The field is growing.** We've been enriched by the open exchange afforded by a growing field of similar funds and funders across the country and have consulted informally with several emerging initiatives in Texas and beyond. This growing learning community is helping to improve practice and evaluation among similar initiatives.
- **Introducing new thinking.** In addition to funding, BTF's purpose is to shift the way nonprofit leaders think about formal collaboration and demonstrate that partnering with other organizations is a positive, productive strategy. To date, BTF's outreach and education on the topic has included producing or presenting at over 17 events with a combined audience of over 900. Our partner site www.thepowerofpossibility.org serves as another important outreach tool for board members and offers discussion guides on the topic.

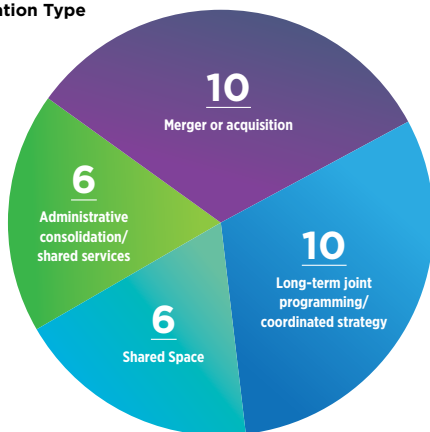
32

**Collaborations
Funded to Date
(42 Grants)**

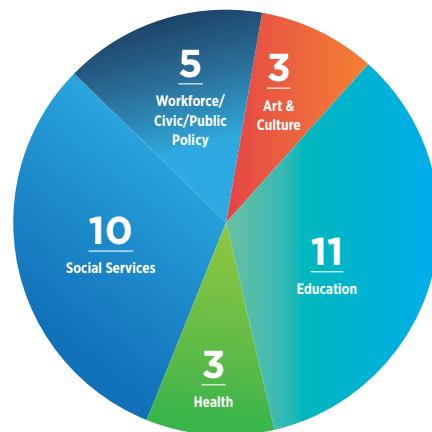
Grant Type



Collaboration Type



Sector



First-Year Key Takeaways

1. **Triggering moments matter.** Our experience mirrors what experts have witnessed for decades: collaboration is often prompted by a major inflection point such as leadership transition, adapting to change, the loss of a significant funding stream, or scaling successful interventions. The latter accounting for most of the BTF collaborations.
2. **The executive director and the board are both key to success.** While the executive director is far more likely to initiate collaboration discussions than the board, boards are critical in creating an environment where executive directors feel empowered to begin these discussions and in evaluating particular opportunities. We've found that if a project doesn't rise to the strategic level of early board involvement, it is unlikely to yield a successful long-term formal collaboration.
3. **Collaborations require more than a check.** We're finding that deeper engagement beyond funding can be beneficial to the collaboration, whether that is ongoing communications with the team, the boards, or technical assistance providers. We are, however, very mindful of power dynamics and the risk of being too pushy or prescriptive. Yet, with so many "soft" elements at play, some grantees welcome an extra sounding board, thought partner, or a nudge to keep the project a priority. Which is why we're exploring the idea of offering volunteer mentors to fill this role and experimenting with this model in the coming grant cycles. This is also why grantees consistently agree that engaging a neutral and experienced third-party to facilitate negotiations is essential to staying on course.
4. **Doing the deal is one thing, making it work is another.** "Making the deal work" is ongoing, and sometimes messy, work that is often more complicated and costlier than initially expected. Funders and partnering organizations need to plan for long-term engagement to institutionalize formal collaborations.
5. **The not-so-secret ingredient is still trust.** We know that collaboration occurs at the speed of trust. Many BTF grantees emphasized that trust is the glue that holds the process together and needs to be created, nurtured, and sustained – by funders and partners alike.

Inquiries and Awards

140 → 90 → 42 → 32

preliminary consultations conducted, representing collaboration concepts from over 385 organizations

applications reviewed

grants awarded totaling ~\$1.5 Million

collaborations supported

The more we do, the more we learn

Mergers are a sign of strength, not weakness. Research shows that the most common collaborations are between strong or stable organizations. We've found this to be true, as 30% of our funded collaborations were to explore or implement a merger or acquisition. In nearly every case, merger exploration comes from a desire to strengthen the mission, not from financial weakness.

Third parties bring crucial objectivity. Grantees have shared that engaging a neutral and experienced third-party to facilitate negotiations was critical to staying on course. Organizations engaged in the process cannot be expected to have the time, resources, or neutrality to effectively manage what are often very sensitive and delicate negotiations between executives and boards. In our experience, a carefully selected and jointly-retained consultant with the right capabilities can be vital in bringing discipline to the process, and in ensuring clear communication between the organizations.

Fear is a great deterrent to application. We've learned some nonprofits fear that conversations will not remain confidential, and fear that receiving BTF support will preclude them from receiving other support from a BTF funding partner. This is precisely why we create a safe space to preserve confidentiality when necessary and are committed to supporting requests with additive funding, so as not to impact other funding sources made available by participating funders. Ultimately, the fear of facing a tough conversation is also at play. Facing tough issues like job redundancies, brand identities and mission creep can be addressed through healthy facilitation with a BTF Feasibility or Planning Grant.

Understanding the market is critical. Without understanding one's subsector ecosystem, it's nearly impossible to make strategic decisions about where to collaborate and with whom. An ecosystem map, or landscape analysis, is a powerful tool that can identify key players in a field, sector, or geography, and define gaps and overlaps in the market. Though BTF isn't currently designed to fund these exercises, we're often finding them a necessary step before applicants are ready to explore a potential collaboration through a Feasibility Grant.

Walking the walk has its advantages. Each funding partner on the steering committee brings different areas of expertise and insights from the field, which enables a healthy discourse when making decisions. The diversity of perspectives that can only come when multiple funders are involved has been a tremendous asset in the selection process, and in our own practice of collaboration. That's why the structure of BTF demands that funding partners experience the complexities of collaboration firsthand.

Monitoring projects takes a significant amount of time. For funders without a dedicated staff person, be aware that the time commitment is substantial. BTF's structure of a shared workflow is working well so far, though it does involve ongoing engagement from all steering committee members.

Common reasons funding is declined:

- Not a strong enough case to meet the definition of formal collaboration (most often the proposed concept is program enhancement or expansion vs. formal collaboration)
- Poorly written application, unreasonable or unqualified budget requests
- Request does not position BTF to play a catalytic role in the collaboration

BTF Friends & Partners

It takes a village. We're thankful to Bain & Company for contributing a fully-staffed case team for a planning engagement, and to countless community volunteers who helped shape the 32 collaborations in BTF's first year.

We are especially grateful to our BTF Partners who support the initiative by sharing ideas for collaborative opportunities, encouraging their partners to participate, and agreeing to review any post-collaboration "Better Together" grant proposals in their areas of interest.

BTF Partners include:

- Communities Foundation of Texas
- The Hoglund Foundation
- Mike & Mary Terry Family Foundation
- The Perot Foundation
- Phillips Philanthropies
- PNC
- The Real Estate Council Foundation
- Social Venture Partners Dallas
- Tolleson Wealth Management
- U.S. Trust, Bank of America Private Wealth Management

To learn more about becoming a partner, please email: info@bettertogetherfund.org.

Profiles

The following Project Profiles reflect the learnings and progress of projects currently underway, or recently completed. They are organized alphabetically according to where they are in the BTF process, with the exception of seven recently funded projects found in the back. For collaborations that wish to remain anonymous, we have excluded partner names and/or profiles with their permission.

Most Recently Funded BTF Phase		Collaboration Name	Partners	Collaboration Status*
1	Readiness	Arts organization readiness assessment	Undisclosed, omitted from report	Not moving forward
2	Readiness	Adults with special needs organization readiness assessment	Undisclosed, omitted from report	Not moving forward
3	Readiness	LIFT Readiness Assessment	Literacy Instruction For Texas (LIFT)	Moving forward informally
4	Feasibility	Bertrand Neighborhood Collaborative	Baylor Scott & White Health and Wellness Center, Frazier Revitalization	Exploration underway
5	Feasibility	Cancer Organizations Merger Feasibility	Undisclosed, omitted from report	Not moving forward
6	Feasibility	Dallas Data Ecosystem Collaborative	bcWorkshop, Commit!, Dallas Innovation Alliance, SMU Hunt Institute for Engineering and Humanity	Exploration underway
7	Feasibility	Domestic Violence Shared Hotline	Undisclosed	Exploration underway
8	Feasibility	Friends of the Dallas Public Library Feasibility	Dallas Public Library, Friends of The Dallas Public Library	Exploration underway
9	Feasibility	Out of School Time Merger Feasibility	Undisclosed	Moving forward informally
10	Feasibility	Principal Impact Collaborative (PIC)	Uplift Education	Exploration underway
11	Feasibility	Shared Space Feasibility	Rising Star Resource Development Corporation	Exploration underway
12	Feasibility	State of the Seniors	The Senior Source, Visiting Nurse Association of Texas	Exploration underway
13	Planning	After8toEducate	CitySquare, Dallas ISD, Promise House, Social Venture Partners	Planning underway
14	Planning	Expanded Learning Information System (ELIS)	Big Thought, Dallas Afterschool	Planning underway
15	Planning	Girls Programming Collaboration	Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas, IGNITE, Step Up	Moving forward informally
16	Planning	GROW Education & Volunteer Collaboration	Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens	Implemented
17	Planning	Parent Voices Fellowship	Leadership ISD, The Concilio	Implementation underway
18	Planning	Shared Resource Center	Bishop Arts Theater, Cara Mia Theatre, Echo Theatre, Kitchen Dog Theater, Pegasus Theatre, Shakespeare Dallas, Theater Three	Planning underway
19	Planning	Step Forward	Anthem Strong Families, Baylor University Medical Center, City of Dallas Department of Economic Development, Dallas County Community College District, Dallas Independent School District, Mercy Street, Serve West Dallas, Young Life West Dallas	Planning underway

Most Recently Funded BTF Phase		Collaboration Name	Partners	Collaboration Status*
20	Planning	Texas News Hub	KERA, KUT in Austin, Houston Public Media, National Public Radio, Texas Public Radio in San Antonio	Planning underway
21	Planning	TX Serves - North Texas	Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, Metrocare Services	Planning underway
22	Implementation	EdCor Integrated Health Clinic	Baylor Scott & White Health, Children's Health, City of Dallas, Dallas Fire and Rescue, Dallas ISD, Dallas Police Department, EdCor Health Initiatives, GrowSouth Fund, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Metrocare, Momentous Institute, North Texas Behavioral Health Authority, Parkland Hospital, Paul Quinn College, T+H Architects, University of North Texas at Dallas, UT Southwestern	Implementation underway
23	Implementation	Elementary Reading Collaborative (ERC)	Beacon Hill Preparatory institute, Catch Up and Read, Early Matters Dallas, Readers 2 Leaders, Reading Partners	Implementation underway
24	Implementation	My Possibilities & LaunchAbility Merger	LaunchAbility, My Possibilities	Implemented
25	Implementation	St. Jude Center	Catholic Charities Dallas, Catholic Housing Initiative, CitySquare, Metrocare Services, Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing	Implementation underway
26	Recently Funded – Feasibility	Education Partnership Feasibility	Education Is Freedom, Education Opens Doors	Exploration underway
27	Recently Funded – Implementation	Fort Worth & Arlington Boys & Girls Club Merger	Girls Club of Arlington, Boys & Girls Club of Greater Fort Worth	Implementation underway
28	Recently Funded – Planning	Owenwood Neighborhood	Aberg Center for Literacy, White Rock United Methodist Church, and nine other agency partners	Planning underway
29	Recently Funded – Planning	Reduce Teen Pregnancy Coalition	City of Dallas, Dallas County Health Department, First Unitarian Church, NTARUPT, Parkland	Planning underway
30	Recently Funded – Implementation	SMU DataArts	DataArts, Southern Methodist University's National Center for Arts Research	Implementation underway
31	Recently Funded – Feasibility	Under 1 Roof Feasibility	Braswell, Cornerstone Crossroads Academy, Inspiring Leaders of Tomorrow, The Chocolate Mint Foundation, TR Hoover, Under 1 Roof	Exploration underway
32	Recently Funded – Feasibility	Urban Farm Partnership Feasibility	Hunger Busters, La Bajada Urban Youth Farm	Exploration underway

*Collaboration status as of September 2018



REWRITING THE BOOK ON

solving adult literacy.

Project

LIFT Readiness Assessment

Partners

Literacy Instruction For Texas (LIFT)

Grant Type(s)

Readiness Assessment

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Long-Term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Moving forward informally

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

La Piana Consulting

Key Stakeholders

LIFT: a leading provider of adult literacy services in North Texas since 1961, serving more than 2,500 adults annually through its low literacy, high school equivalency, and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses.

Context/Market Conditions

More than 800,000 adults in Dallas County struggle with literacy, and that number is projected to grow to over 1 million by 2030.

LIFT board and staff identified high potential opportunities for collaboration across its service continuum: 1) formalizing inbound referrals/hand-off points from sources such as education, workforce, social service, and corrections agencies, 2) reducing undesired student outflows during service delivery, 3) hand-off points for LIFT students to postsecondary education, training providers, and employers.

State adult literacy funding is managed by the Texas Workforce Commission. State and federal funding requirements triggered LIFT to consider how to formally integrate its programs with social service, education, and workforce services.

Collaboration

LIFT already knew that both internal and external factors were motivating them to consider potential formal collaboration but decided to pursue a BTF Readiness Assessment to further clarify how best to proceed

Progress & Next Steps

La Piana’s SRAT exercise set into motion a process of establishing strategic priorities at the board level, while simultaneously researching potential partners. LIFT has kept in regular contact with three other potential collaborating agencies who are all interested in jointly pursuing an environmental scan/needs assessment to inform opportunities for collaboration. LIFT is open and willing to pursue a follow-on BTF Grant once a formal collaboration prospect is identified.

Key Learnings/Advice

The Readiness Assessment paved the way to conduct fact-based examination of support-to-expense ratios as we aligned our budget with our priorities.

La Piana provided sage advice to remain open to all types of possible collaboration, not simply within LIFT’s field of experience.

“Collaborations are based on human relationships, and the best ones require time to explore common goals and values in service of common missions.”
-Dr. Linda Johnson, LIFT CEO



HELPING A NEIGHBORHOOD

get back on its feet.

Project

Bertrand Neighborhood Collaborative

Partners

Baylor Scott & White Health and Wellness Center, Frazier Revitalization

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Exploration recently completed

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Prevention Institute

Key Stakeholders

Frazier Revitalization (a community organizing nonprofit), Baylor, Scott & White Health and Wellness Center (a community health nonprofit advancing community wellness in the Juanita J. Craft Recreation Center in South Dallas), six other independent organizations in the areas of education, crime reduction, health and wellness, and economic development.

Context/Market Conditions

Bertrand Neighborhood is a small neighborhood in Frazier, just east of Fair Park in South Dallas. The neighborhood is less than a quarter square mile and home to about 1,000 residents. 43% live below the poverty line, and median household income is \$21,300.

Over the years, the area has suffered from poor public policy and disinvestment, but today there are strong anchor institutions in or near the area that can help residents create lasting positive change.

Collaboration

A BTF Feasibility Grant provided funding for the Prevention Institute to convene potential partners and conduct training on formal collaboration to determine if a formal collaboration is feasible among any of the eight participating partners. Specifically, the groups intend to explore developing and implementing land use, and social development plans for the Bertrand neighborhood.

Progress & Next Steps

The Prevention Institute process helped the groups form a shared vision, define participating partners, and articulate a range of assets that could be leveraged among the group. The Bertrand Neighborhood Collaborative intends to move forward with a formal collaboration and apply for a BTF Planning Grant.

Key Learnings/Advice

Prevention Institute's facilitated exercises, using frameworks such as the Collaboration Multiplier and THRIVE tool, were particularly helpful.

Sometimes the bureaucracy and city-wide focus of public partners can pose additional challenges in advancing a formal collaboration in such a limited geographic area.

Neighborhood collaborations must always prioritize resident participation, which can also pose added challenges when the community already feels marginalized.

“The opportunity to work with Prevention Institute was so valuable and would not have been available to us without the support from Better Together Fund. The feasibility study put us in a better position to engage in a meaningful way.”

—Bertrand Neighborhood Collaborative Partner



SILOS ARE NO

place for data.

Project

Dallas Data Ecosystem Collaborative

Partners

bcWorkshop, Commit!, Dallas Innovation Alliance, SMU Hunt Institute for Engineering and Humanity

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Workforce/Civic/Public Policy

Collaboration Type

Administrative Consolidation/Shared Services

Collaboration Status

Exploration underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Social Impact Architects

Key Stakeholders

bcWorkshop, Commit!, Dallas Innovation Alliance, SMU Hunt Institute for Engineering and Humanity: four nonprofits engaged in advancing distinct aspects of Dallas' data ecosystem.

Context/Market Conditions

Data is central to understanding and addressing complex social issues such as housing, education, and poverty. Making that data more accessible to a wider audience helps to fuel entrepreneurship, innovation, scientific discovery, and community revitalization.

Dallas' existing data ecosystem is fragmented and operates in silos, with few centralized repositories of information and ad-hoc data sharing between entities. This leads to a duplication of effort and barriers to effectively using data to address problems facing the city.

Collaboration

A 2-year study, sponsored by Communities Foundation of Texas, found that a collaborative effort is needed to meet Dallas' data ecosystem. To address this need, these independent data stewards came together to explore a formal collaboration to grow Dallas' nascent data ecosystem.

Progress & Next Steps

A BTF Feasibility Grant enabled the groups to assess and align on a shared vision, establish goals, identify specific challenges to overcome, and study models in other cities.

The groups are in the process of comparing governance models for similar data collaboratives across the country to inform a mutually agreed upon vision for next steps, which may or may not include another BTF funding request.

Key Learnings/Advice

Because all four partners talk about data differently, and use data with different types of communities, an external perspective was instrumental in helping conceive the bigger picture beyond individual organizational differences and interests.

Each group had a different idea on where to start tackling this problem. Having a third party facilitate and set clear expectations from the beginning helped assure all members that meetings would be a safe space to be open and critical when needed.

“Although each of the four organizations are utilizing data in different ways and have different reasons for wanting systemic improvements, we all share an understanding that we are working to build something that goes beyond our four organizations to provide a community benefit.”

—Owen Wilson-Chavez, Senior Analytics Manager, buildingcommunityWORKSHOP



JOINING FORCES TO HELP

survivors of domestic violence.

Project

Domestic Violence Shared Hotline

Partners

Undisclosed

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Administrative Consolidation/Shared Services

Collaboration Status

Exploration underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Social Impact Architects

Key Stakeholders

Six separate emergency shelter organizations

Context/Market Conditions

Each shelter runs a separate 24-hour hotline and tracks its bed availability separately.

Demand for beds has increased, but not every survivor who calls a shelter is always served. Survivors must find and dial multiple numbers to secure a safe place, often during a traumatic time. The Dallas Police Department refers victims to two of the six shelters during the Lethality Assessment Process.

Shelters have attempted light coordination, such as a shared Google doc with bed availability, but this technology is not always in real-time, and not always used consistently.

Collaboration

A willingness to explore solutions together has led the shelters to consider a formal collaboration that would provide seamless access to victims of domestic violence while creating a more efficient way for police and emergency responders to refer clients to emergency shelter programs.

Progress & Next Steps

A BTF Feasibility Grant covered an expert facilitator to research existing models of a shared hotline and bringing in the program director from Safe Horizon in NYC to discuss how they consolidated 30 emergency shelter programs into one hotline.

A distinction was made between a single point of entry hotline number for the public to access and a unified hotline number for police and emergency responders to use when referring clients. While there is still some reluctance among the group to give up direct client access to a provider for a public hotline number, shelter providers are interested and willing to take the next steps to evaluate costs and staffing needs for a unified emergency responder hotline number. A complementary technology platform to monitor real time bed availability is another shared service the groups are interested in pursuing. The collaboration is working to put together a follow-on feasibility or Planning Grant request with the intent of starting with a unified emergency responder hotline number.

Key Learnings/Advice

Bringing in a practitioner who had navigated a similar collaboration in a much larger jurisdiction was vital in demystifying the process.

Conducting a survey among participating shelters allowed direct feedback to gauge interest.

“The funding to work with an independent third-party consultant and the ability to bring NYC colleagues to Dallas to educate the group was the critical tool to making this collaboration possible.”

—Domestic Violence Shared Hotline Partner



LIBRARY GROUPS

getting on the same page.

Project

Friends of Dallas Public Library Feasibility

Partners

Dallas Public Library and Friends of
The Dallas Public Library

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Long-Term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Exploration underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

AssociaDirect, John Chrastka

Key Stakeholders

The Dallas Public Library, established in 1901, Friends of the Dallas Public Library, an independent 501(c)(3) organization established in 1950 to support the Dallas Public Library, up to 17 other independent 501(c)(3) library friends' groups that support specific neighborhood branches of the Dallas Public Library system.

Context/Market Conditions

The existing structure of 18 independent 501(c)(3) friends' groups that support the Dallas Public Library's staff and programs at its 29 branches has been a boon for library locations where the community is supportive and involved. However, this system leaves a significant deficit at library locations that struggle to find community members with the time, resources, and willingness to become involved.

The variance of involvement and efficacy from each of these 18 independent organizations creates an imbalance in equity that is not reflective of the overall library's strategic initiatives. Some branches do not have any associated friends' group.

While these 18 friends' groups have collaborated informally on various projects, very little ongoing coordination or communication occurs to reduce administrative redundancies or create alignment on strategy.

Collaboration

Through a BTF Feasibility Grant, the groups explored various collaboration models to further unify their support network for the overall library system. They also explored specific operational shifts that could drive efficiency.

Progress & Next Steps

After six months of meetings, facilitated by an external library consultant, the groups did not reach consensus on which model to adopt moving forward. Subsequent meetings between stakeholders may include a subsequent request to BTF for a Planning Grant to create a system of support for library locations currently without dedicated support.

Key Learnings/Advice

Having 18 volunteer-led parties involved in a consensus building activity posed challenges, even with an expert facilitator to lead the process.

For the Dallas Public Library executive staff, the process illuminated how much value these groups bring to their individual branches.

“It is unfortunate that the groups could not reach a consensus on one or two paths to explore further. However, I am optimistic that informal conversations will continue amongst the groups sometime in the future.”

—Mary Wilonsky, Executive Director, Friends of the Dallas Public Library



RETHINKING THE MODEL FOR

out of school programs.

Project

Out of School Time Merger Feasibility

Partners

Undisclosed

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Exploring Merger or Acquisition

Collaboration Status

Not moving forward with formal collaboration; moving forward informally

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

La Piana Consulting

Key Stakeholders

Two local chapters affiliated with the national organization that operate as independent organizations and are governed by their own boards of directors.

Context/Market Conditions

Each chapter provides out of school time programs for low income children.

The national affiliate and two of its Texas-based chapters want to explore what relationship(s) would most benefit the organizations in the long term, including the possibility of consolidating back-office functions or a full merger of the three organizations. Specifically, they believe program services could be expanded if they reduce operational inefficiencies.

Collaboration

A BTF Feasibility Grant provided expert assistance to assess organizational readiness and suitability to pursue a strategic alliance, determine the viability of various types of partnership, outline steps for implementation, and define measures of success.

Progress & Next Steps

Each entity completed La Piana's Strategic Restructuring Assessment Tool (SRAT), which provided a framework to explore partnership options. All three entities found the engagement valuable, but determined a merger was not in their best interest at this time. Because of this exercise, they intend to pilot a joint fundraising effort.

Key Learnings/Advice

As with any federated structure, how each affiliate executes on the organization's mission can vary. La Piana has experience with this model and was able to facilitate high-level visioning, as well as granular logistical implications for each collaboration idea.

“[Being] vulnerable, open, and honest leads to a more productive dialogue and opportunities for collaboration.”

–Out of School Time Merger Feasibility Partner



INSPIRING PRINCIPALS TO CONTINUE

inspiring students.

Project

Principal Impact Collaborative (PIC)

Partners

Uplift Education

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Potential Merger or Acquisition

Collaboration Status

Exploration underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Cicero Social Impact

Key Stakeholders

PIC: an innovative 2-year program for an elite group of experienced North Texas area principals. Since inception, it has been housed and hosted by Uplift Education, a leading DFW charter management organization.

Context/Market Conditions

PIC was launched in 2016 by a collaboration among Dallas ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Uplift Education, Teaching Trust, and Commit.

PIC's goal is to address the national challenge of high principal turnover by leading a fellowship that re-engages and inspires experienced school principals. The program objectives are to develop principals' leadership skills so that they can better develop innovative ideas and strategies to improve their campus.

The program is focused on supporting the principals as they incubate and execute a 'big idea' to drive sustained impact on their campus, network and share best practices with like-minded peers, and mentor other principals to replicate the 'big ideas' on other campuses.

As PIC has grown to support more districts and principals, they have been prompted to evaluate whether a more sustainable long-term home could provide additional program resources, as well as serve as a more neutral organization, rather than hosted in a particular district organization.

Collaboration

A BTF Feasibility Grant enabled PIC to explore potential partners that could serve as a long-term home for PIC, as well as helped PIC understand its unique role in the broader landscape of principal development programs.

Progress & Next Steps

The feasibility study is expected to wrap up in September 2018, at which time PIC will decide whether to jointly apply for a Planning Grant with an identified partner.

Key Learnings/Advice

Cicero Social Impact was a critical partner in leading the analysis and providing the manpower to explore partnership opportunities and the program's value proposition.



POOLING RESOURCES TO CREATE DEEPER

workforce development.

Project

Shared Space Feasibility

Partners

Rising Star Resource Development Corporation

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Workforce/Civic/Public Policy

Collaboration Type

Shared Space

Collaboration Status

Exploration underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

La Piana Consulting

Key Stakeholders

Rising Star: a nonprofit community rehabilitation program (CRP) agency providing employment and training opportunities to individuals with disabilities, those with barriers to employment, and our country's veterans.

Context/Market Conditions

Rising Star acquired a new HQ facility in 2017 that included unused office space. The organization wanted to be thoughtful about the best use for this space in keeping with its mission.

Recognizing the potential for greater efficiency and collaboration, Rising Star wanted to explore the concept of a shared space "hub" where complementary agencies could locate operations. Rising Star would provide low-cost office space for smaller agencies potentially serving similar clientele, as well as consider offering shared back-office services to tenants.

Collaboration

Rising Star was awarded a BTF Feasibility Grant to explore the viability of its shared space concept, who the tenant partners would be, and what shared services could be leveraged.

Progress & Next Steps

La Piana conducted a customized feasibility study that included a competitive analysis, defined purpose statement, cost structure analysis, survey of facility enhancements needed, and prospective tenant interviews. This study determined that the ideal tenants are those who are transitioning out of supportive real estate (such as Meadows' Wilson District), are ready to pay for shared services, and share the goal of helping individuals with barriers to employment get their best job and achieve their full potential.

Rising Star intends to make the necessary improvements to its space before pursuing potential tenant(s).

Key Learnings/Advice

The consulting partner's research into the interest, demand and competition for nonprofit shared space in the area was extremely enlightening and shifted Rising Star's thinking about how, and with whom, to collaborate and share space.

"The [BTF] process itself has been as beneficial as the actual funds provided."

-Dennis Edwards, Executive Director, Rising Star



PREPARING FOR THE

silver tsunami.

Project

State of the Seniors

Partners

The Senior Source and VNA of Texas

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Exploration underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Social Impact Architects

Key Stakeholders

The Senior Source, Visiting Nurse Association of Texas (VNA): two of Dallas' largest senior-focused nonprofits that together serve over 40,000 seniors.

Context/Market Conditions

DFW is home to the 10th largest senior population among US cities and is rising in the rankings. It is estimated that by 2020, elderly adults will outnumber young children.

While North Texas has a myriad of service providers and government agencies dedicated to serving older adults, as the population ages, the need is outpacing the system's ability to respond.

In recognition of the forthcoming "silver tsunami," The Senior Source and VNA began discussions to uncover synergies and build systems that streamline services and support. To make an informed decision on how best to collaborate, they realized that more data on the sector was needed in order to understand critical gaps in services today and into the future.

Collaboration

A BTF Feasibility Grant enabled a comprehensive environmental scan and summative report with recommendations to develop a unified community action plan that ensures the safety and well-being of Dallas and Collin County's seniors. This effort was a necessary first step to determine if a formal collaboration between the two large providers made strategic sense.

Progress & Next Steps

In May 2018, the groups shared the initial findings from the published report at a public "State of Seniors Summit." Following the summit, more than 30 senior-serving organizations have responded with interest to participate in action planning meetings around the six prioritized recommendations from the report.

While the Feasibility Grant has resulted in positive momentum toward a collective impact approach, it did not illuminate any obvious opportunities to advance a formal collaboration between the two partnering organizations. The Senior Source and VNA are still exploring potential formal collaborations as they continue to jointly advocate and advance the action plan. They intend to reapply to BTF once a formal concept is identified.

Key Learnings/Advice

Incorporating tools such as a public survey, focus groups, and post-summit survey helped ensure our process was inclusive and relevant to senior needs in the community.

"As a community, it is vital for us to come together to ensure older adults in North Texas have the tools necessary to thrive. We will work collaboratively on the plan that will ensure we meet the needs of older adults long into the future."

—Katherine Krause, President and CEO of VNA of Texas

—Cortney Nicolato, President and CEO of The Senior Source



PREVENTING UNSHELTERED YOUTH FROM

becoming homeless adults.

Project

After8toEducate

Partners

CitySquare, Dallas ISD Social Venture
Partners, Promise House

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Shared Space

Collaboration Status

Planning underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

SMU Center on Research and Evaluation
Jonathan Blum, Polsinelli LLP
Clarkson Davis Consulting
Frozen Fire
Farrell Architects

Key Stakeholders

Dallas Independent School District (DISD), Promise House (agency with 30 years of experience sheltering homeless youth in transitional housing), CitySquare (agency that operates drop-in center and support services for homeless youth), Social Venture Partners Dallas (community of philanthropists that incubates collective impact projects).

Context/Market Conditions

A catastrophic 3,500+ DISD students are homeless, 100 or more are completely unsheltered.

When unsheltered students age out of the foster care system, or opt out of the child welfare system altogether, they are left with limited public and private resources. These remaining services are often only available for restricted hours, leaving many with no place to go after 8:00pm.

DISD had a vacant former school that could be repurposed to serve homeless youth, but no dedicated funds to convert the facility or expand program services. Two programming agencies wanted to expand services but had limited funding to do so. None of the parties had experience coordinating service offerings, tracking outcomes, or jointly fundraising to operate together. Social Venture Partners Dallas had capacity to manage facility renovation, fundraising, and contracts.

Collaboration

After8toEducate was established as a first-of-its-kind public/private collaborative to repurpose a school facility to provide shelter, a 24/7 drop-in center, and essential services to unsheltered DISD high school students.

Progress & Next Steps

After8toEducate established formal agreements between each partner organization, outlining roles and responsibilities. A BTF Planning Grant supported initial site plan expenses, an evaluation planning framework including a logic model and approach to integrating services and program evaluation, and a joint communications plan.

After8toEducate intends to apply for an Implementation Grant to integrate data systems to measure outcomes. Drop-in center will open in fall 2018, and the 24/7 shelter will open in spring 2019.

Key Learnings/Advice

Continuous communication and sharing information are keys to success. Don't get too far down the road without establishing shared policies and procedures.

“Each partner brings proven complementary strengths to our plan to reduce unsheltered Dallas youth.”

-Hillary Evans, After8toEducate Executive Director



LEARNING HOW TO MAKE OUT-OF-SCHOOL

learning more effective.

Project

Expanded Learning Information System (ELIS) Collaboration

Partners

Big Thought, Dallas Afterschool

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Administrative Consolidation/Shared Services

Collaboration Status

Planning underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) at Southern Methodist University

Key Stakeholders

Big Thought (BT), Dallas Afterschool (DAS): two independent nonprofits that play convening roles in supporting and expanding out-of-school-time (OST) learning experiences in Dallas. Together, and through their collective 500+ partner organizations and program sites, they serve more than 150,000 students annually.

Context/Market Conditions

Many children benefit from OST learning experiences, but data collection to support program quality, funding, and advocacy remains fragmented, redundant, and minimal (or even absent) in the case of some providers. To expand the base of support for OST programming as a tool to close the opportunity gap, better evidence about what works is needed.

BT and DAS already work independently with SMU's Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) to track outcomes across their partner sites. They each collect complimentary data on similar constructs while implementing different tools and distribution channels back to providers. Some partner sites collect data for both BT and DAS, and both organizations recognize that a unified and more comprehensive system could support broader and deeper research, as well as overall impact on children and families.

Collaboration

A formal alliance is forming to implement the Expanded Learning Information System (ELIS), a comprehensive system of student-level and programmatic data to support OST service providers throughout Dallas. Instead of collecting data separately, BT and DAS will work cooperatively to identify the information needed to support continuous improvements, while creating systems through which OST providers can easily share data and receive regular reports.

Progress & Next Steps

A BTF Planning Grant is supporting the development of a formal implementation plan for ELIS that addresses intended outcomes including scope, timeline, budget, partner responsibilities, and data system specifications. The ELIS implementation plan is expected to be ready in Fall 2018, at which time they anticipate applying for a BTF Implementation Grant.

Key Learnings/Advice

CORE, a technical assistance provider, came to the planning process with intimate knowledge of both collaborating organizations and their stakeholders. As a result, they were well-positioned to serve as an honest broker, bringing tough questions and/or strategic ideas for discussion.

Partners need to invite the right stakeholders to the table, while being aware that too many voices will impede productive conversations.

“Establish a standing meeting schedule and ask all parties to honor that time. From the beginning, create a transparent process for sharing document drafts, work products, etc. (utilizing online folders like Google or Dropbox).”

–Greg MacPherson, Sr. Director of Research, Evaluation & Design, Big Thought

“While everyone should share a common agenda as well as an idea of what the end goal is, the route to that goal may look different than initially conceived, and the end goal itself may be altered through the collaborative process.”

–Lauren Ammons, Research and Evaluation Manager, Dallas Afterschool



HELPING YOUNG GIRLS BECOME

women leaders.

Project

Girls Programming Collaboration

Partners

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas, IGNITE, Step Up

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Long-Term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Not moving forward with formal collaboration;
moving forward informally

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Bransom Working Group

Key Stakeholders

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas, IGNITE, Step Up: three independent, Dallas-based girl-focused organizations. All three entities are affiliates of their respective national organizations.

Context/Market Conditions

All three organizations recognize a programming gap in leadership development for girls, specifically programming for high school girls during the summer. Each has a unique area of expertise and complementary curriculum assets that could be leveraged in a long-term joint programming effort.

The three organizations are challenged by effectively communicating directly with high school girls, increasing reach and offerings without increasing staff, tracking girls' successes and development, and converting matriculated high school girls into college/career mentors.

Collaboration

With the idea that their alliance could serve as a model throughout the country, a BTF Planning Grant enabled the three organizations to explore a collaborative curriculum and programming feasibility around their shared vision of empowering girls through leadership, college and career exploration, and civic engagement.

Progress & Next Steps

The BTF planning phase involved formally convening leaders from all three groups to document commonly-valued ideas and outcomes, inventory program offerings, synthesize challenges and opportunities, establish opportunities for shared resources, and outline a business model for next steps.

The planning phase helped determine that a shared summer program was not the best strategic option to expand program offerings for high school girls at this time. Instead, they refined a list of other short-term opportunities to collectively expand offerings. These include opportunities for skills-building, mentorship, networking, and travel/scholarships.

Over the next 12 months, the organizations will research and informally investigate alignment opportunities to share program capacity and communication networks, continue developing success and progress tracking measures, and encourage matriculated high school girls to join Step Up's college/career mentor database.

Key Learnings/Advice

The three organizations are not comparable in size, policies, staffing, capabilities, etc., which made piloting a low-cost rapid prototype for a joint summer program a challenge.

“The Better Together Fund process was hugely helpful in understanding the current program capacity of the three organizations and how they align to the needs of high school girls. While the project did not move forward, we gained valuable insight to current market offerings and what is needed to establish partnerships that can create change for both the girls we serve and the nonprofit infrastructure.”

–Ashley Crowe, Chief Program Officer, Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas



A LITTLE WEEDING HELPS

grow botanical education.

Project

GROW Education & Volunteer Collaboration

Partners

Botanical Research Institute of Texas,
Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Implemented

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Project Partners, Fort Worth
J.O. Design

Key Stakeholders

The nonprofit Botanic Research Institute of Texas (BRIT), city-owned Fort Worth Botanic Garden (FWBG): both well-established institutions that have been funded, managed and implemented independently for many decades, although they exist on a contiguous campus with a shared parking lot. They also share similar education missions in the areas of horticulture, botanic science, and biodiversity conservation.

Context/Market Conditions

The shared campus utilizes over a thousand volunteers yet lacks a collaborative system to achieve the maximum benefit from their service.

Duplicative educational programming and outreach along with operational redundancies prompted the organizations to pursue a MOU executed between BRIT and the City of Fort Worth to find opportunities for collaborative programming and volunteer coordination.

Collaboration

A BTF Planning Grant allowed for development of a clear set of measurable objectives that will be realized through the consolidation of educational programming and volunteer management.

Progress & Next Steps

The groups brought in peer leaders across the country to help shape the vision for the joint program offerings, ensuring the offerings will be innovative and best-in-class. The planning phase resulted in a 3-year strategic plan, a 1-year operational plan, and a business plan that outlined opportunities to grow revenue streams and set financial targets for three years.

BTF Planning Grant funds also covered a branding exercise, a marketing plan, and support for their public launch that showcased the new joint programs to over 400 participants who had not previously participated in either organizations' programs.

In the first six months of consolidated programming, attendance increased 2.5 times over the combined attendance of both organizations in the prior year, and expanded volunteer opportunities.

The GROW collaborative has identified potential expenses for further BTF support. They have not yet applied for implementation or a BTF Grant.

Key Learnings/Advice

Bringing in peer practitioners from across the country pushed the groups to think “what we could become” instead of focusing on simply expanding what they already do. That was huge.

“The planning process was a game changer for my team! When consolidation was first mentioned, staff felt overloaded and overwhelmed. Having the ability to bring in peers from successful programs was inspiring and helped them be excited about establishing a joint vision.”

-Tracy Friday, SEED School Director, BRIT



EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BECOME

more powerful advocates.

Project

Parent Voices Fellowship

Partners

Leadership ISD, The Concilio

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Workforce/Civic/Public Policy

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Implementation underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Excellent Design Resolutions, Harold Hogue

Key Stakeholders

Leadership ISD (a nonprofit that develops leaders, advocates, and school board trustees for educational excellence and equity through civic and leadership programs), The Concilio (a nonprofit that bridges the gap between parents and the educational system through parent engagement and education programs).

Context/Market Conditions

A common trend among historically marginalized Dallas ISD parents is a desire to advocate for their students and families, but a lack of understanding and empowerment to be change-makers.

The Concilio has a tremendous track record of relationship building and leadership development for parents. However, graduates of its 9-week Parents Advocating for Student Excellence (PACE) program don't have avenues for continued advocacy training, though many express a desire for this type of programming. Due to the delicate nature of being a district partner and vendor, stepping into district-level advocacy work is not possible for The Concilio.

Leadership ISD offers training and advocacy programs, with the capacity to take parent graduates of PACE to the next level by lifting up their voices to drive policy improvements at the district level. To expand its leadership training to a population of historically marginalized parents, Leadership ISD would need a formal collaboration with The Concilio to leverage the trust built with the parent community.

Collaboration

A BTF Planning Grant funded the design of a long-term joint programming venture, scalable business plan, negotiated MOU, and evaluation plan to measure success.

Progress & Next Steps

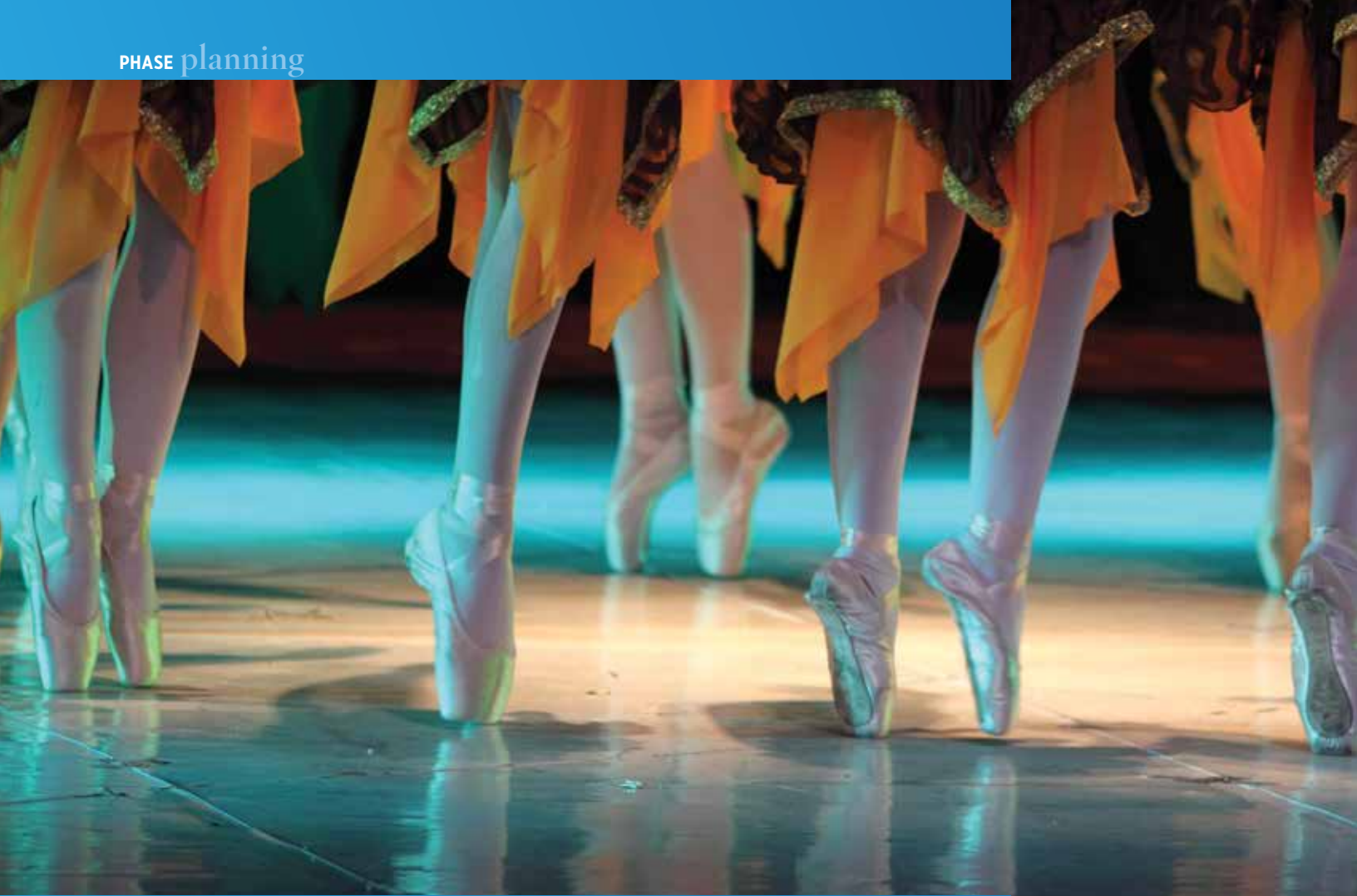
The groups have completed most of these planning phase activities, including extensive program design research through focus groups, and will be piloting the program in late 2018. They intend to apply for a BTF Implementation Grant in fall 2018.

Key Learnings/Advice

A neutral third-party facilitator was instrumental in keeping the project moving. The two parties could focus on the vision and strategy, while the consulting partner could execute the project management and logistical details. Everyone knew their role upfront.

“We do not have enough backing or support to make our opinions matter with powerful people. A program such as Parent Voices will help us understand how to take direct action.”

–Rocio Romero, parent participant in Parent Voices Fellowship focus group



SETTING THE STAGE FOR

theatrical efficiencies.

Project

Shared Resource Center

Partners

Bishop Arts Theater, Cara Mia Theatre, Echo Theatre, Kitchen Dog Theater, Pegasus Theatre, Shakespeare Dallas, Theater Three

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Arts & Culture

Collaboration Type

Shared Space

Collaboration Status

Planning underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Solender Hall - real estate broker

Gary Scott - real estate attorney

Todd Howard Architects - space planning and site planning

Mason York - project coordinator

Key Stakeholders

Seven small to midsize professional theater companies with a diverse range of programming, services, and annual operating budgets.

Context/Market Conditions

Theaters run lean operations. Most rent space or storage units, and/or often utilize staff garages and sheds, to build scenery and store costumes and production-related materials.

Cost for warehouse space is rising, and none of the theaters have the capacity for adequate storage and set-building facilities of their own, or a system to track inventory or loan property.

Theaters are often duplicating efforts by independently creating their own sets, props, or costumes when another theater may have a similar item in storage.

None of the organizations have a reliable inventory of all their production assets, however there is a willingness to share assets like props, costumes, and scenery when not in use. Many partners have common needs, and some have already begun to informally borrow equipment and materials.

Collaboration

The groups will explore a Shared Resource Center that will provide much needed storage and construction space, as well as an online catalogue and lending library.

Progress & Next Steps

A Planning Grant helped determine the appropriate scale for physical space needs and the number of participating partners, create governance structure, develop site plan and operating budget, and begin the real estate search. The collaboration anticipates applying for an Implementation Grant once a final plan is completed and a site has been identified.

Key Learnings/Advice

When working with multiple agencies, establish clear parameters for participation.

The planning phase can take much longer than expected. One of the biggest challenges was coordinating meeting times for all partners to participate.

“Ethics and trust are the bedrock of a solid functioning partnership.”

–Raphael Parry, Executive and Artistic Director, Shakespeare Dallas

“This concept has been considered for over a decade, but we never had any dedicated resources to explore it.”

–Merri Brewer, Managing Director, Theater Three



CREATING MIDDLE-SKILLS CAREER

pathways in healthcare.

Project

Step Forward

Partners

Anthem Strong Families, Baylor University Medical Center, City of Dallas Department of Economic Development, Dallas County Community College District, Dallas Independent School District, Mercy Street, Serve West Dallas, Young Life West Dallas

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Workforce/Civic/Public Policy

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Planning underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Midwest Evaluation and Research

Key Stakeholders

Anthem Strong Families (a community-based agency with case management and training experience), Baylor University Medical Center (a nonprofit hospital), City of Dallas Department of Economic Development, Dallas County Community College District, Dallas Independent School District, Mercy Street (a neighborhood-based mentoring organization), Serve West Dallas (a nonprofit cross-sector convener), Young Life West Dallas (a neighborhood-based youth ministry program).

Context/Market Conditions

Opportunity Youth (ages 18-24) face high unemployment or underemployment rates in West Dallas and beyond due to systemic poverty and a lack of industry-relevant workforce skills.

Area health care providers are facing a hiring and retention crisis among critical entry-level workers, especially patient care technicians. Without career pathways from critical entry-level to middle-skill jobs, the industry is ill-prepared for workforce readiness, development, and retention. Area hospitals face turnover rates up to 60%, impacting their bottom lines.

Collaboration

The groups will establish a long-term joint programming venture to prepare high school graduates for career advancement in healthcare by training them to earn certification and/or degrees, while linking them to job placement opportunities and career advancement.

Progress & Next Steps

A BTF Planning Grant was awarded to help Step Forward refine an actionable plan for their workforce strategy, as well as establish a ROI and CQI evaluation effort. The groups are still in the planning phase, so it's too early to know the appropriate next steps.

Key Learnings/Advice

Two small nonprofits working with a mature employer and large public institutions present additional complexities in aligning priorities and pace of change.

Much effort is put toward improving communications, working out misunderstandings, dealing with perceived partner inequities, overcoming hurdles, keeping everyone on the same page, setting the agendas, and handling a myriad of administrative details (far more than was anticipated) for the collaboration.

“Better Together Fund forced us to look at individual changes each partner had to make in order for the collaboration to work and move to success.”

–R. Scott Hanson, Executive Director & Chief Resource Officer, Serve West Dallas



KERA Dallas education reporter Stella Chávez on a job at a local high school.

HELPING PUBLIC RADIO TO

better inform the public.

Project

Texas News Hub

Partners

Houston Public Media, KERA, KUT in Austin, National Public Radio, Texas Public Radio in San Antonio

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Administrative Consolidation/Shared Services

Collaboration Status

Planning underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Public Media Company
Coats2Coat

Key Stakeholders

National Public Radio (NPR), KERA in Dallas, Houston Public Media, KUT in Austin, Texas Public Radio in San Antonio.

Context/Market Conditions

Since public radio was born, NPR's 264-member stations have worked independently to cover news in their communities. Partnerships between stations have been rare, and historically, four NPR regional editors scramble to track as many as 60 stations.

As newspapers shrink and news deserts grow, local public media has become a beacon in a "fake news" world, putting even more strain on the national news-gathering system.

Texas stations and NPR often duplicate coverage. When big news breaks, one or two NPR reporters often "parachute" in from Washington DC.

NPR wants to change how journalists cover news by creating regional hubs to form a smoothly functioning 1,600-person virtual newsroom. NPR approached the Texas stations about becoming the pilot for this concept due to their informal working relationship of jointly covering statewide stories such as Hurricane Harvey.

Collaboration

A formalized regional hub will create a journalism powerhouse, streamline communication between local members and national programming, and ultimately broaden Texas' impact. By sharing content, journalists can cover more stories as well as take the time needed to explore more issues in depth.

Progress & Next Steps

A BTF Planning Grant provided expert assistance in creating a sustainable business plan, a joint fundraising plan, and a consolidated staffing plan. They are still in the process of completing plans and anticipate applying for implementation in Fall 2018, with an intended launch in early 2019.

Key Learnings/Advice

Third party objectivity has been extremely helpful in ironing out delicate details without getting lost in the weeds. Consulting partners have taken on many of the detailed tasks that might have derailed partnership efforts, enabling the four stations and NPR to rise above the minutiae and tackle the big issues.

Even if all parties have a full and equal partnership based on consensus, one designated point person is still needed to drive the project forward from within.

“Identifying Texas as the ‘prototype’ regional news hub has allowed us to develop key aspects of this collaborative journalistic network - content, of course, but also planning for business functions, sustainability and hiring, along with taking the first steps toward collaborative fundraising. We’re not just prototyping the Texas News Hub; we’re prototyping the process to get there - a process that has the potential to transform the public radio news system. The result will be even better journalism and will ensure that when the Texas story needs to be told to a national audience, it will be Texas stations, Texas reporters, and Texas voices that tell that story.”

-Bruce Auster, National Public Radio's Senior Director, Collaborative Journalism Network



ENSURING VETERANS RECEIVE THE

services they've earned.

Project

TX Serves - North Texas

Partners

Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)
at Syracuse University, Metrocare Services

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Impact Sector

Workforce/Civic/Public Policy

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Planning underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Meadows Mental Health Institute

Key Stakeholders

Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) (a higher education interdisciplinary institute at Syracuse University focused on advancing the lives of military veterans), Metrocare Services, (the largest provider of mental health services in Dallas County).

Context/Market Conditions

The military-connected community overwhelmingly cites navigation of benefits and services as the #1 challenge veterans face as they transition.

North Texas is home to more than 4,000 veteran service organizations. Several studies and needs assessments in Texas point to lack of coordination between veteran-serving organizations (VSOs), suggesting a fragmented VSO landscape where providers lack the bandwidth, expertise, and trust to build cross-agency collaboration.

AmericaServes is a proven model developed by IVMF to coordinate local systems of public, private and nonprofit organizations working together to serve Veterans. Utilizing technology and a local anchor organization, the concept streamlines referrals between participating providers by identifying appropriate services for veterans and their families.

Collaboration

The partners received a BTF Planning Grant to develop an implementation strategy for a local roll out of the AmericaServes model, called TX Serves. The purpose of TX Serves is to coordinate a system of local support and care, enhanced through streamlined referrals and active case management.

Progress & Next Steps

The planning phase revealed that a different local agency was best suited to host the TX Serves coordination model. The collaboration is still moving forward with the United Way of Tarrant County being proposed as the new coordination center.

Key Learnings/Advice

Given the volume of diverse providers involved in the effort, the partners found it was more effective to communicate one-on-one with nonprofit leaders rather than host group meetings. Individual conversations provided an opportunity to learn the specific needs of each organization, leading to discussions on how the proposed model could solve those needs in measurable ways.

“The planning phase of the Veterans Collaboration allowed us and our partners to identify best practices that ultimately will ensure veterans and their families have access to services needed to successfully transition back into their community.”
-TX Serves - North Texas Partner



INTEGRATING HEALTHCARE

under one roof.

Project

EdCor Integrated Health Clinic

Partners

Baylor Scott & White Health, Children's Health, City of Dallas, Dallas Fire and Rescue, Dallas ISD, Dallas Police Department, EdCor Health Initiatives, GrowSouth Fund, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Metrocare, Momentous Institute, North Texas Behavioral Health Authority, Parkland Hospital, Paul Quinn College, T+H Architects, University of North Texas at Dallas, UT Southwestern

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant and Implementation Grant

Impact Sector

Health

Collaboration Type

Shared Space

Collaboration Status

Implementation underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

T. Howard and Associates
Christie Myers

Key Stakeholders

City of Dallas, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (nonpartisan policy research and development institute to improve mental health services in Texas), Paul Quinn College (neighboring private liberal arts, historically black college), UNT Dallas (neighboring public university), 9+ area health care providers.

Context/Market Conditions

Little to no access to primary, behavioral or mental health services exists south of I-30 in metro Dallas. This lack of access to care leads to a high volume of southern Dallas citizens in crisis being diverted to jail, or emergency rooms not adequately positioned to serve mental illness. The lack of primary and mental health care in the area is also a major burden to the City's emergency responders and local emergency rooms.

Building mental health capacity in southern Dallas is also a workforce solution. Southern Dallas colleges, universities, and community colleges are eager to develop more skilled behavior health care specialists to fill the workforce needs.

The City of Dallas indicated that approximately 3.5 acres of land between UNT Dallas and Paul Quinn College is available to address these needs.

Collaboration

Initially convened by NeighborUp, more than 15 entities helped to inform the vision for a collaborative health care center providing mental, behavioral, and primary care in southern Dallas. In addition to offering access to a range of care and providers under one roof, the Education Corridor Integrated Health Clinic (EdCor IHC) will be a resource for clinical education partnerships with UNT Dallas, Paul Quinn College, and DCCCD students. EdCor IHC will also create pathways for community engagement in health and mental wellness and reduce referrals to juvenile justice, jail, and local emergency rooms for non-violent mental health crises.

Progress & Next Steps

A BTF Planning Grant supported the development of a business plan and governance model for the concept. This resulted in establishing a new 501c3, EdCor Health Initiatives, to develop, own, and operate the facility.

While EdCor is in the final stages of acquiring the land, financing the project and confirming tenants, a BTF Implementation Grant is supporting one-time costs associated with establishing provider partnerships to coordinate operations, technology and evaluation.

Key Learnings/Advice

Slow and steady is the only way. The beauty has been in discovering the details of what works and what doesn't.

Complex collaborations, even with the best of intentions, only work when all parties and the community are committed to making it work and willing to compromise for the greater good.

“Starting with a group of stakeholders who understand the desperate need for mental health prevention was the easy part. Shifting their own systems to collaborate with other systems has been the challenge and why resources from BTF are so important.”

–Christie Myers, Project Manager, EdCor Health Clinic

“If we can pull this off, I can tell you this kind of model can actually be a model not only for south Dallas, but also for North Dallas and for other places in the country. People are wanting to do it, but they haven't actually brought this kind of blueprint together under one umbrella.”

–Dr. Madhukar Trivedi, Director, Comprehensive Center for Depression in the Department of Psychiatry at UT Southwestern Medical Center



INVESTING IN

our children's literacy.

Project

Elementary Reading Collaborative (ERC)

Partners

Beacon Hill Preparatory Institute, Catch Up and Read, Early Matters Dallas, Readers 2 Leaders, Reading Partners

Grant Type(s)

5 separate Readiness Assessments, 2 Planning Grants and 1 Implementation Grant

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/Coordinated Strategy

Collaboration Status

Implementation underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Bain & Company
La Piana Consulting

Key Stakeholders

Four independent early literacy nonprofits that deliver supplemental reading programs, one collective impact organization focused on high quality early education.

Context/Market Conditions

Elementary literacy outcomes in Dallas County are concerning. Only 40% of 3rd graders read on grade level. 3rd graders who are not proficient in reading are 4 times more likely to drop out of high school, and high school dropouts are 6 times more likely to be incarcerated.

Each of the four program partners has a unique delivery model, curriculum, and assessment process. Together they serve approximately 3,000 students in Dallas County.

The Dallas education community has set a goal of 60% of 3rd grader on-level in reading by 2025. Closing the literacy gap will require fundamentally new approaches and ways of working.

Collaboration

Although they previously partnered in ad-hoc ways, these five groups came together to explore whether a more coordinated effort could significantly improve program outcomes and lower costs, enabling the groups to more cost-effectively scale across Dallas County to drive a step-change improvement in the trajectory of literacy outcomes.

Progress & Next Steps

After each partner independently completed a BTF Readiness Assessment and agreed to move forward in planning a formal collaboration together, BTF paired them with Bain & Company who led a 3-month fully staffed in-kind engagement to develop a collective strategy and roadmap to move the needle on early literacy.

Coming out of the Bain-led planning phase, the ERC was armed with a shared ambition to scale programs through a targeted implementation plan with Dallas ISD's

Early Learning Department. The first step in advancing the ERC was to migrate to a common assessment tool to enable comparing outcomes, sharing best practices, and improving results. A BTF Implementation Grant enabled this rapid-prototype summer pilot, serving 200 new students on a common assessment. Through its strengthened partnership with Dallas ISD, the ERC is considering its next step toward expanding and further developing its shared vision and business plan.

Key Learnings/Advice

The process has required more staff time than anyone expected.

True partnership begins when organizations put aside their personal agendas for the greater cause.

“The ERC could allow DISD to set and reach literacy performance and growth goals because the organizations provide academic interventions that serve as an extension to the classroom across the entire district.”

-Norma Nelson, Executive Director - Readers 2 Leaders

“Do not be afraid to admit your nonprofit can become better by collaborating with like-minded people and missions....Be open to honest dialogue.”

-Charnella Derry, Executive Director - Beacon Hill Preparatory Institute



THE ABILITY TO BETTER

serve adults with disabilities.

Project

My Possibilities & LaunchAbility merger

Partners

LaunchAbility, My Possibilities

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant and Implementation Grant

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Merger or Acquisition

Collaboration Status

Implemented

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Larry Solomon, Solomon People Solutions

Key Stakeholders

My Possibilities, LaunchAbility: both leaders in the field of serving adults with disabilities, each in their own unique capacity. My Possibilities is a leader in continuing education and job training for people with disabilities. LaunchAbility is a leader in career services, with a strong job placement program.

Context/Market Conditions

Both organizations had identified a growing overlap in services, and a need for education and job placement to work hand in hand. Both organizations share (and compete for) common donors and corporate partners.

My Possibilities was in the process of expanding its footprint on a new 20-acre campus for education and vocational training, and also wanted to incorporate job placement services on the new site.

Some clients began in programs at LaunchAbility when they were in high school, transitioned to job training programs at My Possibilities, and then enrolled in ongoing coaching from LaunchAbility once they were placed in a job. This “ping-pong style” continuum of services can be complicated for clients and families to navigate.

Collaboration

After five years of informal partnering, the two organizations decided to pursue full integration to improve services and the educational continuum for their constituents.

Progress & Next Steps

My Possibilities and LaunchAbility announced their merger, effective February 1, 2018 using the name My Possibilities. (LaunchAbility and My Possibilities “University” program operate under the name “LaunchAbility Career Services Program”). My Possibilities is now the most comprehensive education and job placement organization in Texas for adults with disabilities. In its first five months as a combined entity, they placed more people with disabilities in competitive employment, assisted more students in academic programs by offering community-based job training, and provided more on-site employment assistance than all of 2017 combined.

The groups have progressed through the planning and implementation phases of BTF and are in the process of applying for a final Better Together Grant.

Key Learnings/Advice

Great planning doesn’t always hit the nail on the head, but it can certainly get close.

Board buy-in is a must and must be close to unanimous in their desire to partner.

Don’t underestimate a merger’s impact on the people you serve.

“Managing change among two non-profit organizations is similar to herding cats and dogs together, except you’re in a thunderstorm, the dogs are terrified of thunderstorms, the cats are aggressive when wet, and you are blindfolded.”

-Michael Thomas, My Possibilities CEO



PROVIDING MORE THAN JUST A

home for homeless seniors.

Project

St. Jude Center

Partners

Catholic Charities Dallas, Catholic Housing Initiative, CitySquare, Metrocare Services, Veterans Affairs for Supportive Housing

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant and Implementation Grant

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Shared Space

Collaboration Status

Implementation underway

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Donna Scoggins
Waal Architecture
AOS Engineering

Key Stakeholders

Catholic Charities Dallas (CCD), Catholic Housing Initiative (CHI), CitySquare, Metrocare Services & Veterans Affairs for Supportive Housing (VASH): five independent nonprofits offering services to support the Dallas area homeless population.

Context/Market Conditions

Housing demand for the homeless in Dallas far exceeds supply. With an average age of 54, the homeless population is aging, and many older chronically homeless people face numerous medical and mental health needs.

Catholic Charities Dallas & Catholic Housing Initiative initially partnered agreeing for CHI to purchase a former retirement home to convert into 104 units of permanent supportive housing for the elderly, with CCD agreeing to property manage and oversee all programming and social services. CCD then expanded the collaboration by approaching CitySquare, Metrocare Services, and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing to join the effort of offering a full continuum of wrap-around services, both on and offsite.

Collaboration

To address the complex issue of homelessness, these groups formed a programmatic joint venture to leverage their unique strengths and areas of focus. By pooling financial and human resources, this permanent supportive housing project (a “housing first” model) will provide single-unit housing to more than 100 homeless senior men and women, with an emphasis on the chronically homeless and veterans.

CCD will be the property manager of St. Jude Center as well as coordinate all social service providers, programming and some case management. CitySquare, Metrocare Services, Veterans Affairs will provide intensive case-management to residents.

Progress & Next Steps

After completing a BTF Planning Grant to establish common metrics and outcomes, and create a sustainable joint business plan, St. Jude Center partners received a BTF Implementation Grant for IT integration and security at the new site.

The \$6 million redevelopment is financed through a private/public partnership between the City of Dallas, Dallas County, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas, Frost Bank, private donors, and Catholic Housing Initiative equity contributions. Half of the money will go toward renovations, and St. Jude Center welcomed its first residents in late August of this year. With intensive one-on-one coaching provided through the collaborative partnership, St. Jude Center expects some residents will return to the workforce and become truly self-sufficient.

Key Learnings/Advice

The biggest challenge has been coordinating a public/private financial model that relies on vouchers from HUD to offset rent expenses for residents.

“[BTF] has proven to be an invaluable resource for organizations that want to leverage and combine their individual strengths to develop innovative solutions for the many complex issues in our community.”

-Dave Woodyard, CEO of Catholic Charities Dallas

Project

Education Partnership Feasibility

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

La Piana Consulting

Partners

Education Is Freedom,
Education Opens Doors

Impact Sector

Education

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/
Coordinated Strategy

Summary

Education Opens Doors and Education Is Freedom share a common goal of helping students reach their full potential through postsecondary success. A BTF Feasibility Grant is helping the organizations explore how a more coordinated effort could improve impact and sustainability.

Project

Fort Worth & Arlington
Boys & Girls Club Merger

Impact Sector

Education

Partners

Boys & Girls Club of
Arlington, Boys & Girls Club
of Greater Fort Worth

Collaboration Type

Merger or acquisition

**Technical Assistance
Provider(s)**

Various technology
vendors

Grant Type(s)

Implementation Grant

Summary

Boys & Girls Clubs of Arlington and Greater Fort Worth are planning to merge to form the single largest Boys & Girls Club in Texas, effective in October 2018. A BTF Implementation grant is supporting IT integration activities necessary to combine the two organizations into the new organization, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Tarrant County.

“By combining resources, we can focus more effectively on improving the quality of our services and the reach of our mission.”

–John Broude, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Fort Worth

“Prioritize people. Set aside money for culture transition. Consider additional help with integration. Have a clear case statement for the collaboration. Don’t take things personally. Prepare for a lot of work. Find a great attorney. Learn from others who have been through it.”

–Daphne Stigliano, CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Fort Worth



Project

Owenwood Neighborhood

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

La Piana Consulting

Partners

Aberg Center for Literacy, White Rock United Methodist Church, and nine other agency partners

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Shared Space

Summary

White Rock United Methodist Church and Aberg Center for Literacy are spearheading a planning effort along with nine other agencies to transform an underused church campus in Far East Dallas into a “one stop” service center to coordinate multiple service offerings to neighboring residents.



Project

Reduce Teen Pregnancy Coalition

Grant Type(s)

Planning Grant

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Social Impact Architects
Melissa Ugland, SME

Partners

City of Dallas, Dallas County Health Department, First Unitarian Church, NTARUPT, Parkland System

Impact Sector

Health

Collaboration Type

Long-term Joint Programming/
Coordinated Strategy

Summary

With the support of a BTF Planning Grant, NTARUPT and the City of Dallas along with seven other stakeholders are planning a comprehensive implementation plan to dramatically reduce teen pregnancy in Dallas through a coordinated effort.

Project

SMU DataArts (SMU NCAR & DataArts Merger)

Partners

DataArts, SMU's National Center for Arts Research

Grant Type(s)

Implementation Grant

Impact Sector

Arts & Culture

Collaboration Type

Merger or Acquisition

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

La Piana Consulting
Resnicow Associates

Summary

With the support of a BTF Implementation Grant, SMU has announced the merger of its National Center for Arts Research (NCAR), a leading provider of evidence-based insights on the nonprofit arts and cultural industry, with DataArts, the respected Philadelphia-based resource for in-depth data about US nonprofit arts, culture and humanities organizations. The new SMU DataArts aims to make data useful and accessible to all in the arts and culture field, illuminating strengths, challenges and opportunities for individual arts organizations and for the sector as a whole, to help ensure long-term stability.

Project

Under 1 Roof Feasibility

Partners

Braswell, The Chocolate Mint Foundation, Cornerstone Crossroads Academy, Inspiring Leaders of Tomorrow, TR Hoover, Under 1 Roof

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Administrative Consolidation/
Shared Services

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

TBD

Summary

A group of six nonprofits that serve Dallas' southern sector have come together for a BTF Feasibility study to determine if there is a viable partnership strategy in combining back-office administrative services through a Professional Employment Organization (PEO) to realize cost savings and improve productivity.



Project

Urban Farm Partnership
Feasibility

Grant Type(s)

Feasibility Grant

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

Greg Partners, LLC

Partners

Hunger Busters, La Bajada
Urban Youth Farm

Impact Sector

Social Services

Collaboration Type

Potential Merger or Acquisition

Summary

With support of a BTF Feasibility Grant, Hunger Busters and La Bajada Urban Youth Farm are coming together to find synergies in their efforts to provide healthy meals for food-insecure children, with the ultimate aim of a full merger.

BetterTogetherFund.org

Info@BetterTogetherFund.org

Better Together Fund is a pilot program to encourage and support nonprofits to explore formal, long-term collaborations as a way to maximize impact.