

State of Opportunity?

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR MICHIGAN



EXAMINING ACCESS AND EQUITY
FOR MICHIGAN'S YOUNG PEOPLE,
CRADLE TO CAREER

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FOREWORD

State of Opportunity? The Road Ahead for Michigan seeks to inform and catalyze action among foundations and their public, private and nonprofit partners to turn the question of opportunity into fact for all of our state's residents. If the report and the statewide convening it supports succeed, the title's question mark will be one step closer to becoming an exclamation point.

For Michigan to increase its economic prosperity, its citizens must have equitable access to opportunities from cradle to career. Yet a legacy of systemic inequality continues to hinder progress and limit opportunity. Simply put, the state's young people do not have equitable access—across racial, ethnic, gender, age and other lines—to good schools, jobs and health care. What's at stake is not just their future but Michigan's.

In light of these disparities, the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) organized a committee of foundation and nonprofit leaders to design a statewide convening on March 27, 2012 to explore the road ahead for Michigan's young people, with a focus on what the state's foundations can do to help that road be a prosperous one. This report was commissioned to provide research and examples to inform the conversation, at the convening and beyond.

We wish to thank the members of the committee, named in the opening pages of this report, for the visionary leadership, unwavering commitment and sense of urgency they brought to this work. Our thanks also to the Ford Foundation for its generous support of CMF's work to increase social equity in Michigan.

We invite you to join the conversation and to consider your role in moving opportunity forward for all.

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THE STAKES: CRADLE TO CAREER

“We can’t sit on the sidelines. Too many young people, because of circumstances or heritage, don’t have access to things that would make them successful in life. As a field, we have the leverage and credibility to do something. Giving kids opportunity gives the whole state the opportunity to succeed.”

—Karen Aldridge-Eason, Governor’s Office of Foundation Liaison

Imagine the Opportunity...

A child, a healthy baby girl, is born to a well-nourished mother whose health issues have been addressed well before her pregnancy because she receives regular care. The child receives good learning experiences at home, in child care settings and at pre-school. She arrives at kindergarten emotionally, socially and academically ready to learn and becomes a proficient reader by third grade. Services are provided at school so that her parents receive needed support. Her attendance remains high throughout elementary and middle school.

Even though she is attending school in a low-income neighborhood, her school has adequate resources, qualified teachers, a high quality library and a building that is in good condition and well maintained. There are enough chairs and desks for all of the students. When she arrives at school there is a culture of high expectations and an assumption that everyone can learn, will graduate from high school and will go on to achieve a postsecondary certificate or college degree. Engaging out-of-school time opportunities are available to this student.

She will develop healthy eating and exercise habits because her neighborhood is a safe place to play. She will have opportunities to participate in community development activities. Her voice will be heard and will be valued. Support is available to link her with postsecondary opportunities and these are aligned with available jobs or with opportunities for innovation and microenterprise. As she moves into adulthood, she will achieve income security and will be able to accumulate assets over her lifetime. This young person will have the opportunity to lead a healthy, meaningful life in a neighborhood where people are connected with each other.

A recent Policy Link report notes that “By the end of this decade, the majority of youth will be people of color. By 2030, the majority of workers under age 25 will be people of color. And, by 2042 the majority overall will be people of color.”¹ The report goes on to say that if our country and our state are going to prosper, growth must “be driven by equity—just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone can participate and prosper.”² Diversity stimulates both innovation and economic opportunity.

¹ America’s Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model. April 2011. Policy Link p. 4

² Ibid

...But Consider the Reality

For too many of Michigan's children and youth, such opportunities are not close to being realized. Instead, the state's economic crisis has had an especially sobering impact on children, youth and families in urban, rural and suburban communities across the state.

- Michigan ranks 29th in the nation on indicators of child well-being.
- More than 31,000 school age students have been identified as homeless across the state.³
- Michigan is ranked 40th in the country on infant mortality with nearly 1,000 infants dying each year before their first birthdays.
- As of June 2011, more than one million children in Michigan were receiving some form of public assistance, 20% of those under the age of six.⁴

When examined through an equity lens, these data reveal the legacy of structural barriers to equitable opportunity for children and youth of color. These are barriers that affect them from cradle to career and beyond.

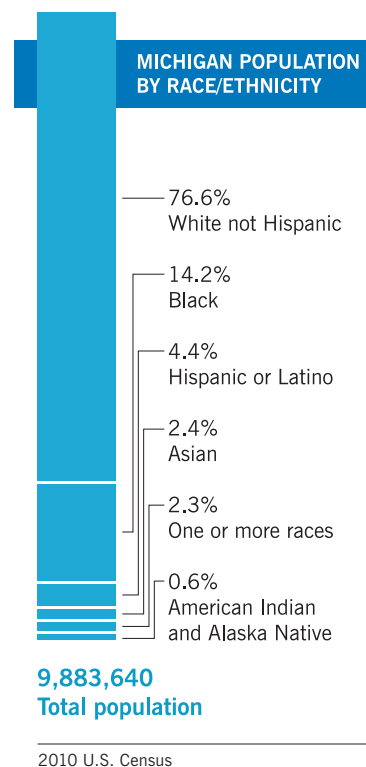
Economists, politicians and community leaders alike are increasingly recognizing a link between social equity and economic growth. In this light, these data points represent not only challenges to fairness in Michigan but challenges to the state's prosperity.

Consider this passage from *Prosperity for 2050: Is Equity the Superior Growth Model?*

*"...If equity is in fact good for economic growth, then the inclusion of those that have been left behind cannot be seen as an afterthought or a separate policy realm but rather as a goal to be pursued in tandem with economic growth strategies. Leaders seeking to foster economic growth and competitiveness will need to develop a new focus on equity, not to gain recognition for social responsibility or community-mindedness, but to achieve their primary goals of growth and competitiveness in the long run."*⁵

Structural racism is "...the ways in which history, ideology, public policies, institutional practices, and culture interact to maintain a racial hierarchy that allows the privileges associated with whiteness and the disadvantages associated with color to endure and adapt over time."⁶

—Aspen Institute report on *Structural Racism and Youth Development*



3 Source: Michigan Department of Education

4 Distribution of Children by Age Reports, Green Book Report of Key Program Statistics, Michigan Department of Human Services (June 2011)

5 Prosperity for 2050: Is Equity the Superior Growth Model. April 2011. Center for American Progress p. 8

6 Structural Racism and Youth Development: Issues, Challenges, and Implications. The Aspen Institute. (2005) p.50

THE TROUBLE SPOTS: WHERE MICHIGAN IS FALLING SHORT

The Cradle to Career Frame

Across the nation states are starting to use a frame, called the P-20 continuum, that aligns resources for children as they grow and develop. The following pages address four areas along the continuum: prenatal maternal and child healthcare, early childhood development, K-16 education and employment.

DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR THE P-20 CONTINUUM

- Women receive prenatal care early in their pregnancies so that babies are born at a healthy weight
- Young children experience high quality learning experiences in safe environments with stable and responsive relationships and sound nutrition
- Children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn
- Students become proficient readers by the end of third grade
- Eighth graders are proficient in math and reading, are engaged in learning and successfully transition into middle school
- Students graduate from high school with proficient academic skills
- Youth seek and complete postsecondary opportunities to further develop their skills
- Youths' skills align with jobs available in Michigan; they are employed in jobs that allow them to be income secure and to accumulate assets; and young people stay in Michigan and invest in the state and support cradle to career education for the next generation through entrepreneurship, tax investments, philanthropy and civic engagement

1. At the Beginning: Prenatal, Maternal and Child Healthcare

Social determinants of health such as poor nutrition, stress, racism and other forms of discrimination and environmental factors affect both maternal and child health. Women living in poverty are more likely to reside in neighborhoods where they are exposed to environmental pollutants such as lead and industrial waste. Rural and urban food deserts combine with lack of transportation to make access to healthy food difficult, if not impossible to obtain. Women living in 18 counties in rural northern Michigan have no access to hospital delivery services.

While income is an important factor, race and ethnicity also need to be considered. African American and Hispanic babies are nearly two times more likely to be born following pregnancies with less than adequate prenatal care compared to White babies. Michigan is ranked 40th in the country on infant mortality with nearly 1,000 infants dying each year before their first birthdays. African American babies are three times more likely to die than White babies. "Nationally, babies born to college-educated Black

women have a much higher risk of dying before their first birthday than do the infants of White high-school dropouts.”⁷ Research has found that: “The lower the weight of a baby at birth and during infancy, the higher the risk for coronary heart disease in later life... low birth weight is [also] associated with an increased risk of hypertension, stroke and type 2 diabetes. ...nutrition during fetal life and infancy have been found to permanently change the body’s structure, physiology and metabolism.”⁸

2. The First Steps: Early Childhood Development

Early childhood experiences have implications for both health and education. Very young children need high quality learning experiences to support their development. Harvard researchers have found that the synapse connections for language development peak at seven months and for higher cognitive functions by age one. Fully 90% of the brain’s architecture develops by the time a child is four years old. “Toxic stress in early childhood is associated with persistent effects on the nervous system and stress hormone systems that can damage developing brain architecture and lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior and both physical and mental health. Activation of the body’s stress management systems produces a variety of physiological reactions.”⁹ Young children living in environments where they experience racism and the stressors related to living in poverty need high quality early learning experiences. Adequate support for young children can minimize the effects of poverty.¹⁰ Nearly half (44%) of Michigan’s children live in households that are low-income or in poverty.

“The scale of the problem requires linking all available resources so that solutions can be implemented at a systems level. Our fates are inextricably linked here.”

—Joan Blough, transition director, Office of Great Start – Early Childhood Investment Corporation

High quality child care that provides effective early learning experiences for children living in poverty will increase the likelihood that they arrive at school ready to learn. Historically Michigan has had the highest rate of unregulated child care in the nation. However, for the first time (FY2011) since Child Development and Care program’s (CCDF Subsidy) inception the majority of children are in the care of licensed and registered providers (51% of children were in licensed and registered settings, up from 43% in FY2010).

“Every \$1 invested in high quality early care and education services for low-income children reaps a return to society of more than \$17... Michigan saved \$1.1 billion in 2009 alone due to investments made in the state’s school readiness efforts over the past 25 years, with savings accruing from reduced costs related to K-12 education, child abuse and neglect, crime, public assistance and substance abuse.”¹¹ Investments in Pre-K pay off for both poor and middle-income families. A senior economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research predicts that when children from both poor and middle-income families attend a Pre-K program their future earnings will increase.¹²

7 Why place and race matter: Impacting health through a focus on race and place – Executive Summary (p. 18): Policy Link. 2011.

8 <http://www.thebarkertheory.org/science.php>

9 Ibid p. 9

10 Evaluations of preschool programs like the Perry Preschool Program and the Chicago Child Parent Centers have shown a high return on investment.

11 An issues primer for Michigan’s 2011 Leaders. Voices for Michigan Children. www.michiganchildren.org

12 Tim Bartik’s Blog August 22, 2011

3. Moving Forward: K-16 Education

Michigan is among the lowest performing states in the country in the outcomes of its public education system. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), fourth grade reading scores are below basic for 67% of African American and 51% of Latino and Native American students compared to 26% of White students.

Low-income students perform below similar students in 42 states on eighth grade math. According to the Education Trust-Midwest Report, the gap between African American and Latino students and their White peers is significantly greater, as is the gap between low-income and higher income students.¹³ And, when compared to all other states, Michigan has the worst rate in the nation for graduating African American males from high school.¹⁴

Inequalities in teacher quality and funding for schools held in place by policies and practices at every level, contribute to achievement gaps. Inaccurate and negative assumptions about poor students' ability to learn create yet another barrier to success for these students.

The implications of low levels of student achievement for individuals and for society-at-large are many and are far-reaching. Less educated individuals are more likely to have health issues, to be incarcerated, to consume more public resources and less likely to vote or to be civically engaged.¹⁵ They are also more likely to be employed at a low-paying job, to be unemployed or underemployed and earn less over their lifetime resulting in a lack of family economic security through sustained income and asset accumulation.

4. Building a Future: Employment

The links between educational attainment and employment are clear. Individuals without basic literacy skills are unable to participate in vocational training programs or other postsecondary opportunities. As noted in the previous section, many young people—a disproportionate of those youth of color—are not succeeding in school nor learning the array of job skills they need to be successful in the job market. Other factors such as employer discrimination based upon race/ethnicity, religious practices, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation and/or immigration status and the absence of adequate public and other transportation solutions makes it impossible for many to get to jobs they could do. The issue of transportation is especially challenging for working households and job seekers in low-income urban communities. Support for economic development resulting in job creation has historically been focused on suburban communities. Inner city public transportation routes often do not extend to suburban communities where better paying jobs are located. Transportation is also problematic in rural areas where workers may need to commute long distances from their homes to the cities where jobs are located, often without the benefit of public transportation.

¹³ *Becoming a Leader in Education: An Agenda for Michigan*. The Education Trust—Midwest Special Report January 2011

¹⁴ The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males: Scott Foundation for public education. 2010.

¹⁵ The Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools. McKinsey & Company, 2009 p. 19

Michigan's high unemployment rates have drawn national attention throughout the recession. In 2010, the unemployment rate in rural Michigan was 12.9% while in urban Michigan it was 12.4%.¹⁶ Unemployment rates for African American and Latino households are more than double that of their White counterparts.¹⁷ Unemployment rates for young men overall were 20.5% and for young African American men 33.4%. Jobless rates for young women overall were 17.5% and for young Latinas, 22.1%.¹⁸ In 2009, 82% of Detroit youth ages 14-18 were estimated to be jobless.¹⁹ Fully 65% of persons in the state with disabilities are not working, though the majority would enter the workforce if afforded the opportunity.²⁰

By 2018 an estimated 62% of Michigan jobs will require a postsecondary degree.²¹ Overall, college graduates or others achieving a postsecondary certificate earn more than those with a high school degree, though women still earn less than men. Race and ethnicity layered with poverty are factors that are associated with still further decreases in earnings.

While Michigan residents have left the state in search of work elsewhere, immigrants continue to arrive. These individuals include university students and professors, refugees, migrant laborers and others. While not growing as rapidly as in other regions, Michigan's Hispanic/Latino population has increased 34.7% since 2000.²² Michigan also has one of the highest concentrations of Arab Americans in the country.

16 USDA-ERS, 2010

17 *Michigan's Economy Continues to Cause Pain: Communities of Color Take a Harder Hit*. Michigan League of Human Services.

18 Employment and unemployment among youth – summer 2010 Bureau of Labor Statistics, a division of the U.S. Department of Labor

19 http://www.michiganfoundations.org/s_cmf/doc.asp?CID=2542&DID=23607

20 National Organization on Disability/Harris Survey June 2004

21 A stronger nation through higher education: Lumina Foundation for Education. September 2010. p. 54

22 Source U.S. Census 2010

THE BRIGHT SPOTS: HOW FOUNDATIONS ARE RESPONDING

Across the state Michigan foundations are experimenting with strategies at different points along the P-20 continuum. Community stories are starting to shift from despair to hope. Cross-sector partnerships are being developed to align resources. Momentum is building. The severity of Michigan's economic crisis has provided an opportunity to work differently and to create a new story.

“As we set the table for the reinvention of Michigan, it is imperative that we all do our part to make sure everyone has a seat.”

—Robert S. Collier, president and CEO, Council of Michigan Foundations

Michigan Grantmaking Through an Equity Lens

“Our goal is to breathe life back into the effort to abolish structural racism, and to help America achieve strength and prosperity through racial equity.” —Sterling K. Speirn, president and CEO, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Many Michigan foundations are investing in nonprofit organizations that *work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically and socially.*²³ While complete data on such grants made by all 2,433 Michigan foundations is not currently available, a sample of such grants made by 50 of the state's foundations indicates that the level of investment is low compared to overall giving.

Total giving in 2009 by the 50 foundations included in the Foundation Center's (FC) database totaled \$406,244,789 through 2,567 grants. Of those grants, 11.3% (\$70,377,698 in 290 grants) met the Foundation Center's criteria for social equity grants.²⁴ These grants represented between 40.5 and 97.8% of all grants made by four of the 50 foundations, 26% for one foundation, between 10% and 20% for six foundations, 0.2% to 10% for 29 foundations and zero for the remaining 10 of the 50 foundations.

MICHIGAN'S PHILANTHROPIC SECTOR

Michigan is home to more than 2,400 community, corporate, family and independent foundations including three of the nation's 50 largest foundations. Its 65 community foundations and their many affiliates serve residents in every county. As of 2010, these foundations held \$24.5 billion in assets and made grants totaling nearly \$1.5 billion.

This robust network of philanthropic organizations is supported by the Council of Michigan Foundations, Governor's Office of Foundation Liaison and the Michigan Nonprofit Association, all of which work to build understanding, connections and public, nonprofit and private partnerships to move Michigan forward.

²³ Foundation Center: Social Justice Grantmaking II: An Update on U.S. Foundation Trends (2009) p. 4 (note the term “Social Justice” was replaced with “Philanthropy through an equity lens” Additional detail related to the definition and the coding of grants can be found on the Foundation Center's website.

²⁴ Source: The Foundation Center, 2011. The database of social equity-focused grants includes 50 Michigan foundations (circa 2009) and grants of \$10,000 or more awarded to organizations in Michigan.

Of the \$70,377,698 in 290 equity grants made by the 40 foundations to Michigan nonprofit organizations, nearly half (42.8%) supported economic and community development, 22.6% supported educational reform and access and 34.6% was distributed across human services, housing and shelter, health care access and affordability, civil rights and civil liberties (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 MICHIGAN FOUNDATION GIVING THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS BY MAJOR FIELDS, 2009²⁵ (N=50 Foundations)

| Subject | Amount | % | No. Grants | % |
|---|---------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Economic and Community Development | \$30,135,268 | 42.8% | 61 | 21.0% |
| Health Care Access and Affordability | \$3,566,098 | 5.1% | 19 | 6.6% |
| Civil Rights and Civil Liberties | \$4,780,470 | 6.8% | 34 | 11.7% |
| Educational Reform and Access | \$15,914,725 | 22.6% | 29 | 10.0% |
| Housing and Shelter | \$3,732,178 | 5.3% | 53 | 18.3% |
| Human Services | \$6,099,014 | 8.7% | 31 | 10.7% |
| International Affairs, Peace, and Conflict Resolution | \$100,000 | 0.1% | 1 | 0.3% |
| Crime and Justice | \$3,058,927 | 4.3% | 37 | 12.8% |
| Social Science Research | \$350,000 | 0.5% | 4 | 1.4% |
| Civic Engagement | \$387,000 | 0.5% | 7 | 2.4% |
| Public Affairs | \$125,000 | 0.2% | 2 | 0.7% |
| Employment Development and Rights | \$635,000 | 0.9% | 4 | 1.4% |
| Environment and Environmental Justice | \$535,388 | 0.8% | 3 | 1.0% |
| Arts, Culture, and Media | \$152,130 | 0.2% | 2 | 0.7% |
| Other | \$806,500 | 1.1% | 3 | 1.0% |
| Total | \$70,377,698 | 100.0% | 290 | 100.0% |

Children and youth represent 27.5% of the total giving through an equity lens and only 2% of all grants. Grants coded as benefiting a specific ethnic or racial minority group total 38.6% of the giving through an equity lens and only 2.3% supported gays or lesbians (see Table 2).

²⁵ Source: The Foundation Center, 2011. The database of social equity-focused grants includes 50 Michigan foundations (circa 2009) and grants of \$10,000 or more awarded to organizations in Michigan.

TABLE 2 **GIVING THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS BY POPULATION GROUP, 2009** (N=50 Foundations)

| Population Group | Amount | % | No. Grants | % |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Aging/Elderly/Senior Citizens | \$2,572,634 | 3.7% | 15 | 5.2% |
| Children & Youth | \$19,328,851 | 27.5% | 50 | 17.2% |
| Crime or Abuse Victims | \$484,350 | 0.7% | 5 | 1.7% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | \$55,278,914 | 78.6% | 222 | 77.0% |
| Poor, Indigent—General | \$54,121,878 | 76.9% | 207 | 71.4% |
| Homeless | \$1,011,766 | 1.4% | 11 | 3.8% |
| Migrant Workers | \$145,270 | 0.2% | 4 | 1.4% |
| Ethnic or Racial Minorities | \$27,188,142 | 38.6% | 111 | 38.3% |
| General | \$23,742,588 | 33.7% | 75 | 25.9% |
| Asians & Pacific Islanders | \$160,000 | 0.2% | 1 | 0.3% |
| African Americans & Blacks | \$1,992,154 | 2.8% | 24 | 8.3% |
| Hispanics & Latinos | \$606,700 | 0.9% | 7 | 2.4% |
| Native Americans | \$421,700 | 0.6% | 2 | 0.7% |
| Other Minorities | \$265,000 | 0.4% | 2 | 0.7% |
| Gays or Lesbians | \$1,600,961 | 2.3% | 16 | 5.5% |
| Immigrants & Refugees | \$120,000 | 0.2% | 3 | 1.0% |
| Men & Boys | \$63,300 | 0.1% | 2 | 0.7% |
| Offenders & Ex-Offenders | \$553,750 | 0.8% | 5 | 1.7% |
| People with AIDS | \$67,197 | 0.1% | 1 | 0.3% |
| People with Disabilities | \$1,445,795 | 2.1% | 13 | 4.5% |
| Substance Abusers | \$50,000 | 0.1% | 1 | 0.3% |
| Women & Girls | \$722,000 | 1.0% | 14 | 4.8% |
| Not Specified/General Public | \$3,450,930 | 4.9% | 14 | 4.8% |

Source: The Foundation Center, 2011. Grants may benefit multiple population groups, e.g., a grant for homeless women and their children may be coded under several categories and do not add up to 100%.

“Our changemaking strategies are more powerful than the dollars we grant.”

—Marie Colombo, senior program officer, Knowledge Management & Chief of Staff, Program,
The Skillman Foundation

“Bright Spots” in Foundation Practice

Michigan foundations have begun to change their practices to respond to the complexity and far reaching implications of the current realities faced by Michigan’s children, youth and families. A variety of initiatives were identified for this report to represent what we refer to as “bright spots” that promise to narrow gaps in opportunity in our state. These “bright spots” provide ideas for “where to go, how to act, what destination to pursue.”²⁶

Michigan foundations are increasing their use of a number of notable strategies and internal practices:

- Collaborations and multi-sector partnerships
- Place based grantmaking including community engagement and empowerment
- Convener and catalyst
- Use of data to identify needs, inform strategies and measure impact
- Advocacy to achieve policy reforms
- Collection and distribution of knowledge within all areas of the foundation
- Commitment to increasing diversity at the senior staff, executive and board levels and promoting inclusive and inter-culturally competent practices with internal and external stakeholders.

“Philanthropy needs to be more efficient and effective and work in ways that are different from what we have done before... we need to move from working in isolation to a collaborative, collective impact framework.” Edwin I. Hernandez, Ph.D., research director, DeVos Family Foundations

THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION'S CHANGEMAKING STRATEGY

Recognizing that its grantmaking resources are inadequate to reach the ambitious goal of community transformation and education reform, The Skillman Foundation also pursues an aggressive changemaking strategy. Changemaking in this case refers to non-grantmaking practices and roles through which the Foundation serves as convener, broker, public educator, problem-solver and/or advocate to advance an agenda for Detroit children. The Foundation works—formally and informally—to align diverse interests and players around a common agenda; ensure that those typically excluded have a seat at the civic table; draw attention to needs and opportunities for investment; insert new ideas and knowledge into the civic discussion; develop support for change and mobilize political will; and wield influence with key leaders and institutions.

CMF DEFINITION OF INCLUSIVE PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS AND DIVERSITY

Inclusive philanthropic organizations seek out and consider the perspectives of diverse individuals to overcome current and historic systemic barriers and exclusion thus ensuring that all individuals have equitable opportunity to participate in society and philanthropy. Diverse individuals are from different genders, national origins, ethnicities, races, cultures, generations, religions, economic backgrounds, gender identities and sexual orientations, and possess different skills, abilities, lifestyles and beliefs.

26 Heath, Chip and Heath, Dan (2010). *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. Broadway Books: New York, NY p.33

When compared to spending by state and federal government, Michigan foundations' \$1.5 billion in grantmaking (2009 data), is unable to meet the significant needs of the state's children, youth and families. To make a real and lasting impact, an increasing number of Michigan foundations have been assessing their impact and making changes to their internal and external policies, practices and strategies for achieving change. Many of those foundations are now employing an inter-related set of strategies that include identifying needs, convening doers, catalyzing solutions, leveraging resources, learning what works and sharing knowledge, including through advocacy for public policy reforms.



Six Promising Stories

Foundations and practitioners interviewed for the case studies highlighted in this report are among those testing strategies to leverage sustainable, systemic changes. Snapshots of their promising stories follow along with six preliminary lessons learned from their experiences. To read the complete stories and fact sheets on issues within the P-20 continuum, visit <http://opportunity.michiganfoundations.org/>.

1) Serving Teen Health Care Needs in Washtenaw County

The Corner Health Center, Michigan's oldest and most comprehensive teen health center, has become part of an effort by local funders to align their strategies and resources to form a comprehensive safety net for health/nutrition in Washtenaw County. The Center's approach to supporting teens and teen mothers and their young children empowers young people to make healthy choices while removing barriers to accessing care. They report that in 2010, fully 93% of the babies born to Corner patients were delivered at normal birth weights. "The Corner is committed to helping young people overcome barriers to good health. Adolescents who cannot meet their basic needs for food, clothing, and transportation cannot adequately maintain their health or the health and safety of their children."²⁷

2) Providing a System of Supports for Young Children in Battle Creek

Battle Creek funders have shifted from funding isolated programs to thinking about systems. They have become more strategic about how to leverage their capacities and how to engage community residents to address issues of equity in education, health and income. The greatest change has been the recognition that community residents are resources and must be engaged in this work. Funders are working together with nonprofit providers, home day cares, the members of the Educators Task Force (covering pre-school to post graduate), the Calhoun County Intermediate School District, the Early Childhood Task Force and community residents to address the issue of school readiness. A small family foundation took the initiative to start the conversation. "We have an opportunity to share resources and to pull individuals together around this issue...we pull together different silos and connect them...this is not 'our program,' it is a team working together...we are helping people to help themselves." Nancy Taber, executive director, Guido A. and Elizabeth H. Binda Foundation

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3) Supporting Student Success from Kindergarten on in Grand Rapids

Foundations in Grand Rapids have joined with educators, nonprofits, the Department of Human Services and local government to support student success through the Kent School Services Network (KSSN). KSSN is a Community Schools Partnership that brings comprehensive health and human services to the lowest performing schools in the highest poverty neighborhoods so that they can be easily accessed by students and their families in a central location. It is an example of a local-level, cross sector partnership that has addressed the achievement gap by removing attendance barriers. “In all that we do we keep access and equity top of mind. The fabric of this organization is built on equity and access from our hiring decisions to our grantmaking...we ask ourselves who will have access? What are the barriers to participation?...we are a social justice funder.” Diana Sieger, president, Grand Rapids Community Foundation

4) Helping Students Succeed in High School and College in Flint

The Ruth Mott Foundation expanded its role from being a funder to being in partnership with educators to improve academic success throughout the district. Beecher Middle/High School, located on Flint’s north side, is among the lowest achieving schools in Michigan based on the low graduation rates, poor test scores, failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress and Title I status. The most recent data reported by the Genesee Intermediate School District (2007) indicated that of the 198 ninth graders who attended Beecher in 2003, only 71 graduated in 2007. The Beecher Scholarship Incentive Program (BSIP) assists students with graduating from high school and pursuing postsecondary education and/or training. Today, BSIP students have higher graduation rates (nearly 100%), attendance and GPAs than non-BSIP students. Fully 80% of BSIP alumni go on to attend a two or four-year college. BSIP’s first alumni graduated from Western Michigan University in 2009. Currently, six alumni have graduated from college. Foundations can “use evaluation data as a catalyst for change...engaging in a highly participatory evaluation has changed our mindset about evaluation and the way we think about using information.” Sylvester Jones, program officer, Ruth Mott Foundation

5) Building a Network of Support for Post-Secondary Education across Michigan

Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) is a story of how funders both small and large have created a state-wide initiative to facilitate access to postsecondary opportunities for all students. State-level infrastructure supports local-level implementation of this work through community foundations (MCAN). MCAN's mission is to “dramatically increase the college participation and completion rate in Michigan, particularly among low-income students, first-generation students and students of color” (www.micollegeaccess.org). MCAN staff coordinate resources, provide leadership and advocacy, offer professional development, support Local College Access Networks (LCANs) and work on state-wide initiatives.

6) Investing in Job Retention for Low-Income Wage Earners in West Michigan

Job retention and transportation to jobs are issues that affect low-income households all along Michigan's western lakeshore. Foundations, nonprofits, businesses and the public sector are partnering to develop solutions that no one group could achieve in isolation. One solution has been to have a Department of Human Services (DHS) case worker travel among the largest employers in the region to be on-site. “There is no doubt that when employees struggle with difficult situations at home it affects them at work as well...With investment from the Community Foundation and area employers, this program helps employees identify and access the supports that are the right fit for their needs. When that happens, everyone involved benefits.” Janet DeYoung, president and CEO, Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area

Six Preliminary Lessons

An analysis of the case studies provided in this report suggest six key lessons for consideration.

LESSON ONE

Build Partnerships Around a Common Vision and Align Resources. Engage partners early on to develop shared goals and to identify and align resources. This can take time but is essential. Partner with government on shared goals to leverage foundation resources with public funds and to increase the likelihood of influencing policy. By doing so, solutions are more likely to be sustained and the scope of impact expanded.

LESSON TWO

Collaborate for Knowledge and Impact. The most common type of collaboration is when multiple funders agree to give separate grants but for a common purpose. Some communities have developed common applications and meet together to discuss and coordinate their funding. Detroit area funders are in the process of mapping their strategies and investments to inform individual and collective grantmaking in the future. One interviewee commented that the relationships that have developed and the discussions about how foundations categorize their grantmaking have both been useful.

LESSON THREE

Learn to Engage Diverse Stakeholders; Use Context Specific Strategies. In a state and nation with changing demographics, many foundations are building their understanding and capacity to be more diverse, inclusive and inter-culturally competent in their relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Listening to and considering community members' concerns, needs and aspirations is essential to developing context specific responses.

LESSON FOUR

Create a Culture of Learning. Nearly all of the case studies have used external evaluation to inform their work as well as to document outcomes. Sylvester Jones, program officer, Ruth Mott Foundation commented that foundations can "use evaluation data as a catalyst for change." He went on to say that, "engaging in a highly participatory evaluation has changed our mindset about evaluation and the way we think about using evaluation." Some foundations across the state have created a new position for a staff person to connect knowledge with action. Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Battle Creek are all developing shared data collection systems.

LESSON FIVE

Understand how Issues Inter-relate. Issues as well as successes in one area have implications for other aspects of the lives of children and youth. Solutions to complex problems cross the focus areas of health, education and income. It is important to think broadly about the inter-related issues within a specific area such as early childhood as well as to connect work all along the P-20 Continuum.

LESSON SIX

Commit for the Long Term to Achieve Transformational Change. A three to five year investment may not be enough to effect significant change. Foundations must be willing to commit to an issue for the long haul and to bring a broad range of resources to the table (e.g., leadership, knowledge, staff time, grants).

CALL TO ACTION



A diverse and growing group of thought leaders, policymakers, foundations and nonprofits are recognizing that for Michigan to thrive, every individual, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, zip code or other characteristics must have access to equitable opportunities to succeed starting at birth. The state's future depends on it.

These leaders, including those listed at the beginning of this report, believe that Michigan foundations can play a unique and important role in increasing equity in their grantmaking, convening, advocacy for policy reforms and public education, and leveraging of public and private dollars to achieve shared goals.

The Council of Michigan Foundations is committed to catalyzing and supporting action among the dynamic network of foundations in our state.

We invite you to access information, participate in learning and adopt new practices that lead to better outcomes for all.

“Throughout Michigan, there are many examples of foundations already partnering with nonprofits to ensure people have access to opportunities they need and deserve for a successful and prosperous future,” said Robert S. Collier, president and CEO, Council of Michigan Foundations. “Despite the progress we make, the needs are still great and the question of equity is one that all foundations must continue to ask. As we set the table for the reinvention of Michigan, it is imperative that we *all* do our part to make sure everyone has a seat.”

Appendix: Interviewees, Reviewers and Resources

Formative Evaluation Research Associates wishes to thank the following individuals for sharing their time, expertise and information with us to inform this report.

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