

CORPORATION FOR A SKILLED WORKFORCE

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THE NATIONAL FUND FOR WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS www.nfwsolutions.org

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions is an award-winning national workforce development initiative focused on helping low-wage workers obtain good careers while at the same time ensuring that employers can find workers with the high-quality skills they need to succeed in this highly competitive economy. Since 2007, the National Fund has raised more than \$31 million to support 31 communities that have contributed an additional \$112 million in locally raised resources from nearly 300 different funding sources, including community foundations, United Ways, corporate foundations, workforce investment boards, chambers of commerce, and state agencies. Each of these communities has created local funding collaboratives that are collectively investing in more than 80 sectoral workforce partnerships.

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UNITED WAY WORLDWIDE www.LIVEUNITED.org/our-work/income/

United Way is a worldwide network in 45 countries and territories, including nearly 1,300 local organizations in the U.S. It advances the common good, creating opportunities for a better life for all, by focusing on education, income and health. The United Way movement creates long lasting community change by addressing the underlying causes of problems that prevent progress in these areas. United Way's income work promotes communitychange strategies to address the obstacles that prevent hard-working families from getting ahead and help them gain the financial stability that will allow them to plan for-and accomplish their long-term financial goals. For more information about United Way's income work, please visit: www.LIVEUNITED.org/our-work/ income/

PREFACE

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions is ambitious: we seek to change the way our communities—and the United States—ensure that the American economy provides family-sustaining jobs to all. Specifically, the National Fund is committed to helping at least 30,000 people get jobs or advance in their careers, while providing services to 1,000 or more businesses to recruit, retain, and advance employees.

To achieve that goal, the National Fund promotes a groundbreaking exercise in philanthropy, unique in scope. Since our founding just four years ago, over 300 local funders, including government agencies and community-based organizations, have joined 31 regional funder collaboratives across the country. These collaboratives focus financial resources and intellectual capital on one of our nation's most pressing challenges: creating jobs and careers in a post-recession economy.

As you will read here, local United Ways are invaluable partners in those collaboratives. At the birth of the National Fund, United Way Worldwide supported a cohort of fourteen local United Ways as they formed and joined regional funding collaboratives. Today, these local organizations are leaders or active partners in five of the collaboratives that received significant start-up investments from the National Fund, working with partners -- community founda-

tions, Workforce Investment Boards, and corporate foundations—to match the grants on a four-to-one basis.

I both congratulate and thank local United Ways and United Way Worldwide for their contributions to the emergence and achievements of the National Fund. Their experiences in the first regional collaboratives helped us confirm and refine our initial strategies and on-theground practices, and since then, the involvement of these well-respected organizations has been critical. In particular, United Ways bring longstanding connections to local employers and to local social service agencies that are essential as the National Fund engages and serves these stakeholders in local workforce development systems.

One of our goals in the coming years is to ensure that the close relationship between United Way and the National Fund continues and that it grows, particularly as we all face an environment in which public resources for social services are likely to decline. We share a basic premise: to get people out of poverty permanently, we must help them acquire the skills they need to succeed. And to do that requires us to understand the skills needs of employers and to ensure that workers have not only the right skills but also the child care, transportation, and other supports they need to help their families and to advance in careers



FRED DEDRICK
Executive Director,
National Fund for Workforce Solutions

In 2008, United Way announced three national goals that would drive its work to mobilize the caring power of communities in the areas of education, income, and health. Our 10-year income goal is to cut in half the number of lower-income working families who are financially unstable. We believe that by 2018, through our efforts in partnership with community leaders, employers, government, foundations and organizations like the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, we can help 1.9 million working families get on the road to and achieve financial stability.

To achieve financial stability, families must have stable, adequate income through employment opportunities that provide the income to meet and maintain their every day needs. Furthermore, families must have the ability and means to save and acquire financial resources and assets for long-term sustainability.

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions and United Way have a common goal to bring family-sustaining employment opportunities to more lower-income working families through sector-based partnerships. Sector-based workforce partnerships are designed to meet both the needs of employers and workers, making it a natural fit for United Ways that are concentrating on increasing financial stability and

engaging corporations in their community impact work. While many United Ways have been long-time supporters of efforts to create and sustain employment and to further training and career pathways, the aligned participation in the National Fund's regional workforce funding collaboratives served as the first, coordinated United Way workforce development effort focused on sector-based employment.

This report documents the beginnings of United Ways' involvement in regional workforce funding collaboratives and the roles they played in their development and implementation. It is United Way Worldwide's hope that more United Ways will see a role for themselves within regional workforce funder collaboratives and will continue to find ways of enhancing local sector-based initiatives. These coordinated efforts among United Ways, businesses, local funders, and community-based organizations will help more families gain a foothold on the economic ladder that will lead to success and financial stability in this challenging economic environment.



JOSEPHINE BIAS ROBINSON Vice President, Income – Community Impact Leadership & Learning United Way Worldwide

INTRODUCTION

Almost 25 percent of adults in the United States earn less than \$27,000 annually in jobs that offer no health insurance, vacation, or paid sick leave and little opportunity for advancement. These workers often struggle to pay for food, rent, child care, health care, and transportation, with little left over for saving and investing.

At the same time, increased global competition has led to declines in the American manufacturing sector, requiring U.S. workers to possess stronger skills and broader competencies in order to succeed in the current job market. Now more than ever before, postsecondary education or technical training is fundamental to each individual's long-term earning potential.

Recognizing that standard or traditional training and job-placement programs may not address today's complex workforce challenges, a wide variety of local organizations are coming together to form sector-based workforce partnerships. These collaborations engage employers, training providers, community-based organizations, and other key stakeholders in workforce development to address both workforce needs of employers in specific sectors and the training, employment, and career advancement needs of workers and jobseekers. This approach, a mechanism for simultaneously meeting the

needs of both workers and employers, represents a potentially significant shift in the way the "business" of workforce development takes place in regions across the country.

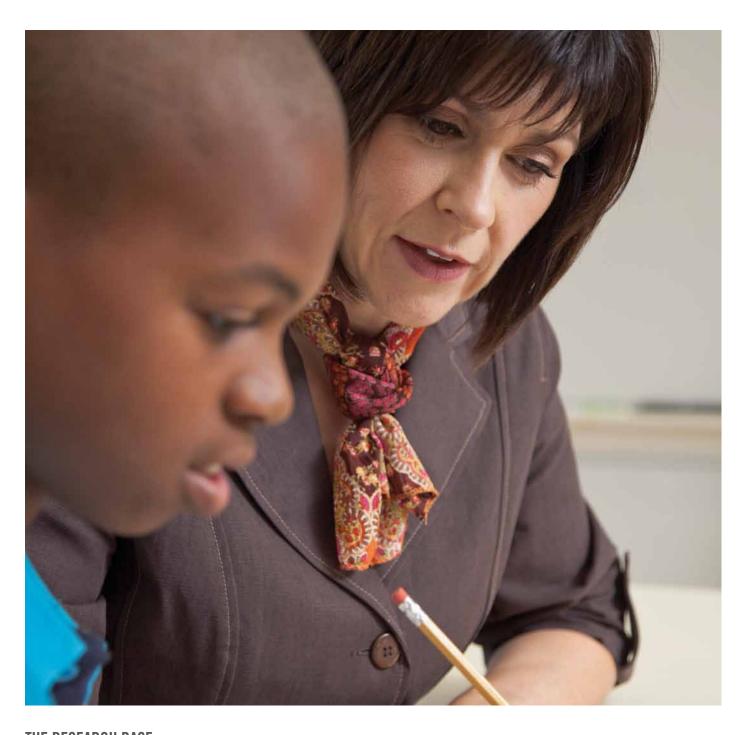
Recognizing the potential of sectorbased workforce partnerships to more effectively train and place individuals in jobs paying a family-sustaining wage, a group of national investors came together in 2007 to form the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. The National Fund, with ten national funders and over 300 public and private funders nationwide, brings together corporations, workforce intermediaries, and government agencies to create regional funding collaboratives that support the work of sectorbased partnerships. The collaboratives strategically invest in training and career supports in industry sectors that are critical to local economies and offer opportunities for advancement.

This innovative approach to workforce development is gaining ground across the United States, although United Ways have been slow to engage in the regional funding collaboratives that support sector-based workforce partnerships in their communities. Yet their role as local conveners positions United Ways to improve the coordination among diverse organizations to create seamless workforce development

systems that are flexible, integrated, comprehensive, and meet the needs of employees as well as employers.

In 2007, to explore the role of United Ways in regional funder collaboratives, United Way Worldwide partnered with the National Fund for Workforce Solutions on a seven-month readiness process to prepare fourteen United Ways to form regional funding collaboratives that would apply for grants from the National Fund. With support from Jobs for the Future, United Way Worldwide organized peer learning opportunities for this group and provided assistance with strategic planning. At the end of the process, the National Fund invited eight United Ways to submit grant proposals, and it subsequently awarded funds to five of them to support sectorbased workforce partnerships.

This report is based on the knowledge and themes captured during the seven-month readiness process, as well as interviews with ten of the fourteen participating United Ways. It provides an overview of sector-based workforce partnerships and their value to a community. It also makes suggestions for growing and sustaining these partnerships. It concludes by identifying potential roles for local United Ways in sector-based workforce partnerships, offering a guide for their deeper engagement in workforce development activities.



THE RESEARCH BASE

For this report, the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce conducted a series of interviews with staff, funders, and community partners from ten United Ways, all of which participated in the seven-month readiness process and are involved in regional funder collaboratives:

United Way of Greater Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)
United Way of Central and Northeastern
Connecticut (Hartford, CT)
Mile High United Way (Denver, CO)
United Way of Central Iowa (Des Moines, IA)
United Way of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley (Boston, MA)

United Way for Detroit and Southeastern Michigan (Detroit, MI) United Way of Greater Cincinnati (Cincinnati, OH) United Way of the Midlands (Omaha, NE) United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA) United Way of Rhode Island (Providence, RI)



UNITED WAY FOCUS ON FINANCIAL STABILITY

In 2008, United Way Worldwide announced ambitious, 10-year goal to reduce the number of lower-income working families that are financially unstable. It will achieve that goal though the United Way Financial Stability Partnership, a national initiative that promotes community-change strategies for helping families meet their basic needs, while gaining the financial stability that allows them to plan for and accomplish their long-term financial goals.

United Way has identified evidence-based strategies and approaches in five key areas that drive its financial stability work and help us make progress on the national goal. These five areas are:

- Family-Sustaining Employment;
- · Income Supports;
- Savings and Assets;
- · Manageable Expenses; and
- Affordable Housing.

With the inclusion of family-sustaining employment as a focus of its financial stability work, United Ways have increasingly focused on education and training, job acquisition, and career advancement as part of its larger strategy for helping families obtain jobs that pay family-sustaining wages.

Since sector-based workforce partnerships are designed to meet the needs of both employers and workers, local United Ways see this approach as consistent with their efforts to increase family-sustaining employment, while also engaging with corporations traditional workplace fundraising campaigns. Promoting an organizational focus on workforce issues, including sector-based programs, indicates to employers that their contributions to United Way support efforts that bring impact full circle.

The formation of regional collaboratives to support sector-based workforce partnership strategies is also a natural fit with the work of United Way. It builds on United Way's capacity to bring partners together around a common vision and focus community resources on identified needs.

SECTOR-BASED WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS

Sector-based workforce partnerships represent a regional approach focused on the workforce needs of high-growth industries. These partnerships bring together employers, workers, and other key stakeholders from a selected industry sector. On an ongoing basis, the partners discuss the sector's particular characteristics, practices, and skill requirements. Together, the partners develop and implement effective job-training and placement services that meet the needs of both workers and employers.

Sector-based workforce partnerships differ from traditional workforce development approaches in several key ways:

- Traditional approaches focus on increasing worker skills and placing people in jobs.
 Workforce partnerships focus on solving problems faced by workers and businesses.
- Traditional approaches are transactional in nature. Workforce partnerships are relational and engaging.

- Traditional approaches operate within existing funding systems and business practices.
 Workforce partnerships endeavor to change funding systems and business practices to enable a full array of solutions.
- Traditional approaches feature sharp boundaries around fixed organizational roles and practices. Workforce partnerships catalyze flexible partnerships to innovatively solve problems and enhance value.
- Traditional approaches have a short-term focus on serving workers. Workforce partnerships have a long-term orientation toward improving impact and outcomes for partners, individuals, and systems.



REGIONAL FUNDING COLLABORATIVES

Sector-based workforce partnerships are often developed and seeded by regional funding collaboratives, which are comprised of government agencies, private foundations, and corporations. The members of these collaboratives pool their resources and make targeted, aligned investments in education and training and in support of sector-based workforce partnerships that have the potential to create jobs and improve the regional economy.

BENEFITS

The use of regional funder collaboratives to support sector-based workforce partnerships offers several benefits to the community.

Greater efficiency of resources, less duplicative

funding, and a greater ability to leverage funds. Regional funding collaboratives leverage the resources of several organizations to achieve broader impact. In addition, participating as part of a collaborative reduces risk for new funders and provides a supportive environment in which they can learn more about these efforts. United Ways that have reduced their community investments have used regional funding collaboratives as a strategy for maximizing their financial resources and serving as

many individuals as possible.

Better relationships with employers.

The dual-customer approach supported by regional funder collaboratives creates an environment of shared goals and strategies among employers, workers, and community partners. Because this approach focuses on solving problems faced by workers and businesses, employers receive clear benefits from their participation, making them more likely to commit time and resources to advancing their workers.

Increased connections throughout the workforce development system. Regional community collaborations increase communication and collaboration among community partners, improving the quality of local services, fostering integration, and encouraging innovation.

Increased alignment with educational

institutions. Involvement in regional funding collaboratives can prompt community colleges to make operational changes that better meet the education and training needs of low-income workers. These changes include integrating their corporate training, academic services, and student affairs programs; increasing their emphasis on career pathways rather than short-term training; and offering career coaching and other support services that help students succeed in education and jobs. As a result, community colleges increase their revenue as more employers turn to these institutions to meet their workforce training needs.



The **Greater Cincinnati Workforce** Network is building the professional capacity of local workforce development programs. It is also creating connections between employment programs and emergency assistance programs, bringing together new resources and approaches that were not previously aligned.

FORMATION

When forming a collaborative, it is critical to engage a diverse set of community stakeholders, including local and state government agencies (particularly Workforce Investment Boards), education and training institutions (often represented by community-based organizations and community colleges), employers (from relevant industry sectors and/or chambers of commerce), economic development agencies and organizations, labor, and the philanthropic community. The diversity of this group will help ensure that solutions meet real community needs.

The processes and time required to form a regional funder collaborative vary widely by community, but they can be divided into two distinct phases: strategic planning and implementation.

In the strategic planning phase, which can last for a year or more, United Ways found that building relationships and trust are critical. These efforts create the foundation upon which all future work is built.

The collaborative must focus on identifying community needs, educating partners about sector-based workforce partnerships, and developing a shared vision for change with clearly defined strategies and outcomes. Labor market data and asset mapping can increase knowledge among stakeholders and help the partners identify opportunities on which the group may focus. It is important to approach the



collaborative's work from the perspective of solving problems—not running programs—to create a solid, inspired, and enduring theory of change that speaks to how problems will be addressed and focuses on clear strategies that set a foundation for accomplishing longer-term goals.

In the implementation phase, which unfolds over three to five years, partners must commit to the shared vision of the regional funder collaborative and ensure that their actions are in alignment. Strong relationships, a high level of trust, and a sense of shared responsibility for meeting the collaborative's goals are required to move ideas into lasting and effective action. A few United Ways reported the need to improve collaborative processes and protocols before rolling out strategies to a broad group of stakeholders.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

There are several different governance and oversight models for regional funding collaboratives. Some communities choose a formal committee structure, while others opt for a less formal process. Whatever the model, it is important that the collaborative have written operational guidelines, including expectations for participants' roles, financial contributions, staffing, and data management and who will serve as the lead agency. A clear process for grant-making, with standardized tools, lets funders know what to expect from being part of the collaborative. Clarity around these issues ensures that all partners understand, commit to, and respect one another's roles, while minimizing the fear and turf issues that are inherent in collaboration. Eliminating ambiguity also builds shared ownership among the partners.

Most United Ways have hired at least one fulltime, dedicated staff person to manage and support the work of the collaborative, while some have assigned small teams to share responsibility for managing the work. United Ways have felt Mile High United Way in Denver recognized that strong relationships between education providers and businesses make it possible to track labor market outcomes for training participants, including their long-term educational attainment, job placement, career advancement, and wages.

that dedicated staff are critical to the success of a collaborative; however, those working on a smaller scale felt that it was not necessary to have full-time staff person for this work and have identified ways to leverage the time of existing staff to carry out the various tasks associated with managing and supporting the collaborative.

FUND DISTRIBUTION

As with governance, the structure for collecting and distributing financial resources varies from collaborative to collaborative. In some communities, each partner contributes its dollars to a single fiscal agent (usually the lead agency) to distribute to grantees. This is commonly referred to as a "pooled funding" approach. In other cases, funders commit funds to the collaborative but distribute their contributions directly to grantees. This "aligned funding" approach is especially useful for leveraging funds that are difficult to re-grant through a fiscal agent because of organizational restrictions, including those for the use of public workforce funds. In a number of cases, collaboratives use both approaches to accommodate the needs of different funders.

However funds are disbursed, participating organizations must align their grant-making protocols with the collaborative's protocols, including reporting requirements and outcome expectations. This creates consistency for grantees and a sense of shared ownership among the collaborative partners.



CHALLENGES

Regional funder collaboratives have faced many challenges that cannot be mitigated by structure. The challenge most frequently cited by United Ways was calibrating the frequency of meetings. Partners must balance busy schedules and competing priorities, while acknowledging that the work moves quickly and frequent conversations are necessary to keep pace.

Another challenge identified by United Ways is the diversity of perspectives among organizations. Collaboratives are frequently challenged to find and emphasize common ground across a diverse membership with many different organizational agendas and funding priorities.

In addition, United Ways were interested in connecting corporations that run workplace fundraising campaigns with the collaboratives' workforce development efforts. However, many United Ways noted that leveraging employer relationships, particularly those formed through the traditional fundraising campaign was more difficult than they expected. United Ways will need to establish a relationship beyond fundraising with employers that they wish to engage in workforce partnerships and sector-based efforts.

Finally, while the dual-customer approach helps engage partners across a sector, there is a tension between the extensive, long-term training and supports often required to prepare a worker for a career in an emerging sector and meeting an employer's immediate needs for skilled personnel.

UNITED WAY ROLES IN REGIONAL FUNDER COLLABORATIVES

As noted, all ten local United Ways in this study were involved in the development and implementation of regional funder collaboratives, but the role of each in these collaboratives varied from community to community. To identify an appropriate role, each United Way consulted with other community stakeholders, held internal conversations about organizational strategy, and analyzed the local workforce development landscape vis-à-vis the organization's historical involvement in it and the perceived value of these efforts within the community.

LEAD AGENCY

The lead agency for a regional funder collaborative must have a diverse skill set and constructive relationships with a range of local partners. Lead agencies are responsible for convening and fostering cooperation among the collaborative's partners; facilitating and informing strategic planning activities; and managing day-to-day operations, including providing assistance with fundraising, communications and due diligence for grant-making activities. Lead agencies also provide oversight and management support for evaluation activities, and they promote continuous improvement of the collaborative's workforce partnerships and associated strategies.

United Way of Central lowa was selected as the lead entity for the Central Iowa Works Collaborative because the collaborative's workforce system partners sought a neutral third party to play that role. This structure made it more feasible for local education and training partners, such as community colleges and One-Stop Centers, to offer services with support from the collaborative without concerns about conflicts of interest. United Way had been the convener of several local working groups focused on early childhood education, asset building, health, workforce development, and housing, making it the logical choice. The United Way has translated its relationships and expertise in convening these community discussions to its role as the lead of the collaborative.

While the Omaha Workforce Collaborative is led by the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, the city's United Way of the Midlands has been instrumental as a proponent of sector-based strategies and the use of regional funder collaboratives to connect disparate workforce development efforts. At the onset of its involvement. United Way used its long-term relationships with the local chamber of commerce, community college, and Workforce Investment Board to raise awareness of this new approach. As United Way sought their engagement in bringing the approach to Omaha, it sponsored the participation of these key partners in National Fund for Workforce Solutions learning activities. The United Way's leadership around the concept of forming an Omaha collaborative and bringing strategies together under this umbrella continues to be crucial to the success of efforts today.

Of all the roles a lead agency plays, perhaps the most important is that of convener: this role provides the glue for the collaborative's collective efforts. Because local United Ways inherently value collaboration and are often seen as trustworthy conveners and partners, taking on the role of the lead agency is often seen as a natural outgrowth of their work. In addition, United Ways are often uniquely positioned to be the convener and lead organization because of their existing relationships (particularly with local businesses and local community-based organizations), nongovernmental status, and knowledge of the issues that many low-income individuals and families face.

COMMUNITY PARTNER, CONNECTOR, AND CHAMPION

Sector-based workforce partnership strategies depend on strong relationships with diverse stakeholders. Therefore, the cross-sector relationships United Ways commonly have contribute greatly to the collaborative's success and United Way's influence on the direction of both the collaborative and workforce partnerships. Strong relationships help diverse partners overcome turf issues to more effectively identify community needs and develop shared agendas to help meet them.

Relationships can also provide opportunities for local United Ways to link the activities of their regional collaboratives to other relevant community efforts and to collaborate around mutual strategies and expand impacts. All of these efforts ensure that a regional collaborative focuses on meeting the real needs of a region and its employers and workers.

Finally, local United Ways often have the credibility to position themselves as believable champions for the goals and efforts of the collaboratives in which they engage. Having respected champions within the collaborative is critical to engaging new partners, effectively advocating on behalf of policy priorities, and finding avenues to grow and sustain these efforts.



Influencing the Workforce Development System

United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley describes the workforce development system as a "complex labyrinth" of partnerships and networks, and sees its involvement in Boston's SkillWorks as an opportunity to foster connections and improvements within this space. It sees a role for the regional funder collaborative beyond that of guiding and monitoring the performance of workforce partnerships, to influence the larger workforce policy system. In this way, the collaborative functions as a learning community that intentionally connects peers and funders with the larger system. The collaborative members identify policy issues that arise and options for addressing them, and they also work to advance policies favorable to their mission.



The **Job Opportunity Investment Network** benefits from funding as part of the state of Pennsylvania's sector-strategy initiative. Thus, the collaborative views its public policy and advocacy work as particularly important to its sustainability.

FUNDER/STRATEGIC PARTNER

In some communities, local United Way agencies are involved in the collaboratives as funders and strategic partners without serving as lead agency or fiscal agent. The role of strategic partner typically involves committing resources to the collaborative, working with other collaborative members to support effective local workforce partnerships, and pursuing continuous improvement of the collaborative's efforts.

POLICY ADVOCATE

A number of local United Ways leverage their organizational relationships and strategies to influence local, state, and federal workforce policy, thereby helping to bring solutions to scale and ensure their sustainability. Activities in this area include convening learning networks to discuss the impact of public policies on the activities of workforce partnership, helping build the capacity of stakeholders in the workforce development system, advocating for more aligned approaches and investments within the public workforce system, and jointly submitting proposals for state and federal funds to support collaborative activities.

GROWING AND SUSTAINING REGIONAL FUNDER COLLABORATIVES

Local United Ways engaged in regional funder collaboratives have found that sector-based work-force partnerships are a valuable and cost-effective approach to helping families obtain jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. Yet this approach to workforce development is new to many communities, and regional funder collaboratives are just beginning to identify strategies for sustaining their work beyond their initial grants from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. Evaluation data that can quantify the impact of sector-based workforce partnerships on job attainment and retention will be critical to building the support and continued funding needed to sustain this work and achieve the goal of helping employers and employees succeed in our communities.



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