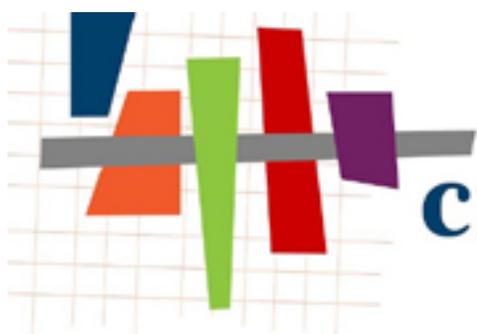


# Building Pathways to Funding:

*A Strategy Towards  
Expanding Funding  
for the Creative Youth  
Development Field*



**creative youth**

DEVELOPMENT

## This publication is part of a series of tools created to enable deeper connections between creative youth development program leaders and funders:

- [Building Funding Pathways: A Strategy Towards Expanding Funding for the Creative Youth Development Field](#)
- [Mapping Skill to Will: Approaches to Funding Creative Youth Development in the United States](#)
- [BAYCAT & The Golden State Warriors: A Case Story](#)
- [Memphis Music Initiative & ELMA Philanthropies: A Case Story](#)
- [The San Diego Creative Youth Development Network & The Clare Rose Foundation: A Case Story](#)
- [YMCA Lighthouse Project & The Heinz Endowments: A Case Story](#)



The National Creative Youth Development Partnership is a collaborative effort by youth and adult field leaders committed to the CYD values of Racial Equity & Social Justice, Youth Voice and Leadership, and Collective Action in and with the community.

[www.CreativeYouthDevelopment.org](http://www.CreativeYouthDevelopment.org)



Dedicated to the development of thriving communities and a more just world, Creative Generation works to inspire, connect, and amplify the work of young creatives who catalyze social transformation and those who are committed to cultivating their creative capabilities.

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**This report was authored by Jeff M. Poulin.**

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## Introduction

In 2018, the Creative Youth Development (CYD) National Partnership, through grant funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, worked in concert with the broader field to drive collective action in three strategic priorities to advance creative youth development:

- Visibility & Impact: Documenting and Communicating Outcomes and Impact
- Funding: Building Pathways to Funding
- Field Building: Professional Development, Networking & Technical Assistance

Upon the publication of the National Action Blueprint Outlines Strategies for Positive Change, the Funding Action Team articulated their goal to help CYD practitioners, alongside current and potential funders, better understand how their work fit together as well as fit within the general funding landscapes of arts/culture and education/youth development. Through theoretical and applied research, the Action Team has created tools, talking points, and a network of leaders to pursue broader pathways to funding CYD in communities across the United States.

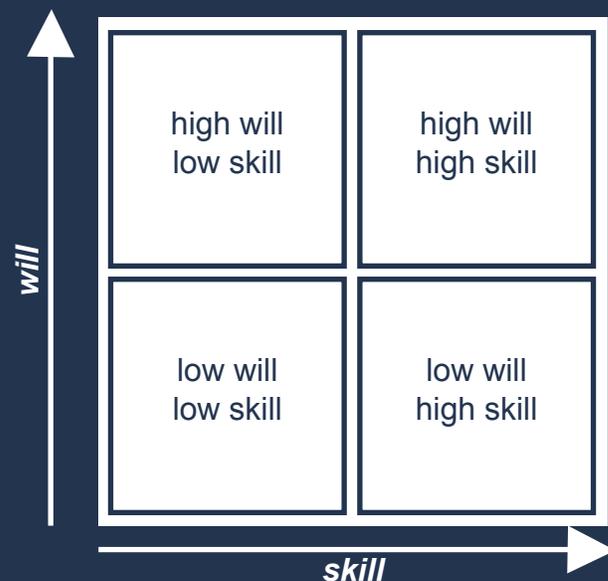
The research that has been conducted involved a landscape analysis of current and potential CYD funders, an analysis of the experience and attitudes of those funders through a developed Skill/Will Map, and a deep-dive set of case stories illuminating partnerships between funders and CYD programs. Together the data was synthesized and articulated in a series of reports and case stories for an audience of funders and members of the national CYD community.

The following brief is intended to provide CYD practitioners with actionable tools in order to effectively partner with CYD funders.

### The Funding Landscape

The Skill/Will Map is a model developed by Hershey and Blanchard<sup>1</sup> in the Human Resources and business leadership sectors, which articulates four specific categories based on two factors:

- Skill: experience with a task, training, knowledge, and natural talents
- Will: desire to achieve, confidence in abilities, and attitude towards a task



<sup>1</sup> Situation Leadership Theory was originally published by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in 1969 as part of their book, *Management of Organization Behavior*.

For purposes of this brief, we will adapt this model and examine four categories of funder behavior in relation to their experience funding CYD and their organization’s attitudes about funding CYD. It should be noted that no category is more positive or negative than any other, but rather these categories were designed to help funders (and their CYD program partners) better understand how to navigate the current circumstances they are experiencing.

Our research indicated several key metrics, which align with the high to low scale in both categories of skill and will. They are:

- Will – these have to do with the institutional policies of funding entities:
  - CYD named in strategic funding priorities
  - Investment in and engagement with CYD programs in funding portfolio
  - Engagement with CYD programs and leaders in non-grantmaking activities
- Skill – these have to do with the individual skills of the grantmaker or program officer:
  - Strong Relationships and open/transparent communication with CYD leaders
  - Co-creation of services for CYD programs and leaders
  - Peer-to-peer knowledge exchange with CYD grantees and other funders

To learn more about how funders can better understand these metrics, this framework, and their own Skill/Will, check out the *Mapping Skill to Will: Approaches to Funding Creative Youth Development in the United States* publication in this series.

## Recommendations for Strategy

Upon completion of our research, we have identified numerous strategies CYD practitioners can take in order to effectively partner with funders operating in each of the four Skill/Will categories.

Right, please find a diagram, which portrays the category and **key action** of CYD practitioners.



## Collaborate with Field Builders

Funders that exist in the High Skill/High Will category, we view as field builders. They actively fund and support CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs and identify as part of the CYD landscape of their community or funding region. They look to leverage their CYD funding work and impact to grow the field of CYD and to increase the profile and importance of the work as a strategic priority area in the philanthropic community.

Funders in this category often have an explicit CYD funding focus and act as a catalyst for the CYD ecosystem within their grantmaking region. They may serve as a convener for CYD programs as well as other funders to co-create strategic investment plans and support infrastructures for programs and staff, ultimately impacting the youth served by programs. Together, they increase the amount of funding going to CYD programs, by working strategically across the ecosystem to decrease barriers to access and increase the quality of programs and services for young people.

As a CYD practitioner, we must seek to collaborate with High Skill/High Will funders. We can do this in the following ways:

- Strategize with the funder to elevate the field with key decisionmakers like elected officials
- Integrate funding and participatory work with cross-sector partners
- Maximize impact of funder dollars through shared collaborative activities, like unified program evaluation studies and professional development for teaching artists

Examples of these types of partnerships in Memphis and San Diego can be found in their case stories.

## Educate Potential Stars

Funders that exist in the Low Skill/High Will category, we view as potential stars. They actively fund or seek to fund CYD and CYD adjacent organizations and programs, but struggle with aligning those investments to existing strategic priorities. They often have limited CYD portfolios due to a struggle with articulating the impact of CYD programs and investments.

Funders in this category may be non-traditional funders (like corporations or individuals) or philanthropic organizations who are not focused in the CYD or adjacent sectors. However, the program officers or individuals involved display a keen interest in CYD programs and their impact in communities. Most often relationships between CYD programs and these funders are based on interpersonal relationships and may shift unexpectedly due to personnel changes.

As a CYD practitioner, we must seek to educate Low Skill/High Will funders. We can do this in the following ways:

- Craft a mutually reinforcing shared agenda of joint activities
- Define a multi-faceted set of benefits of your collaboration
- Develop and invest in personal relationships

An example of this type of partnership can be found in the case story of BAYCAT & The Golden State Warriors.

## Advocate to Reluctant Allies

Funders that exist in the High Skill/Low Will category, we view as reluctant allies. They actively fund and support CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs, but do not see themselves as part of the CYD ecosystem.

Funders in this category may have a long-standing relationship with a CYD grantee, due to their application in the culture or education portfolios. Their funding justifications may fall into the category of cultural preservation or K-12 academic achievement. The program officer sees value in the CYD practice occurring within the program but does not consider the foundation's work a part of the local CYD community, due to a lack of alignment with the grantmaking portfolio's strategic priorities.

As a CYD practitioner, we must seek to advocate to High Skill/Low Will funders. We can do this in the following ways:

- Invite the funders to observe our CYD spaces and programs and help them process/synthesize what they are witnessing
- Create the space to learn together through peer-to-peer learning communities, educational site visits, or attending conferences
- Develop strong institutional relationships beyond the individual program officer or CYD practitioner – potentially invite foundation president to your site.

An example of this type of partnership can be found in the case story of YMCA Lighthouse Project & The Heinz Endowments.

## Introduce CYD to Potential Funders

Funders that exist in the Low Skill/Low Will category we view as potential funders. They do not currently fund CYD organizations or programs nor demonstrate knowledge about CYD as a field of practice. They do, however, demonstrate potential based on their strategic funding priorities.

Funders in this category may fund other arts/culture or youth/education programs in a given region where CYD programs exist, however they focus their attention on elements beyond the scope of the CYD field of practice.

As a CYD practitioner, we must seek to introduce CYD to Low Skill/Low Will funders. We can do this in the following ways:

- Seek out and meet these funders in their own settings
- Explain CYD and the field of practice using their terminology
- Demonstrate impact of CYD programs using established metrics within their field

# Advice From the Field

As we approach funders and work to expand the funding pathways for the CYD field, our research unveiled some basic principles of success:

**1.** **Know your audience and what they care about.** Regardless of their level of engagement or interest with the CYD field, it is your job to understand their priorities and make relevant your talking points to their current circumstances.

**Be open and agile.** You might begin by asking what it is that they need to accomplish and then articulate your work into the gaps they identify as needs.

**2.**

**3.** **Create the space to learn together.** By learning together, the partnership opens a space of vulnerability and agility to adapt to the changing needs of their work.

**Invest in relationships.** Investing time in interpersonal connections will build a solid foundation for the partnership between CYD practitioner and funder.

**4.**

**5.** **Seek to balance power.** Funders and CYD programs must seek to equalize power in their relationships through open and transparent communication, trust, and growth through shared learning.

## Conclusion

We believe that by working together, funders and CYD programs and practitioners can build funding pathways to expand the field of CYD. This research provides basic principles and ideas for action, however, true partnerships moves at the speed of the individuals within them. You've taken the first step by reading this brief – now, reach out to your funding partners and begin the real work.

# Acknowledgments

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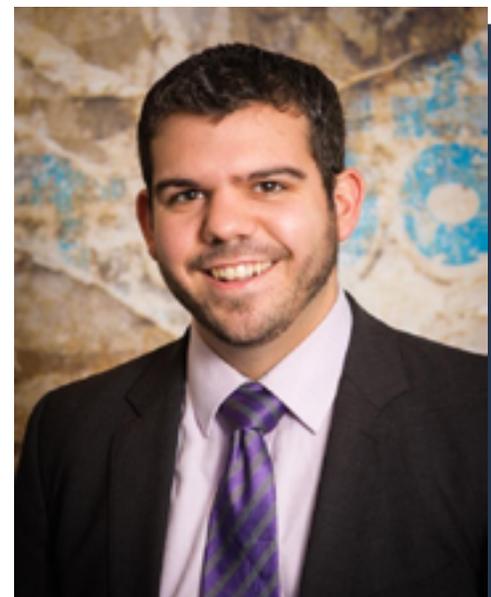
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Jeff M. Poulin is an American educator, non-profit administrator, and social entrepreneur whose work takes a justice approach towards uncovering local solutions for global challenges.

With over a decade of experience in the fields of cultural policy and education, Jeff leads Creative Generation, working to inspire, connect, and amplify the work of young creatives and those committed to cultivating their creative capabilities.

His work has influenced worldwide movements supporting arts and cultural education. He is widely published and has presented at conferences and universities across the country and around the globe. Jeff currently teaches at several universities and consults with regional, national, and international institutions.

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