Bloomberg Associates

Collaborative Cities

A Guide for Designing, Implementing,
and Sustaining Strategic Partnerships

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**

Foreword

Patricia E. Harris
Chief Executive Officer
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Effective city leadership means leaving no stone unturned when it comes to finding new ways to improve the lives of your constituents. Over the course of our 12 years running the biggest, most diverse city in America, those of us who served in the Bloomberg Administration learned that the best way to deliver essential services more effectively, and advance change more rapidly, was to bring together the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

The driving force behind that collaborative spirit was always the man sitting in the center of the New York City Hall bullpen, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. So, it should come as no surprise that cross-sector collaboration is integral to so much of the work we do at Bloomberg Philanthropies.

This report comes at a time when cities are facing a host of urgent challenges — politically, socially, and economically — all while dealing with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. And the day-to-day responsibility of confronting those crises falls squarely on mayors' and local governments' shoulders.

That's why, when the pandemic first hit, Bloomberg Philanthropies immediately launched the COVID-19 Local Response Initiative to help mayors and their staffs confront the coronavirus head-on. The initiative was set up to provide cities with technical assistance and real-time information on the virus, while also connecting them with experts in public health and management at two of our long-time partner organizations, Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University. We also brought on additional partners to help create a contact tracing program with the New York State government — and made the playbook for setting up similar programs available to all governments, so they didn't have to start this complicated process from scratch.

The pandemic's effects have fallen disproportionately on people of color, and as we've worked to help mayors confront this tragic disparity and control the virus, millions of Americans have taken to the streets to stand up for racial justice and equality — a cause that is more urgent than ever. At Bloomberg Philanthropies, where we have always focused on addressing unmet needs and targeting resources where they are needed most, we're looking for new ways to make a meaningful difference in the fight for a more equitable society. And with cities at the center of this fight, we are well-positioned to help mayors lead the charge for change — including by increasing police accountability, reforming criminal justice systems, and working to close the racial wealth gap.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only created new problems, but it also exposed the cracks in our society that had been neglected for decades. One of the most important ways Bloomberg Philanthropies can help cities build a stronger foundation for the future is by providing mayors and other leaders with guidance on how to explore and implement cross-sector partnerships. This report helps do that by drawing on lessons learned and best practices from our work, and from cities around the world. Of course, successful partnerships across sectors don't just happen, and they don't spring from the pages of a manual. They take hard work — and they require strong, creative leadership to foster collaboration.

Throughout my career working in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, I've always been inspired when different organizations — with varying missions, motivations, and ways of doing business — unite under one banner to help improve people's lives. And I've seen what a difference it can make. All of us at Bloomberg Philanthropies truly hope this guide can play a role in spurring more of the collaborative spirit we need to meet this historic moment effectively — and build stronger, fairer, better, and more just cities for many years to come.

Patricia E. Harris

Chief Executive Officer of Bloomberg Philanthropies and former First Deputy Mayor of the City of New York

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in more than 570 cities and over 160 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's giving, including his foundation and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono consultancy that works in cities around the world. In 2019, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed $3.3 billion.

Introduction

Cities are complex ecosystems, continually transforming and evolving in a fast-moving world. And while every city is unique, they share similar challenges such as the need to provide equitable access to health care, transportation, and education.

Effective leadership requires using the vast range of resources at a city's disposal to address these and other issues and opportunities. However, leaders must recognize that the tools required for a particular problem might not exist exclusively within government.

Partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are vital in order to creatively respond to needs and tackle challenges. Recent events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, greatly underscore the need for cross-sector collaboration as a means of marshalling new resources, coordinating responses, and leveraging the unique assets of businesses, nonprofits, and philanthropy.

Through strategic collaboration, cities can harness the collective expertise, energy, and resources required to address issues from food insecurity to affordable housing. Leaders throughout the world have demonstrated the massive potential of strategic partnerships as a force for good in their communities.

A lot can be learned from past and present work around municipal collaboration, but there are few resources that provide actionable insights for designing and implementing strategic partnerships. This guide strives to fill that gap by offering a playbook for city leaders looking to build and strengthen partnerships.

There are many different terms used for projects between government and other sectors. The most commonly used term is a "public-private partnership" (also known as a PPP or P3), however, a PPP is defined differently by government entities and can carry local laws that govern the work. For the purposes of this document, "strategic partnerships" is used primarily to discuss broad cross-sector collaboration and considerations around these initiatives.

The examples highlighted in this guide focus less on infrastructure improvements and more on programs that help to reimagine government and service delivery and to tangibly improve the lives of residents. The lessons draw upon the experience of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Bloomberg Associates as well as research and interviews with city officials, academic experts, private sector leaders, and other individuals with strategic partnership experience. This guide does not provide a one-size-fits-all strategy for public-private collaboration. However, it does present general best practices that can be applied across municipalities, while also offering guidance on how city leaders can adapt these approaches to their own challenges and circumstances.

Bloomberg Philanthropies and World Central Kitchen, in collaboration with NYC Health + Hospitals, partnered to provide over 2 million meals to health care and other essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. 2020

Partnership Benefits

"Cities have finite budgets, but mayors have unlimited opportunities to form partnerships that can help them accomplish their goals. Companies and nonprofits can mobilize valuable resources to help tackle urgent challenges, and by building relationships with them and thinking creatively, city leaders can deliver major benefits to their residents that otherwise would never be possible."

Michael R. Bloomberg
Founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Bloomberg LP,
three-term mayor of New York City

No city or town is served by government alone — each one relies on a network of public, private, and nonprofit entities to meet the needs of its community members. While government has unmatched access to people and service delivery systems, it needs strong partners to effectively address complex public needs. The benefits of strategic partnerships can be immense but also vary from project to project. It is important for city leaders to consider at the outset the specific strengths that outside partners could bring to the work. This is crucial in determining if cross-sector collaboration makes sense, and, later, how to structure an initiative to best leverage these advantages.

This section examines some of the major benefits of partnerships including sparking new approaches to service delivery, addressing systemic issues, building platforms for engagement, supporting innovation, responding to emergencies, and creating enduring collaborative environments.

Enhancing Basic Needs

As cities grow and rapidly change, so do the needs of its residents. Partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors can address gaps in public services and enable government to act more nimbly to reach constituents. Some of the many issues addressed through partnerships include social services for vulnerable community members, financial planning and assistance, food vendor services in underserved areas, pro bono legal aid, enhanced public spaces, and transportation, such as bike share programs.

Example in Practice:

The New York City Department of Consumer Affairs first launched Financial Empowerment Centers in 2008 to provide low-income New Yorkers with free individual financial counseling from professionals,

Children participating in Fresh Air Fund's Summer Spaces, a public-private collaboration using closed New York City streets. 2020

helping residents reduce their debt, develop budgets, improve their credit, and more. The project allows the city to draw on the capacities and client relationships of community organizations, providing mutual benefits, including increased funding, for all partners. The program has served tens of thousands of city residents, and the model expanded in dozens of other cities through the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund. In 2020 the CFE Fund announced that more than 50 city and county governments will expand counseling and navigation services for their residents and help mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 through access to local, state, and federal resources. "Local government is uniquely positioned to reach community members and deliver large-scale financial empowerment services," explained Jonathan Mintz, President of the CFE Fund and former Commissioner of the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs. "This is why providing technical assistance to mayors and their teams to help them embed financial empowerment programs and policies into city services is one of the best ways we can improve financial stability for individuals and families."

Addressing Systemic Issues

Cities face a variety of system-wide challenges and a limited set of public resources. Partnerships can leverage the diverse expertise and resources of the private and nonprofit sectors to address cross-cutting issues that require closer coordination between stakeholders. Broad systemic challenges, such as building connections between educational institutions and employers, providing holistic supports to marginalized populations, and reforming the criminal justice system, can be addressed in part through new partnerships.

Example in Practice:

New York City's Young Men's Initiative (YMI), launched in 2011, brings together public and private partners to develop and promote policies and reforms that increase access to education, employment, and health supports for young men of color. It engages city agencies, community organizations, and philanthropy in targeted programs to address racial disparities and injustice. The effort helped serve as a model for

the My Brother's Keeper program, established by the Obama Administration to work across sectors and address persistent opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color. "Often we talk about scale, and sometimes we're able to witness how a local initiative, like YMI, can have impact beyond its programmatic limits," said Niiobli Armah, former Bloomberg Associates Lead on My Brother's Keeper implementation in cities. Nearly 250 cities, towns, counties, and tribal nations in all 50 U.S. States, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have accepted President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge, not only recognizing obstacles faced by young men of color but committing to targeted interventions and data collection.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted Black and Latinx community members, has highlighted the deeply rooted social and racial inequalities that many city leaders are working to tackle. Stockton, CA, under the leadership of Mayor Michael Tubbs, was the first city in the U.S. to pilot a mayor-led guaranteed income program to help close the racial and gender wealth gap. This work helped to create Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, a coalition of mayors announced in June 2020 to advocate for a federal guaranteed income policy.
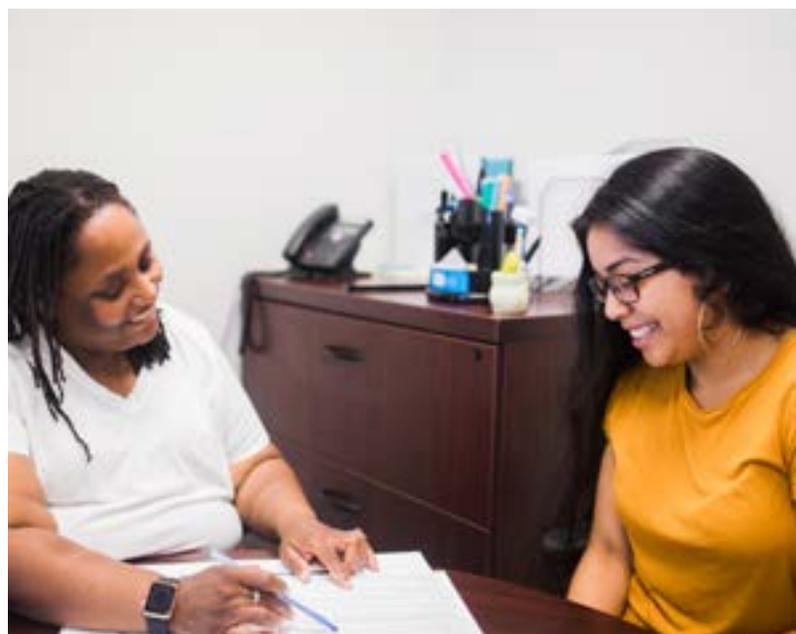
A Detroit resident participates in a counseling session at a Financial Empowerment Center, a partnership between the City of Detroit, Wayne County, and Wayne Metro Community Action Agency. Photo credit: City of Detroit, 2019

Increasing Civic Engagement

Cross-sector partnerships can also help cities create the space for residents to engage in their community and provide more inclusive and far-reaching opportunities for participation. In collaboration with private, nonprofit, and local stakeholders, city government can hold competitions for innovative approaches to solving civic challenges, create and promote more volunteer opportunities, or provide online platforms for citizens to share and launch their ideas for improving their community.

Example in Practice:

The Cities of Service Love Your Block program, supported by the U.S. federal government and philanthropy, provides resources for communities to creatively address blight through cleanup efforts and public displays. Love Your Block participants strengthen their neighbor-to-neighbor networks, improve connections with local government, and increase their social capital to take on additional projects in the future. Since 2011, the program has helped propel resident-led revitalization at 5,600 sites, and a 2018 study by the Urban Institute found it increased social connectedness – producing results and relationships.

Driving Innovation and Risk-Taking

Public-private collaboration can foster increased experimentation and subsequent innovation. This stems not only from the additional resources and new ideas that come from partnerships, but also the private sector's greater capacity to take risks. Examples can include creating centers or funds focused on piloting forward-thinking programs on issues like poverty and economic mobility, using social impact bonds to reduce potential costs, or establishing programs to solicit new ideas for addressing municipal issues.

Example in Practice:

Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge was created to encourage bold, creative responses to pressing and plaguing challenges in our cities. Grants of $1 million to winning applicants enable city leaders to implement and test potentially groundbreaking solutions that address resident needs. The Stockholm Biochar Project, a 2014 Mayors Challenge pilot program winner, was launched to advance the Swedish city's commitment to waste management. Stockholm created facilities where residents could take plant waste to be converted into soil conditioner, or biochar, which is also being used in parks and public spaces across the city. The biochar captures and stores enough carbon to offset 3,500 cars and its production creates pyrolysis gas, which generates energy for the city's district heating system. A key partner in this initiative is Stockholm Exergi (formerly Fortum Värme), the city's public-private energy company. The project has inspired other cities such as Minneapolis, MN, which passed a resolution in 2019 to support biochar use in city gardens and agricultural projects, and the city of Sandnes, Norway that developed their own pilot plant.

Community members in Hartford, CT paint the Wolcott Street Mural, a Love Your Block initiative. Photo credit: City of Hartford, 2019

Local leaders and partners join the launch of Stockholm's Biochar Plant and prepare to add biochar to a newly planted tree.
Photo credit: Casper Hedberg, 2017

Responding to Crises

Cross-sector partnerships can enhance a city's ability to respond in a quick, flexible, and effective manner when needed. This capability is particularly important in a crisis, where the effective coordination and deployment of resources is crucial to reducing community harm or suffering. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, a city philanthropic vehicle, partnered with the New York Food Truck Association to provide over 330,000 hot meals to residents in impacted neighborhoods. The use of commercial food trucks provided the city with the flexibility to respond much quicker and more nimbly than would have been otherwise possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred an unprecedented level of cooperation among the public, corporate, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors in response to needs and challenges. Emergency response can take a range of forms, including providing basic necessities to impacted individuals, offering technical assistance to city leaders, and helping coordinate inclusive recovery plans.

Example in Practice:

A key strategy to stop the transmission of COVID-19, contact tracing programs are reliant on strong collaboration between state and local government and a range of public health, private, and nonprofit entities. New York State partnered with Bloomberg Philanthropies, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies, to set up a contact tracing program to respond to the pandemic. This effort is helping contain the spread of the virus by identifying and reaching out to those who have come into contact with an individual testing positive for COVID-19. Using information from this initiative, people are alerted to self-quarantine for 14 days and get tested, helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Forging a Sustainable Culture of Collaboration

Strategic partnerships can also help local government leaders create a culture of collaboration across sectors and among community members more generally. In Colorado, the CareerWise program offers opportunities for youth to apprentice with local businesses. It provides students with work experience and relevant credentials and certifications, while earning their high school degree and an associate degree, enabling them to go directly into jobs upon completing the program. The initiative, supported by Colorado businesses, the school system, and local government, opens new career pathways, and makes connections between employers and the workforce of tomorrow.

This collaborative environment can drive experimentation, innovation, and more comprehensive solutions to community challenges, while also forging enduring relationships between public and private stakeholders that can serve the city into future administrations.

Example in Practice:

In 2019 Birmingham, AL Mayor Randall Woodfin announced the Birmingham Inclusive Growth (BIG) Partnership. The Opportunity Zone initiative is private sector-led and inspired by the City. It was created to both enhance the quality of life for residents and generate returns for investors. The BIG Partnership engages residents and investors to identify and fund projects that foster an equitable community, through job creation, financial inclusion, and innovation. The effort catalyzes support for Birmingham's 24 Opportunity Zones, as a result of the U.S. Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to encourage investment in low-income communities. The redevelopment of the iconic American Life building into a 140-unit affordable housing development was the first Opportunity Zone project in Birmingham. "Our opportunity zone strategy and vision for what is possible in our city will not succeed unless the voices of those neighborhoods are at the table," said Mayor Woodfin. "In addition to critical community partners, we are marketing our city's assets to national investors, who would have never known about the opportunities in Birmingham. As a local government, we have the power and the obligation to bridge government policies, funding opportunities, and empower our residents to drive the progress they want to see."

Team members from the Ethiopian Public Health Institute conduct COVID-19 contact tracing at the Addis Ketema sub-city in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Photo credit: Resolve to Save Lives/Tewodros Emiru, 2020
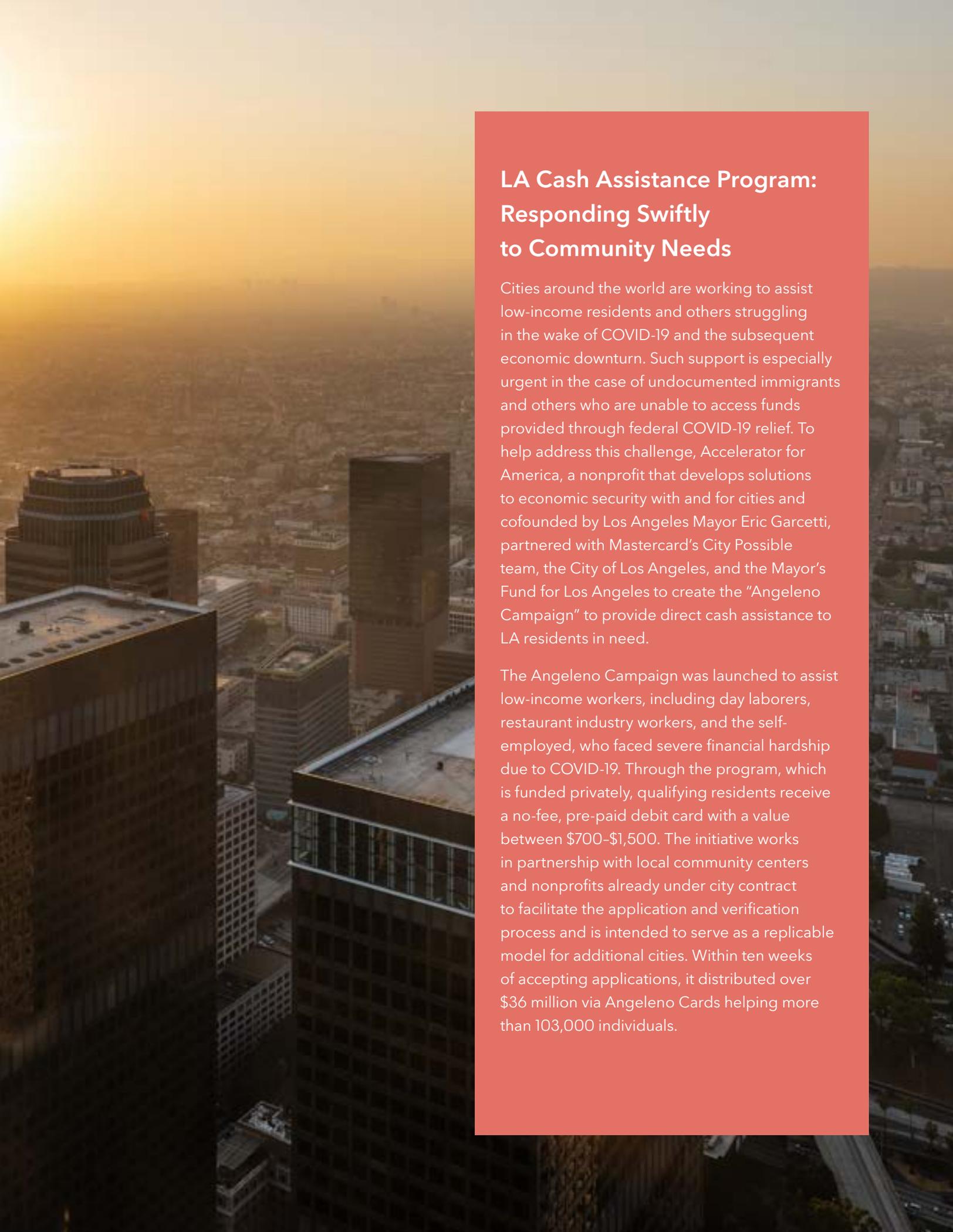
LA Cash Assistance Program: Responding Swiftly to Community Needs

Cities around the world are working to assist low-income residents and others struggling in the wake of COVID-19 and the subsequent economic downturn. Such support is especially urgent in the case of undocumented immigrants and others who are unable to access funds provided through federal COVID-19 relief. To help address this challenge, Accelerator for America, a nonprofit that develops solutions to economic security with and for cities and cofounded by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, partnered with Mastercard's City Possible team, the City of Los Angeles, and the Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles to create the "Angeleno Campaign" to provide direct cash assistance to LA residents in need.

The Angeleno Campaign was launched to assist low-income workers, including day laborers, restaurant industry workers, and the self-employed, who faced severe financial hardship due to COVID-19. Through the program, which is funded privately, qualifying residents receive a no-fee, pre-paid debit card with a value between $700–$1,500. The initiative works in partnership with local community centers and nonprofits already under city contract to facilitate the application and verification process and is intended to serve as a replicable model for additional cities. Within ten weeks of accepting applications, it distributed over $36 million via Angeleno Cards helping more than 103,000 individuals.

Building Blocks

"Local government can set the tone and establish the structure for effective cross-sector collaboration—and bring together stakeholders in a meaningful way to share expertise, spark innovation, and tackle challenges."

Megan Sheekey
Strategic Partnerships Lead at Bloomberg Associates and former
President of the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City

Overview

Creating a solid foundation is essential to any strategic partnership. A project cannot achieve its mission during the initial stages of work, but it can easily go off track in ways that can be difficult to recover from. This section lays out some of the initial building blocks of a successful collaboration. Although some of these steps can be time consuming, the consequences of hastily embarking on a public-private initiative are often far more costly.

Mayors participating in a virtual session of the COVID-19 Local Response Initiative, created to provide them with tools and training to lead their communities through the pandemic and resulting economic crisis. Professor Jorrit de Jong, Faculty Director of the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, moderates one of the interactive discussions. 2020

Define the Problem

The first step in building strategic partnerships is taking the time to assess the current situation. It is important to consider the range of challenges faced by your city and look for collaboration on issues that are relevant to the community and that have attainable benchmarks for success. You need to clearly define the problem you are trying to solve and what the initiative will tackle, with a focus on quantifiable outcomes that can be communicated early in the process.

Successful partnerships are more likely when the targeted problems are focused and well-defined. This process can be strengthened by holding discussions with community members, alongside city government stakeholders, to help develop a more holistic perspective of the challenges at hand and produce a more accurate problem statement.

It is important to acknowledge that a precise, agreed-upon definition of the problem can be difficult to achieve. Openness to redefining the problem as new information and insights are gathered throughout the partnership can be helpful in navigating this challenge. As the work progresses, and especially once partners begin to discuss and design specific initiatives, collaborators should continue to refine the problem statement.

A public Wi-Fi hackathon on how to charge cell phones in public hosted by the Louisville Metro Innovation Team. February 2020

Identify Challenges

Cross-sector partnerships can advance many initiatives, but it is important to understand past efforts to help set the stage for a new strategy and anticipate obstacles a project may face.

"As mayors in recent years have worked to boost their innovation capabilities, their strategies increasingly include collaboration with nonprofits, business, and other levels of government," said James Anderson, head of Government Innovation at Bloomberg Philanthropies. "But these efforts can get stuck if mayors and their staffs aren't clear about what previously worked — and what failed — when their cities tried to work with other sectors."

Leaders must consider challenges related to political dynamics among stakeholders, resources such as personnel and key structures, and the ability to come together around specific requirements and outcomes. Additionally, private partners may have different priorities and approaches than that of city government, which should be acknowledged at the outset.

Evaluate Assets

In addition to defining needs and considering how strategic partnerships can benefit your city, it is imperative to assess the available resources that can be leveraged. Assets can include tangible resources, such as infrastructure, land, financial assets, and staff, as well as less tangible assets related to expertise and relevant technical skills. Having examined the assets available to your city and unearthed relevant resource gaps, you can begin partnerships with a clearer vision of the existing capacities, as well as those needed for collaboration. It is helpful to identify these obstacles early so that partners may pursue work that recognizes but moves beyond these constraints.

Emphasize Leadership

The ultimate success of a partnership often depends on champions who are passionate about the idea and who can get other stakeholders interested and engaged. At the outset of a project, it is especially important for the mayor and key stakeholders in place to catalyze action and serve as advocates for a project.

A committed and involved mayor is a critical factor in successful partnerships. Mayors have the ability to set the political agenda, work across different government agencies and outside partners, and create the environment necessary to drive change. "One of the common themes from the many public-private partnerships I've been involved in is the role of mayors," shared Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation. "The reason mayors matter so much is because these partnerships take root in a place, and that place is often cities. So if there is not competent, effective leadership with capacity in a city, it's very hard to have successful public-private partnerships."

While the mayor can help catalyze activity, the day-to-day decision making will need to be driven by others. As such, deputizing effective leaders and institutions is crucial.

Foster Champions

Community foundations and local organizations can be grounding entities and valuable allies. Cities with effective and resilient public-private collaboration often have reliable champions in the philanthropic community. Local or place-based funders can serve as steady advocates for partnerships and a source of fiscal support through changing political climates.

The Funders Network Partners for Places program was founded to make connections between national foundations, local funders and mayors. It includes a matching grant program in U.S. and Canadian communities focused on open spaces. In Ithaca, NY the program is supporting the city's efforts to evaluate policy tools it can use to incentivize or mandate green building standards for new construction.

Community-based organizations not only deliver essential services and programming but are helping cities design and deploy new policies and programs. For example, in 2018 a community coalition supported the successful passage of Portland, OR's Clean Energy Initiative, which raises between $54 million to $71 million in new revenue for clean energy annually through a 1% business license surcharge on large retail corporations. The City leverages these funds to not only weatherize homes and install solar panels on key government buildings and schools, but also to provide green contractor trainings.

Stockton Mayor Michael Tubbs addresses other mayors during a session at the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, which offers training to mayors and senior city officials from around the world. 2018

Root Nashville: Adapting Lessons with a Local Lens

In an effort to improve its urban space and address air pollution, Nashville, TN looked to other cities for inspiration. Modeled after efforts in New York, Miami, and Philadelphia, the city's Root Nashville program launched in 2018 with a goal to plant 500,000 new trees in Davidson County by 2050.

Nashville's goals are reliant on community partners. Metro Water Services is overseeing the planting and maintenance of new trees on public grounds and the Cumberland River Compact is engaging other local organizations to plant trees on private land. Guided by local data, a major focus is on increasing tree density in areas of the city with elevated rates of asthma and poor water quality, combating environmental injustice.

In designing the initiative, Nashville worked with Adam Freed, Sustainability Principal at Bloomberg Associates, who helped oversee MillionTreesNYC as Acting Director of the New York City Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability. Key lessons from New York included setting clear targets that partners could rally around and creating a broader public campaign capable of inspiring momentum and energy that could carry through administrations. While much could be drawn from the examples from other cities, Freed stresses that careful attention to the particulars of a new strategic partnership is vital. "The devil is always in the details. You should have a good model or approach, but filtering and adapting it to the local context is critical."

Photo credit: Root Nashville, 2019

Keys to Success

With the building blocks in place, you can turn to the day-to-day work of implementing, overseeing, and refining an initiative. Though a number of components are important to the effective launch and enactment of partnership projects, city leaders should focus special attention on the key areas highlighted below.

- **Legal and Ethical Guidelines:**
  Establishing and adhering to the rules and requirements that govern conduct.

- **Engagement and Communications:**
  Bringing stakeholders together and building trust through consistent dialogue.

- **Management and Oversight:**
  Creating a structure that is streamlined and accountable with appropriate staffing.

- **Budgeting and Fundraising:**
  Determining, raising, and allocating the resources necessary for the partnership to succeed.

- **Measuring Outcomes:**
  Designing metrics and processes for quantifying success and communicating impact.

This section describes these components in detail and provides key lessons and questions for city leaders to consider as they design and implement a partnership. With robust strategies to address each of these key areas, leaders can position their initiatives to drive impact and create a foundation to sustain success over time.

A rider taking out a Citi Bike, the largest bike share system in the United States. The City of New York launched the program in 2013 with a $41 million investment from Citibank. Photo Credit: Getty Images STAN HONDA, 2013

Legal and Ethical Guidelines

Overview

Strategic partnerships can present new and unfamiliar terrain for many city leaders. Beyond navigating complex legal and regulatory issues, leadership must also ensure that any partnership is consistent with the broader ethical standards of the community. This means understanding the formal city rules and creating buy-in by ensuring openness and transparency throughout the process.

Understand Baseline Requirements

The individual rules that govern public-private collaboration vary widely between municipalities. The city code or charter is typically the best starting point for understanding the city's key requirements and prohibitions and should be consulted at the outset of the work. Beyond the charter, key sources of legal guidance include city attorney memoranda (which often carry the force of law) and any specific rules that define responsibilities and limitations of relevant government agencies.

The acceptance of grants and private contributions come with unique requirements. Your city's legal counsel can clarify the rules around private sector engagement and help to ensure guidelines are in place regarding the solicitation of donations and grant management requirements. Counsel can also advise on whether a written agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding or contract, is needed between the city and a partner tasked with project management and/or fundraising responsibilities. The organizational structure you establish (detailed later in this guide) may also be a determining factor in answering this question.

"Accountability and setting expectations are crucial for city employees and those working on strategic partnerships. You are acting on behalf of the public and you need clear rules in place to govern that."

Rose Gill
Municipal Integrity Principal at Bloomberg Associates and former Commissioner of the NYC Department of Investigation

Be Specific and Anticipate Potential Questions

Consult the city attorney's office, corporation counsel, or other designated municipal legal advisor early in the process to help develop a framework for advancing your partnership. The city's counsel will of course be concerned about protecting the interests of the city and reducing risk. In some cases, their perspectives may be largely framed by the challenges encountered in past projects, rather than the potential benefits of the partnership. In order to promote the potential benefits, respond to any historic concerns and engage counsel as your ally, be clear about the goals of the work, and try to identify risks along with your plans to address them.

Initial questions to anticipate and consider include:

• Is the city authorized to create or be part of a public-private partnership?

• Is there any precedent for this collaboration?

• What were the outcomes of previous efforts?

• Who stands to benefit from the partnership?

• Who will the detractors be? And how will the city respond to those detractors?

• How will the roles and responsibilities of each party involved help to advance the work and minimize risk?

• How will the transparency and integrity of the partnership be publicly reported?

"You need to be as specific as you can about how the partnership will advance civic goals, who the potential partners are, and what their respective roles will be," explained Tracey Knuckles, Senior Lead at Bloomberg Associates, and former Deputy Commissioner & General Counsel for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. "If you do this, you can allay potential concerns and have a more targeted conversation with your city's counsel."

Create Transparency in the Process

An open and transparent workplan and process is essential across all types of cross-sector partnership. This should include transparency around contracting, conflicts of interest, budget reporting as well as the roles and functions of different partners.

It is also important that these protections are foundational and resilient. If the rules governing accountability are merely informal or easy to repeal, partners may look for means of subverting them over time.

Transparency was the foundational guide to public-private programs in Athens, Greece under Mayor Georgios Kaminis. In addition to working with a nonprofit partner who provided financial oversight with an independent board of directors, privately funded projects were presented to the Athens City Council Finance Committee for approval. The Finance Committee is comprised of representatives from all political parties on the Council. "There is often a lack of trust in government and you need to try and rebuild that," explained Alexandros Kambouroglou, former Executive Director of the Athens Partnership, which served as an incubator for public-private initiatives. "It is important to be very open about how you will be using the private funds from the very beginning and constantly communicate to everyone involved what you are doing and how you are doing it." This transparency was also crucial in establishing new areas of strategic collaboration, as the Athens Partnership was given more freedom to experiment with new types and structures of projects because of the accountability in place.

There are of course many forms of municipal government, which include city or county managers, city councils, commissions, and other governing bodies involved in city administration, policies, and budgets, so consider how you are aligning partnership efforts with the political structures and realities of your city. Initial steps include confirming which branch of government has a consultative role versus approval role and creating plans to communicate with other branches of government as directed by intergovernmental affairs or other relevant parties.

Key Lessons

○ **Establish Clear Plans**
Be clear on partnership goals from the beginning and convey to your municipal legal counsel.

○ **Understand Local Rules**
Review the city charter, city laws, and ethics and conflict of interest rules that must be followed.

○ **Communicate the Rules of Engagement**
Ensure guidelines are in place and shared with city employees regarding the solicitation and management of grants/donations.

○ **Use Moral Standards, Not Just Legal Ones**
Be sure that partnerships are being guided by clear principles and shared moral standards, not simply whether something meets the letter of the law.

○ **Monitor Resources**
Create clear documentation of resources received and expenditures to guard against waste, fraud, and abuse.

○ **Anticipate Concerns**
Consider the potential challenges or issues that stakeholders may raise and what solutions could look like.

○ **Prioritize Openness**
Create clear transparency in the formation and implementation of the partnership and ensure this openness cannot be subverted.

Questions for City Leaders

- Have you identified and reviewed the relevant documents governing the rules and regulations surrounding public-private collaboration, including the solicitation and management of private funds?

- Is there a city attorney or other municipal legal entity that can help evaluate and offer legal guidance around partnerships?

- Have other partners engaged their own counsels to ensure all are on the same page?

- Are guarantees around transparency clearly built into the foundation of the work?

- Is the work aligned with city officials, such as city council members, and how can they be effectively engaged?

- Does a legal agreement need to be established between the city and a partnering entity that is managing funds or program deliverables?

- Are there rules in place directing use of the funding into future administrations?

Residents dance in Athens' revitalized Commercial Triangle, a collaboration with private donors, businesses, and local organizations. 2017

Engagement and Communications

"One training I attended compared strategic partnerships to a carpet. They advised building a sizable coalition so that there are enough people standing on the carpet that someone cannot pull it out from under you. My experience has only validated the importance of having enough partners standing on the carpet."

Rashaad Abdur-Rahman
Former Director of the Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods, Louisville, KY

Overview

Strategic partnerships are fundamentally about relationships. Community engagement and strong communications (both internal and external) are at the heart of successful cross-sector collaboration. Nothing is more central to government's role as a convener than communications. Best practices include emphasizing the importance of dialogue, developing plans and processes alongside stakeholders, continually seeking and incorporating community input, and ensuring the partnership has the capacity and infrastructure for effective communication.

Speak a Shared Language

Partnerships need to be inclusive of different perspectives, backgrounds and cultures, and reflect the diverse interests of cities and their residents. Strategic leaders should emphasize the value of the partnership to stakeholders in ways that resonate with their diverse priorities. "Even if you agree on something, the challenge is making sure you are speaking each other's language," explained Jorrit de Jong, Faculty Director of the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. "Issues arise when people from different sectors are using different figurative language."

Leaders of partnerships must be adept at creating a common language and framework to work from while also ensuring they are engaging new stakeholders in a more personal manner. This includes being meticulous in clarifying terminology and goals to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding.

Support a Culture of Collaboration

Convening partners and activating them towards a common goal can be challenging, especially when partners have differing motivations, approaches, and priorities.

As highlighted in the "Building Blocks" section, being transparent about the goal and overall vision at the outset of the work can help mitigate future issues. Further, partnerships should be founded on trust and reciprocity. This speaks to the value of having leaders within government who truly see partnerships as vehicles for shared learning and action, and not just as a means of leveraging private resources.

In Providence, RI Mayor Jorge Elorza has prioritized convening key private sector, philanthropic, and community leaders regularly to share information, resources, and foster collaborative approaches to city challenges. This approach can position organizations outside of government as core stakeholders and drivers of the work, keeping them invested in the project and the process.

Children play beneath "Mobile Suspension," one of nine installations by artist Erwin Redl, part of the City of Spartanburg, SC's winning Public Art Challenge project. The project brought together the city's police department, fire department, neighborhood associations, and businesses to transform open spaces and create safer, more vibrant neighborhoods. 2016

"Fundamentally, for the private sector it's simply good business to work with cities on their priorities. Mayors should pick areas that are important to their constituency but are also pragmatic for collaboration. If you start small and get some wins, it will also help to attract more resources and build supporters."

Samuel Palmisano
Chairman of the Center for Global Enterprise and former President and Chief Executive Officer of IBM

Forging deep relationships between partners can also prove valuable in the case of an emergency like COVID-19 or a natural disaster. When partnerships need to be activated or adapted quickly, a preexisting level of trust can provide a foundation for effective and efficient action.

Build Trust through Communication

Keep in mind that many public-private projects come with a certain level of skepticism, which may be from a lack of trust in government, concern over the privatization of public services, or historical context of past efforts, among other triggers. Effective communication means ensuring that the value of a partnership is consistently and accurately represented to all stakeholders, including residents, donors, government employees, and the press, at each stage and throughout the life of the work.

Depending on who you are trying to reach, consider how information will best be received and the messenger(s) that can help to build trust. Ongoing engagement with cross-sector partners can also help to create equitable spaces for community feedback and reveal new opportunities for engagement.

"Don't just show up for the photo op," stressed Joni Holifield, Founder and President of HeartSmiles, a nonprofit that partners with the city of Baltimore on youth employment programming. "Government officials need to show partners they genuinely care and value what we bring and what we have to say. There are community events about every day, so showing up, building authentic relationships, and actively reaching out to the people and organizations who are doing the work sends a clear message, especially to our young people."

Key Lessons

○ **Cultivate Sustained Relationships**
Invest the time necessary to understand partner needs and ensure there is trust and transparency between all stakeholders.

○ **Leverage the Mayor**
As conveyed in the "Building Blocks" section, a motivated and engaged mayor has a unique ability to catalyze partnerships and set an agenda around collaboration. Think carefully about what leadership roles the mayor can play throughout a partnership initiative.

○ **Avoid Being Purely Transactional**
Make clear that partnerships go beyond filling a gap in government services. The voices of all partners at the table are important, and the partnership should deliver clear benefits to residents and all parties involved.

○ **Coordinate Goals and Process**
Recognize that the goals of the partnership impact the structure and the ways stakeholders should interact with one another. Develop desired outcomes for the partnership and ensure consensus around goals among stakeholders.

○ **Emphasize Inclusion**
Ensure that the partnership is engaging diverse voices and perspectives, especially the communities being served by the work. Community partners can play a valuable role in reaching marginalized groups and combating social inequalities.

Questions for City Leaders

- Have you adequately engaged all core stakeholders (public, private, and nonprofit)?

- Have you taken steps to ensure partners are valued and that their voices are being heard?

- Have you created a collaborative structure for the partnership that aligns with the needs of stakeholders?

- Are your partners invested in the success of the project and eager to see it through?

- Are there adequate channels to allow for consistent communication between all stakeholders?

Housing Services in Detroit: Increasing Resident Engagement

The City of Detroit, MI employed a collaborative approach to better connect residents of income-restricted affordable housing with supportive programs and integrated services. The City partnered with Cinnaire, a national affordable housing investor with a strong local presence, and with Wayne-Metro Community Action Agency, the pilot's Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) partner. The City also engaged with a local community group, Congress of Communities, to conduct resident interviews that helped guide the design details of the program. In collaboration with property managers, the partnership will offer financial assistance counseling to more than 1,000 households and test the effectiveness of targeted outreach and determine whether there are observable changes in residents' financial behaviors and wellbeing as a result of the sessions. In response to COVID-19, resident-focused financial empowerment counseling will also be provided virtually to address emerging pandemic-related needs.

The City is working with the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab to design and implement a holistic housing services delivery model in partnership with a network of community-based housing organizations and a nonprofit network manager, CHN Housing Partners. This model will integrate City programs and services with nonprofit-delivered resources to create a more seamless experience for low-income residents seeking to address housing challenges.

Facing capacity and budgetary constraints, Detroit's Housing and Revitalization Department has pursued partnerships with community organizations as an important strategy to improve services for residents. This has required a shift in how the City of Detroit approaches these relationships, moving from solely vendor relationships to a more collaborative co-design of services in pursuit of shared goals.

"Our City staff is seeing the power of thinking about housing service delivery from the resident perspective, which motivates the formation of cross-sector partnerships to ensure services are trusted, accessible, and effective," said Julie Schneider, Deputy Director of Detroit's Housing and Revitalization Department.

Management and Oversight

"Businesses come and go. Nonprofits come and go. Government can serve as a consistent and powerful convener to tackle our most pressing issues. But strong leadership and the right infrastructure are essential ingredients for successful cross-sector efforts."

Deidre Lind
Founding President of the
Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles

Overview

As with all city activities, project management and oversight are essential, however, cross-sector collaboration poses additional challenges. An effective management structure offers an array of benefits, such as facilitating communication, increasing coordination, improving efficiency, tapping resources, and measuring outcomes.

Evaluate Current Capacity

Needs around management and oversight can differ significantly across municipalities and individual projects. Cities have to look inward to determine the best approach and structure. Critical factors to consider when evaluating management and oversight needs include:

- Staff capacity

- Existing project management expertise

- Prior cross-sector partnership experience

- Goals of the initiative

- Strength of the city's relationships with the private sector and other non-government stakeholders

Participants at a Women & Girls Summit supported by the Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles. Photo credit: MFLA, 2017

Create Internal Accountability

During the implementation phase, it is important for city staff to recognize any real or perceived conflicts of interest that will impact efforts. All parties involved in the design, negotiation, and implementation of a partnership project should have clearly defined roles in order to establish proper boundaries and hold individuals accountable. City leaders must hold their private sector partners accountable to the terms of their scope of the project as well as ensure internal staff remains apprised of legal constraints and stay focused on their responsibilities.

Establish Roles and Governance Structures

Many options are available to cities seeking to develop a more robust internal management and oversight structure for its strategic partnerships. As a first step, a city can build out capacity through hiring and training, ensuring staff have the expertise needed to manage cross-sector partnerships.

Individuals tasked with key management functions should be carefully chosen, as their performance is critical to a project's success. Their responsibilities may include project analysis, contracting, administration, and fundraising; however, other factors such as community outreach and engagement play a major role in your staffing decisions.

To internally manage cross-sector collaboration, some cities have developed an Office of Strategic Partnerships or created a Philanthropic Liaison position to serve as a bridge between the city, private sector, and other non-governmental partners. An Office of Strategic Partnerships can help to align common goals, serve as a central coordination point for partners, identify funding sources and strengthen donor relations, and enhance coordination between the mayor, senior officials, and city agencies. In cities such as Newark, NJ and Oakland, CA coordinators within city government managing these activities have been funded by grants from local foundations.

Cities can also use an existing municipal office or agency, such as a community assistance unit or grants management office, which can help facilitate communication across government agencies. Additionally, an existing office may already have established relationships with key stakeholders as well as the capacity to share information with partners and the broader public and help monitor key data and metrics.

Whatever path is chosen, equipping the person responsible for oversight with resources and the ability to hold partners accountable is critical.

Select a Funds Management Structure

Determining how to manage public-private projects and associated funding is a crucial design decision. Funding sources, such as grants requiring administration by a tax-exempt charitable organization, or funding strategies, such as social impact bonds, may dictate your organizational structure. Across all options, best practices identified elsewhere in this guide remain paramount, including ensuring there is a defined mission and project scope, prioritizing clear and frequent communication with stakeholders and the public, and establishing strong governance, transparency, and accountability measures.

Models for managing philanthropic support include:

- Administration by city government

- Fiscal partnership with a community foundation or other nonprofit entity

- Creation of a dedicated nonprofit organization

City officials can also explore combinations or hybrids of different models. The Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles was first launched at the California Community Foundation by Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2014. The Community Foundation served as a fiscal partner, offering administrative and grants management services, for almost a year until the Mayor's Fund incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) organization. Below are just a few of the factors to weigh when considering one of these organizational structures.

Administration by city government

Advantages	Considerations	Example
• Enables city to have direct oversight and management • City may have internal expertise in and a proven track record of managing private funds	• City may not have capacity to undertake the administrative needs of a public-private program • May pose a challenge to city rules or norms governing private sector partnerships	• City Give, a municipal philanthropy tool launched by the City of Fort Collins, CO to manage private support for public programs (see details on page 31)

Fiscal partnership with a community foundation or other nonprofit entity

Advantages	Considerations	Example
• Depending on organization, funds administration may be subject to fewer regulations than in government • Donors may already be familiar with a trusted and aligned organization • Provides a level of distance from government, while maintaining fiscal oversight and an understanding of community needs	• Designated entity will hold fiduciary responsibility and city officials will lose some control • Broader scope of participants and voices can increase legitimacy but also create challenges in relationship management and goals alignment • An advisory board or committee with unique understanding of the issues and goals can provide an additional layer of oversight	• The City of Newark, NJ partners with the Community Foundation of New Jersey, which manages private grants and donations for targeted public programs

Creation of a dedicated nonprofit organization

Advantages	Considerations	Example
• Can be designed to best meet the specific needs of the city and programming goals • Can serve as a valuable intermediary between public and private partners	• Start-up costs (and fundraising needs) may be higher than other options • May be perceived as partisan or focused on a single government administration, and may be challenging to transition to subsequent administrations	• The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, a nonprofit organization, works in partnership with New York City agencies and offices

Develop a Transition Plan

Establishing a clear mission for the project and the accompanying funding is important for defining the direction of the work but is also equally important for creating consistency and continuity for the partnership, so that it can be sustainable over time and across administrations. The goal is not to hamstring future administrations, but to think about the purposes of the intended grant funds and create guidelines that can help ensure continued success and guard against abuse. Stakeholders should anticipate that a new leader may want to put their mark on an initiative and seek to reimagine some aspects of the project, and can take steps to ensure that goals remain in place.

9/11 Memorial Park, supported by the City of Fort Collins' City Give program. Photo credit: City of Fort Collins, CO, 2017

👆 Key Lessons

○ **Identify Costs and Benefits**
Develop a clear understanding of the costs associated with your implementation phase and management structure and build into your strategy.

○ **Understand Current Capacity**
Evaluate the city's current capacity to take on a partnership and consider how management and oversight structures can fill any needs or gaps.

○ **Lay Out Management Options**
Consider various oversight and administrative structures and determine which best aligns with the needs of your city and project(s).

○ **Design Management Functions**
Determine oversight and staffing needs to effectively administer day-to-day operations and reporting needs of the strategic partnership. If operations exist outside of government through a fiscal partner, due diligence is essential to ensure organizational capacity and experience is in place to appropriately manage the project.

Questions for City Leaders

- Are roles and responsibilities for the work clearly defined with accountability mechanisms in place?

- What relevant management skills and capacities do you currently have within city government? What assets are missing?

- Do you have relevant municipal departments or offices that can be activated to facilitate strategic partnerships? Would it be beneficial to create an Office of Strategic Partnerships?

- Do you have a plan for how management and oversight will be structured within the partnership and where it will be situated? Is there a strong existing community partner in place to manage this work?

- If parts of the partnership are administered outside of city government, how are you ensuring there is appropriate oversight and coordination of the work?

- Are plans in place to administer and sustain the project, including funding, which may extend into future administrations?

Budgeting and Fundraising

"Attracting funding is foundational to partnerships, but donors do not want to be a backstop to government funding. They want to help drive change."

Nina Bodenhamer
Director of City Give
Fort Collins, CO

Overview

Successful public-private projects require a comprehensive understanding of resource needs and an expansive fundraising strategy. Leaders can use their previous asset evaluation to identify budgetary and resource needs, develop a timeline with key benchmarks, and track progress. Cities often have a range of funding strategies and opportunities at their disposal. However, to effectively attract resources, maximize private sector support, and guard against misconduct, it is important to create streamlined fundraising and grants management processes within the oversight structures discussed in the previous section.

With contributions from AT&T and the New York Public Library, the NYC Office of the Bronx Borough President joined local partners to distribute school supplies and books at a 2020 Fresh Air Fund Summer Spaces youth program site. Photo credit: Fresh Air Fund, 2020

Catalogue Public Resources and Needs

Leveraging government assets is key to maximizing scarce resources and attracting the support of outside partners. Initial steps around budgeting and fundraising should include conducting a thorough evaluation of the city's existing resources that can be put toward a project, identifying outstanding budgetary needs, and developing a timeline for fundraising built around key benchmarks. Through a budget analysis, including the operating and capital budgets and current expenditures, leaders can identify potential funding and in-kind sources for partnership projects and better define needed next steps.

Quickly taking advantage of public resources is especially important when responding to crises. As part of the COVID-19 Local Response Initiative, Bloomberg Philanthropies teamed up with the U.S. Conference of Mayors to help provide guidance to cities navigating the federal relief funding process. The City Fiscal Tracker and Federal Reimbursement Initiative was created to offer webinars and other key resources for mayors and city staff. As fiduciaries for relief funding, it is imperative that cities pay strict adherence to the ethical and legal guidelines highlighted earlier in the guide. The fast-moving nature of crisis response can easily open the door for waste and abuse.

Identify Private Sector Opportunities

Once a baseline budget and available public sector funds are confirmed, a city should consider the range of available private sector resources and funding strategies.

Throughout the process of identifying private sector opportunities, it will be critical to think expansively and cast a wide net. Partnership leaders should seek to engage a diverse set of donors and clearly communicate how they can have the most impact through their contributions. This includes identifying valuable in-kind support, such as equipment or services, which should be considered at the outset of a needs assessment and the budgeting process.

It can also be valuable to create a consistent point of contact with potential donors to help build trust and coordinate priorities and requests as outlined in the previous section.

Create a Streamlined Funding Process

Regardless of the management structure(s) you employ for partnerships, a streamlined fundraising process can be critical to attracting and sustaining contributions and driving donor participation. Prior to accepting grants or contributions, managing agents need to understand the grant deliverables, expectations of funders, any government guidelines, and reporting requirements. Simply put, do not accept funds you cannot manage or deliver on.

It is also paramount to ensure proper separation and transparency among donations to city programs and political campaign contributions to promote ethical practices.

Develop Strong Funder Relationships

Developing a strong funder base requires recognizing current and past funding sources, working with partners on fundraising strategy and engagement, and building an inclusive funder base from both large and small donors. Donors want to be meaningfully engaged and appreciated for the value they bring to partnerships, rather than positioned as backstops to city funding. These enduring relationships can prove especially valuable when it comes to activating new funding to respond to emergencies.

Tim Duncan, Mike Bloomberg, local officials and members of nonprofit Love City Strong unload emergency supplies on St. John, USVI following Hurricane Maria. 2017

Key Lessons

○ **Define Budgetary and Resource Needs**
Clearly articulate budget and resource needs with an understanding of the scope of the project, role of the private sector, and a detailed timeline.

○ **Leverage Public and Private Resources**
Refrain from using private sector donors as a backstop for government funding and consider all federal, state, and local government resources that could support the strategic partnership.

○ **Streamline Funding Process**
Consider ways to simplify the city's process for accepting and managing grants and donations.

○ **Professionalize Experience**
Embed individuals with professional skillsets into the city to manage partnership and donor engagement.

○ **Ensure Ethical Guidelines**
Establish clear and transparent guidelines for donors interested in contributing to partnership initiatives. Adhere to rules that guard against any appearances of impropriety, such as donations by individuals or entities doing, or seeking to do business with the city.

Verify that private funds can be managed according to all relevant government requirements and donor expectations.

○ **Identify Funding Sources**
Research funding opportunities and cultivate potential donors using a range of strategies for engaging them.

Questions for City Leaders

• Have you taken advantage of all available public resources to achieve or enhance your goals?

• What budgetary resources will be needed to achieve your strategic partnership, including staffing and management?

• Given the costs and needs, what specific role will the private sector play in your strategic partnerships?

• What is your timeline for securing public and private support?

• How will you structure and manage fundraising activities and the administration of funds, including reporting needs?

• Can you meet the deliverables and requirements of each grant agreement?

• How can you consistently strengthen relations between the Mayor's Office and philanthropy?
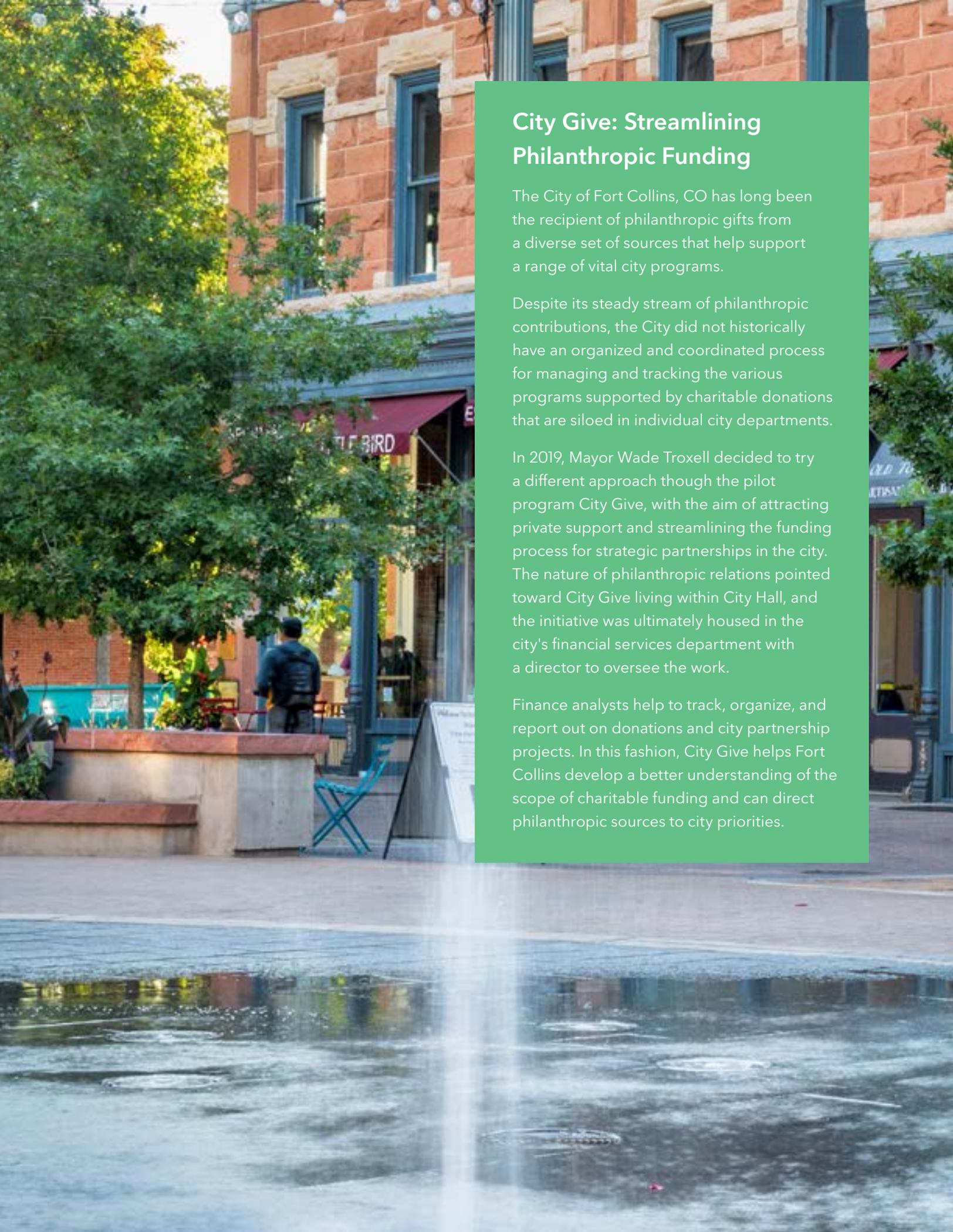
City Give: Streamlining Philanthropic Funding

The City of Fort Collins, CO has long been the recipient of philanthropic gifts from a diverse set of sources that help support a range of vital city programs.

Despite its steady stream of philanthropic contributions, the City did not historically have an organized and coordinated process for managing and tracking the various programs supported by charitable donations that are siloed in individual city departments.

In 2019, Mayor Wade Troxell decided to try a different approach though the pilot program City Give, with the aim of attracting private support and streamlining the funding process for strategic partnerships in the city. The nature of philanthropic relations pointed toward City Give living within City Hall, and the initiative was ultimately housed in the city's financial services department with a director to oversee the work.

Finance analysts help to track, organize, and report out on donations and city partnership projects. In this fashion, City Give helps Fort Collins develop a better understanding of the scope of charitable funding and can direct philanthropic sources to city priorities.

Measuring Outcomes

"Government often has difficulty scoping the actual problems they face and using data effectively to find the right solutions. I see this particularly when government tries to work with external partners."

Beth Blauer
Executive Director of Johns Hopkins University Centers for Civic Impact

Overview

What constitutes success for a strategic partnership is not always obvious. Finding ways to define and quantify outcomes and then measure progress against these benchmarks is a crucial priority. Ideally, this sort of evaluation and measurement should be defined and structured in advance and then executed in real time, allowing the opportunity for discussion, iteration, and refinement. In instances where personally identifiable information is held by either side of the partnership, all of this must be done with the utmost adherence to proper data management, privacy, and relevant laws and regulations.

Prioritize Evaluation

It is easy to overlook how central measurement is to the nature of any partnership. This means not just thinking of measurement as something built on top of an existing project, but as a core function that is stressed as a priority from the outset and embedded within the other components of the work. "You always need to have measurable outcomes and impacts," said Andy Wiley-Schwartz, Senior Lead at Bloomberg Associates and former Assistant Commissioner for Public Space for the NYC Department of Transportation. "And there are creative approaches to do this, whether it is capturing images over time, engaging partners to conduct surveys, or standing on a street corner counting pedestrians or parked cars."

Evaluation is also crucial in demonstrating the continued value of an initiative, assessing activities, improving capacity, refining strategies, securing funding, and driving optimization of impact. Measurements and metrics can both inform the work of the project and assuage concerns from external audiences.

Develop a Shared Understanding

As highlighted earlier in this guide, stakeholders bring a variety of expectations and perspectives to any project that can at times be difficult to align. Developing a shared framework for the initiative is a crucial and foundational step. This approach needs to translate into metrics and definitions of success that stakeholders can rally around and agree on. Knowing what constitutes a "win" is important for
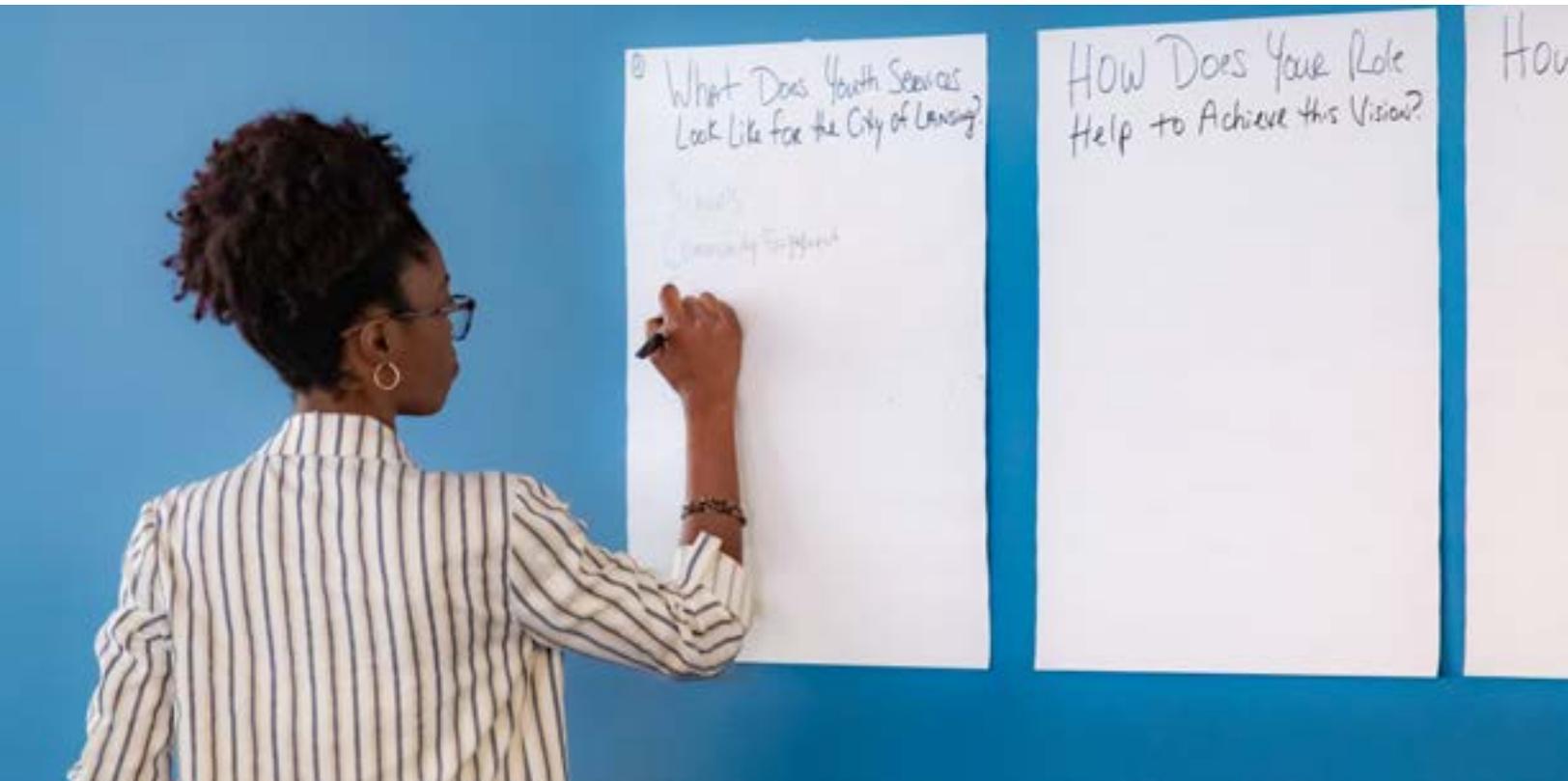
Johns Hopkins University Center for Government Excellence Senior Advisor Tiffany Davis leads a session on Goal-Setting and Exploring Performance Measures in Lansing, Michigan. Photo credit: Stephen O'Connor, 2019

keeping everyone on the same page and working toward a collective goal.

The London Data Commission, a partnership of London's business membership organization London First, Oliver Wyman Forum, and Arup, developed a framework for a shared approach to data alongside public and private stakeholders and in collaboration with Mayor Sadiq Khan's Chief Digital Officer. The Data for London report, released in September 2020, profiles how cooperation and data sharing help to generate insights that will lead to better policy decision-making, improving the lives of Londoners.

Be Rigorous in Choosing Criteria

It is also critical that any metrics are clearly defined and difficult to manipulate. This means creating a level of independence for the evaluation that is agreed upon and strictly adhered to.

Some types of strategic partnerships, such as social impact bonds, are specifically designed so that the

government pays private investors a higher return if a project delivers positive outcomes (and often cost savings for the government). In such cases, firm criteria and clear divides between evaluators and other stakeholders become even more paramount.

Leverage Data Creatively

Cities should not limit themselves when it comes to effectively using the data that comes from an evaluation. Insights from such data can improve the individual partnership it was collected for, but also shed light on how other projects in the city may be designed or strengthened. Takeaways can be shared with counterparts in other cities to advance responsible scaling of effective programs. Finally, stakeholders can look for ways to engage the broader public around the data and crowdsource solutions to city challenges. Many cities are working to make city data available in easy-to-use formats to embrace transparency and facilitate knowledge sharing.

Key Lessons

○ **Create Shared Metrics**
Develop a metric system that reflects the values and priorities of stakeholders and where goals and outcomes are clearly understood and agreed upon.

○ **Share the Process and Findings**
Tracking and disseminating outcomes allows partners to identify challenges as they arise. Shaping and sharing the evaluation process with the communities being served promotes inclusion and builds trust.

○ **Ensure Metrics Can Adapt to Future Goals and Needs**
Think critically about whether the current metrics, language, and measurement structure of the project are adaptable and can meet the future needs and demands of the city.

○ **Be Flexible in Targets**
While much can be learned from different cities and projects, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Be sure that metrics and objectives are tailored to the local circumstances and capacities of the municipality and project.

Questions for City Leaders

- Have you incorporated evaluation and targeting at the outset of the work?

- What roles are stakeholders playing in the evaluation design and process?

- Have you agreed on clear targets and metrics that are reflective of the priorities of impacted community members?

- Can the metrics or targets be easily measured?

- Are your current metrics conducive to sustainable, inclusive growth and public utility?

- How will outcomes be used to determine future funding (public or private)?

Preschool Promise:
Improving Economic Mobility Outcomes

Dayton, OH Mayor Nan Whaley is committed to early childhood education. Preschool Promise was developed to ensure that all children – particularly the community's highest-need children – are fully ready to start kindergarten on track. Children who begin school behind often stay behind, with educational gaps compounding year over year.

After seeing the results of a successful preschool pilot program, Dayton voters passed a 0.25% income tax increase in 2016, which, among other priorities, funds one year of affordable, quality preschool for all Dayton families with 4-year-olds. This earmark, along with strong community support, has helped to institutionalize Preschool Promise and provides sustained funding.

"Preschool Promise's focus on mining data is what sets it apart," said Mayor Whaley. "Our evaluation component – measuring children's progress and identifying what professional development really improves classroom instruction – makes all the difference for kids."

Robyn Lightcap, Preschool Promise Executive Director, noted that the initiative devotes the largest portion of its budget to improving teacher instruction using personalized coaching and evidence-based training, particularly Conscious Discipline. "Early childhood educators desperately want high quality professional development. Too often programs can't afford to provide it. We're filling that critical need."

One barrier to improving kindergarten readiness is low attendance at preschool. To get the full benefit of that education experience, children need an attendance rate of 90% or better. There is a 20 percentage-point gap in attendance among Black preschool students in Dayton and their white counterparts – a disparity that is likely to worsen because of COVID-19. Preschool Promise and the City of Dayton are implementing evidence-based interventions to close this opportunity gap. The University of Dayton serves as the program's impact evaluation partner with additional support from What Works Cities, a Bloomberg Philanthropies initiative that provides technical support and expertise to encourage better use of data and evidence in local government. The central focus is on improving economic mobility outcomes for residents, while building the case for sustaining access to high-quality pre-K in Dayton and Montgomery County.

Photo credit: Preschool Promise, 2018

Sustaining Impact

"Be like water. In some cases, you have to be liquid and able to flow wherever the opportunity for partnership exists. Sometimes you have to be frozen and solid and able to protect different issues. And sometimes you have to be a gas and let things permeate and happen. All approaches are crucial to implementing and sustaining the work."

Grant Ervin
Chief Resilience Officer, City of Pittsburgh, PA

Overview

The primary focus of this guide is to effectively design and implement strategic partnerships. But stakeholders also need to take a long-term view. Consider how the work might function years down the line and how these efforts can respond to new challenges and opportunities.

Effective strategic partnerships are resilient, often living beyond those responsible for the initiative's launch and development. Valuable impacts can be halted and lost if leaders fail to plan for the project's ongoing work. This section briefly describes some of the steps leaders can take to increase the chances that strategic partnerships sustain success.

Prepare for Leadership Transitions

Any project involving city government runs the risk of the work being altered by a new mayoral administration, city council, or other governing bodies. Partnership efforts with the potential to span an election year should consider how they will build political will and allies to ensure sustainability.

Changes in political priorities are not inherently problematic. Democratic accountability is a core

feature of public sector work and something to be embraced, not avoided. If stakeholders are uninterested in building political capital and finding ways to maintain public support, then a strategic partnership may not be the proper strategy for the effort.

In any case, building long-term approval often means choosing projects that are consistent with core city priorities and civic values. If an initiative is perceived as being merely the pet project of a mayor or other stakeholder, new leadership may be more tempted to discontinue it. "In the cities we've advised, initiatives that are grounded in a community with strong collaborators do not disappear when a new mayor takes office," said George Fertitta, CEO of Bloomberg Associates. "Programs may change names or their management, but they remain in place if the demand and will still exist."

Further, the risk of political change also underscores the need to avoid merely transactional partnerships and build broad-based commitment and energy. A public campaign, such as those conducted by MillionTreesNYC and Root Nashville highlighted earlier in this guide, is one way to raise the profile of an initiative and create momentum across administrations.

A man surveys panels from the Solar City Seoul project, a program that aims to make solar energy more affordable and accessible. 2018

Communicate Successes to Build Support

Effective external communications are crucial to developing broad-based support for an initiative and increasing its resiliency. Communicating the value of the work is critical not just at the outset, but throughout a project's lifecycle. Strategic partnerships with robust and sustained community engagement can bring a range of benefits, including resilience in the face of threats and increased chance of securing new investment. Goodwill can be built throughout the initiative as a means of establishing credibility and anticipating future risks. And it can be helpful during uncertain times for the partnership, such as budget negotiations or a leadership change, to have a track record of previously established accomplishments
to point to.

Design Channels for Feedback and Continued Learning

Along with communicating outward, all partnerships should create space for feedback from stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the work. This can be accomplished in part by ensuring that evaluation and measurement do not just occur at the end of a project but are rather seen as tools for continuous growth and refinement. It also means thinking of evaluation not just as an academic or scientific exercise, but as a robust process in which both individuals working on the project and populations served have the chance to share their views. Project stakeholders and the broader public should feel like their ideas and perspectives are being heard and that any project is open to reform and improvement.

As discussed earlier, measuring impact is a critical element of successful strategic partnerships. To maintain success, leaders should ensure systems are in place both to evaluate what has and has not worked on an ongoing basis and to use these insights to refine efforts. Durable partnerships require flexibility in adjusting initiative goals, approaches, and metrics as conditions change over time.

Sustainability also requires openness to changes in structure and process. Building channels to evaluate and adjust according to effective strategies as well as systems for ongoing learning will make partnerships, and the structures designed to advance them, more durable.

Anticipate the Unexpected

COVID-19 illustrated in stark terms the need to prepare for a range of contingencies. If a partnership is serving an essential city function, are there plans in place for how it can continue to operate under adverse conditions? For instance, can a health and wellness program designed around face-to-face engagement be adapted to provide telehealth services if needed?

Partnerships can provide an essential function in responding to natural disasters, health crises, and other unexpected threats. It may be valuable to consider the ways in which the infrastructure of an established partnership could be leveraged or transitioned as needed to provide urgent support.
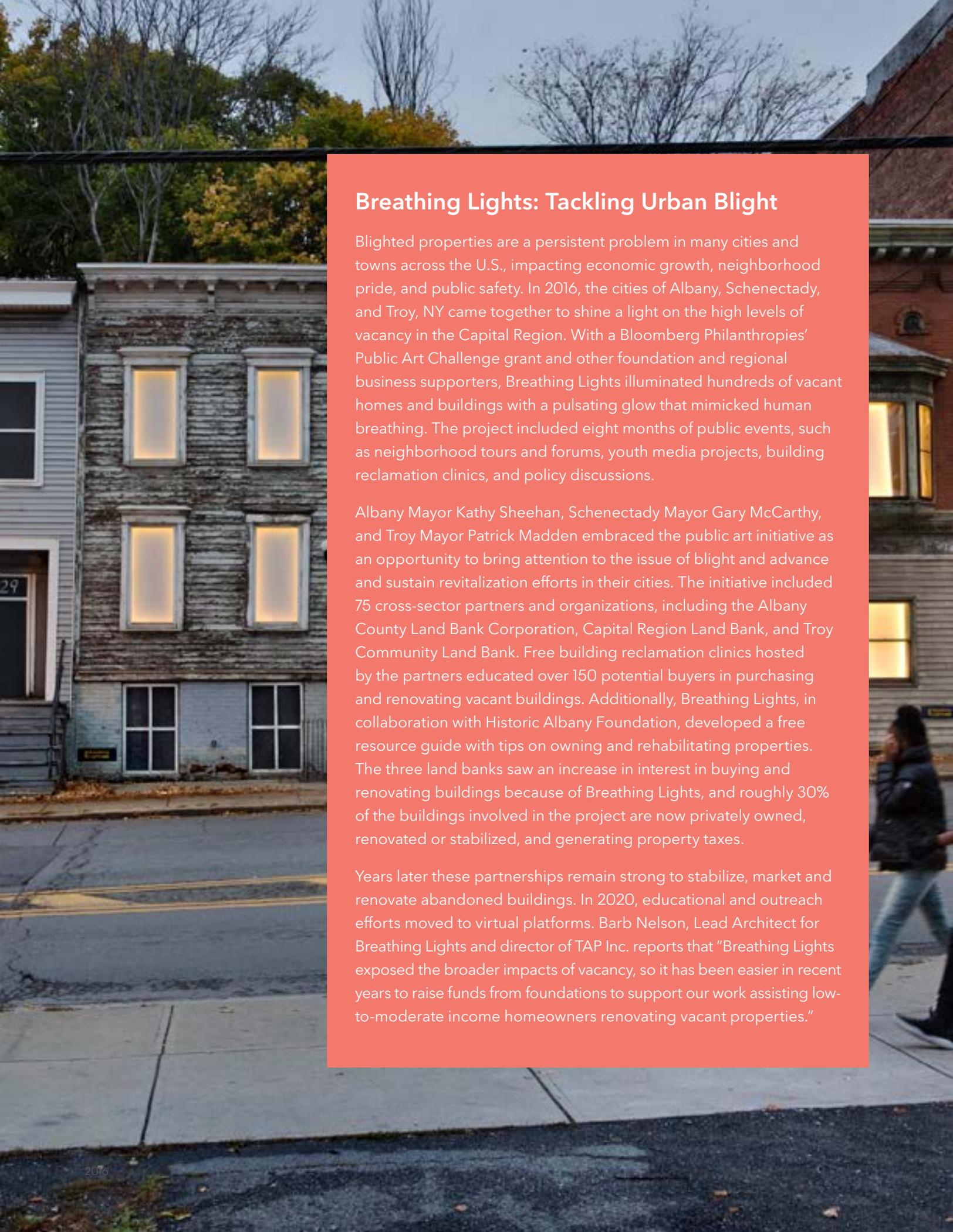
Breathing Lights: Tackling Urban Blight

Blighted properties are a persistent problem in many cities and towns across the U.S., impacting economic growth, neighborhood pride, and public safety. In 2016, the cities of Albany, Schenectady, and Troy, NY came together to shine a light on the high levels of vacancy in the Capital Region. With a Bloomberg Philanthropies' Public Art Challenge grant and other foundation and regional business supporters, Breathing Lights illuminated hundreds of vacant homes and buildings with a pulsating glow that mimicked human breathing. The project included eight months of public events, such as neighborhood tours and forums, youth media projects, building reclamation clinics, and policy discussions.

Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy, and Troy Mayor Patrick Madden embraced the public art initiative as an opportunity to bring attention to the issue of blight and advance and sustain revitalization efforts in their cities. The initiative included 75 cross-sector partners and organizations, including the Albany County Land Bank Corporation, Capital Region Land Bank, and Troy Community Land Bank. Free building reclamation clinics hosted by the partners educated over 150 potential buyers in purchasing and renovating vacant buildings. Additionally, Breathing Lights, in collaboration with Historic Albany Foundation, developed a free resource guide with tips on owning and rehabilitating properties. The three land banks saw an increase in interest in buying and renovating buildings because of Breathing Lights, and roughly 30% of the buildings involved in the project are now privately owned, renovated or stabilized, and generating property taxes.

Years later these partnerships remain strong to stabilize, market and renovate abandoned buildings. In 2020, educational and outreach efforts moved to virtual platforms. Barb Nelson, Lead Architect for Breathing Lights and director of TAP Inc. reports that "Breathing Lights exposed the broader impacts of vacancy, so it has been easier in recent years to raise funds from foundations to support our work assisting low-to-moderate income homeowners renovating vacant properties."

Conclusion

Around the world, city leaders are teaming up with the private and nonprofit sectors to respond to needs, notably COVID-19 and the resulting economic fallout, and drive innovative solutions in their communities. Leaders who champion collaboration to tackle new and systemic issues benefit from engaging diverse voices and deploying multiple approaches. Cities are stronger than any one sector in isolation, and when government, business, philanthropy, and nonprofit leaders combine forces toward the common good, the results can be transformational.

The examples and best practices highlighted in this guide illustrate the possibilities of cross-sector collaboration and some of the steps leaders can take to better their chances of success. Though each city is unique, and readers will approach this resource with different levels of expertise and experience, this guide provides leaders with an actionable roadmap for designing and implementing strategic partnerships in their cities.

Among many other key components, leaders should keep in mind the following core lessons when pursuing strategic partnerships:

1 Consider Your Goals and Capabilities:
Identify the specific problem(s) you seek to address and how you will define success. Consider your assets as a city and the partnership role(s) you are ready and willing to fulfill.

2 Understand Legal Requirements:
Seek legal counsel and review the city's rules and guidelines regarding private-sector partnership, including the solicitation and acceptance of contributions. Create guidelines, if needed, and communicate the rules of engagement to all employees involved in these efforts.

3 Emphasize Continuous, Strong Communication:
Prioritize early communication among all stakeholders and strive to create a culture of collaboration, fostering diverse input and engagement. Be clear on the partnership benefits and articulate the business case for partnership.

4 Establish Clear and Professionalized Roles and Responsibilities:
Carve out specific roles for stakeholders to fill and establish clear systems for accountability. Create transparent processes informed by and held accountable to strong ethical and legal guidelines.

5 Determine Management Structure:
Consider what organizational structure is needed to appropriately manage funds and project deliverables in and outside of municipal government.

6 Design an Informed and Inclusive Fundraising Approach:
Take time to consider the array of potential funding sources that may be available to you. Seek to encourage broad participation and create simplified and streamlined processes for grants and contributions.

7 Pursue Clear Timelines and Metrics:
Select problems with clearly identifiable timelines and metrics of success and cultivate a shared understanding of both among partners. Design and implement processes for continual refinement and improvement.

8 Plan for Transition and Build for Resiliency:
Think about how the partnership could adapt or react to changes in administration, unexpected challenges or crises and build this resiliency into the foundation of all activities.

As you strive to build and advance partnerships in your city, these lessons are meant to serve as a useful tool and source of inspiration. Future partnerships, such as those you will pursue in your community for years to come, will add to the insights presented here and help us continue to build a richer understanding of the value and tactics of effective strategic partnerships. Partnerships are not static, and collaboration should continuously evolve to meet new challenges and needs. Cities have always been at the forefront of bold, creative solutions to society's most vexing challenges. Bloomberg Philanthropies looks forward to continuing to learn from cities and their partnerships as you carry on this legacy.

The City of Saint Paul, MN teams with partners, including Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, providing support to residents impacted by COVID-19. Photo credit: City of Saint Paul, 2020

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Right: Street mural in Saginaw, MI, a recipient of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Asphalt Art Initiative. 2020