



The Partnership for New Communities

INSIGHTS FROM SOLVING PROBLEMS
THROUGH CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS
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Introduction

From the White House to the Harvard Business Review, state governments to local philanthropy, many institutions and individuals have expressed their belief in the power of cross-sector partnerships by funding and participating in them. As a result, these partnerships have multiplied in recent years. However, the collective understanding of what makes a cross-sector partnership successful is limited.

While there have been a number of case studies about cross-sector partnerships working on specific issues, and there is an emerging body of work on collective impact—an approach that has cross-sector partnerships at its core—there has not been extensive inquiry into the structure and behaviors of effective cross-sector partnerships.

At Living Cities, we believe in the power of cross-sector partnerships to address some of the toughest challenges our country faces today. We also believe there is a need for greater understanding of cross-sector partnerships so that practitioners, participants, and funders have a systematic way and shared language to reflect on whether their existing or planned partnerships are structured to achieve their intended goals.

Over the last two years, we have been learning from and with leaders about what it takes to set up and run a cross-sector partnership so that it can have real and measurable impact. Through our grants and research, site visits, and hours of interviews we learned so much that was useful, we knew we had to find a way to organize, define, and describe the ideas that were being

mentioned time and again. In this work, we define a cross-sector partnership as an alliance of organizations, which together have a role in solving a problem and achieving a shared goal.

This case study was developed as a companion to *What Barriers? Insights from Solving Problems through Cross-Sector Partnerships* with the goal of making the concepts explored in that paper concrete. This case study is structured as follows:

- A About the Partnership for New Communities**
- B A Closer Look: Traits, Factors and Behaviors Influencing the Partnership for New Communities**
 - 1** Building a strong foundation for a cross-sector partnership
 - 2** Factors that influence the success of a cross-sector partnership
 - 3** Behaviors of high-impact cross-sector partnerships
- C Three Insights that Emerge from this Case**
- D What's Next?**

Here are three key themes to look for in this case study:

1 What gives you the right? The connection between authority, representatives, and positioning.

When people and institutions come together to try to address complex social or economic problems, they are often faced with the question: who has granted you the right to do the work? This question of authority is fundamentally connected to the stature and power of individuals involved with the partnership as well as how the partnership itself is positioned in relation to other individuals and organizations working on the same issues.

2 Developing the strategy for a cross-sector partnership by linking charge and the problem-solving cycle.

Cross-sector partnerships often form because there is a group of individuals or organizations that want to implement a particular strategy. If the problem has a known solution, this can work very well, and the partnership will have a 'doing' charge. However, if the problem—like so many complex social and economic problems—has no known solution, the approach of starting from a particular strategy is deeply flawed. By skipping over the important steps of problem-defining and interpreting and hypothesizing, it is easy to develop solutions which mischaracterize the source(s) of the problem and what can plausibly address them. Since many factors contribute to complex social and economic challenges, we believe that a cross-sector partnership which has a 'thinking and doing' charge is more effective when it forms around achieving

an intended result and develops the strategies for achieving that result together.

3 Don't overstay your welcome; plan for sunset by tying results to time boundaries.

In social change work, organizations and cross-sector partnerships sometimes persist past the point of being useful. One effective way to avoid this is to tie the partnership's intended result to a time boundary in order to plan for it to sunset.

To read the framing paper and other case studies, provide feedback, or join the community of practitioners and funders seeking to strengthen the effectiveness of cross-sector partnerships, visit: www.LivingCities.org.

A About the Partnership for New Communities

The Partnership for New Communities was created by leading civic institutions and businesses to support the success of the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation, a sweeping effort to reinvent public housing. The Partnership raised money and invested it in employment-related initiatives, economic development and community building to bring about large-scale improvements to the neighborhoods most affected by public housing transformation.

Chicago's Plan for Transformation began in 2000 under the leadership of Mayor Richard M. Daley with approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is the largest, most ambitious redevelopment effort of public housing in the United States, with the goal of rehabilitating or redeveloping the entire stock of public housing in Chicago. By the end of the Plan, 25,000 units of housing will be renovated or built new. The Plan goes far beyond the physical structure of public housing. It aims to build and strengthen communities by better integrating public housing and its leaseholders into the larger social, economic and physical fabric of Chicago.

But, in the years leading up to the Plan, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) had been a discredited agency fraught with mismanagement, fraud, and abuse. At the time the Plan was announced, the CHA didn't have the reputation or credibility to effectively implement something as sweeping as the Plan for Transformation. Even the best functioning housing authority in the country would have found it extremely difficult to deliver the promise of the plan.

Recognizing the opportunities and challenges inherent in successfully implementing the Plan for Transformation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust co-founded the Partnership for New Communities in 2001 to bring Chicago's corporate, philanthropic and civic leaders together to:

- Support the goals of public-housing transformation in Chicago.
- Stimulate large-scale economic revitalization in some of Chicago's most disinvested neighborhoods.
- Promote the development of strong institutions that enrich community life and sustain economic diversity.
- Invest in the human potential of community residents.

The Partnership employed the following strategies to carry out its mission:

- Engaging Chicago's business, civic and foundation leaders to stimulate new investments of time, talent and financial resources towards the Plan's objectives.
- Raising funds and investing them in initiatives – primarily related to workforce development and

neighborhood development goals – that improve opportunities for residents and promote quality of life in and around the mixed-income developments.

- Connecting key players operating at different levels and in different sectors to facilitate lasting improvements to systems that improve quality of life for people and neighborhoods affected by the Plan.

From 2001-2012, the Partnership for New Communities was an early example of a cross-sector partnership working to address complex urban issues. During its decade of work, the Partnership had two different types of impacts. Through its leadership, fundraising, grantmaking and connections, it supported the goals of the Plan for Transformation and increased effective workforce options for public housing residents by:

- Co-founding Opportunity Chicago, which aimed to help 5,000 public housing residents prepare for and find employment over five years (2006-2010). Along with its key partners—Chicago Housing Authority, City of Chicago and Chicago Jobs Council—and many others, the Partnership helped Opportunity Chicago exceed its goal, ultimately placing 5,185 residents in employment, despite the worst economic recession in decades. Opportunity Chicago also strengthened the public workforce development system’s ability to serve public-housing residents and other low-skilled, low-income workers.
- Supporting economic revitalization of neighborhoods

most affected by the Plan with relatively small, but strategic investments. The impacts of this are seen in the business communities of Chicago’s Near West Side and Bronzeville neighborhoods where grants supported the creation of the Bronzeville Community Market, which continues today, and helped to revive the long-dormant Chamber of Commerce on the Near West Side.

In total, the Partnership raised \$20 million in support of the Plan for Transformation, and made grants of \$17 million in 86 awards to 36 different recipients. The average grant amount was just over \$209,000.¹

In addition to its fundraising and grantmaking impact, the second type of impact that the Partnership for New Communities had was that it built civic capacity by demonstrating a new model for how leaders could work across sectors and institutions to address tough social, economic and political problems and produce concrete results.

The Partnership for New Communities was staffed by an Executive Director throughout its existence. During that time, it ranged from having 1-3 additional members on its staff.

In the spring of 2012, the Partnership for New Communities—always intended to be a time-limited effort— sunset.²

¹ Chicago Community Trust website. Online at: <http://www.cct.org/impact/partnerships-initiatives/strengthening-communities/partnership-for-new-communities> (accessed 1/30/13).

² Partnership for New Communities. *Partnership Sees Finish Line, Heads Into Final Stretch*. Online at: <http://www.cct.org/sites/cct.org/files/CCTPartnershipFinalStretch2011.pdf> (accessed 1/30/13).

B A Closer Look: Traits, Factors and Behaviors Influencing Partners for a Competitive Workforce

1 Building a Strong Foundation for a Cross-Sector Partnership

In this section, we will examine how six foundational traits of cross-sector partnerships show up in the Partnership for New Communities.

TRAIT	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
1. Results The result the cross-sector partnership sets out to achieve.	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended result is described in general terms • Provides a description of what the cross-sector partnership is trying to achieve • Helpful in communicating the aims of a partnership, but not for measuring progress or ensuring accountability
	Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States a specific outcome (or set of outcomes) to be achieved • Communicates what success will look like for the partnership • Specified results serve as a foundation for organizing data collection, measuring progress and ensuring accountability

The Partnership for New Communities sought a **general** result because it communicated the aims of the partnership—to support the successful implementation of the Plan for Transformation—but not for measuring progress or ensuring accountability.

While the Partnership overall had a general result, its work was strongly linked to two efforts with specified results- the type of result that communicates what

success would look like and serves as a foundation for data collection, measuring progress, and ensuring accountability. The first of these was the CHA's Plan for Transformation which had a specified result—rehabilitating or redeveloping the entire stock of public housing (~25,000 units). Also, one of the key interventions that the Partnership supported—Opportunity Chicago—had the specified result of placing 5,000 public housing residents in jobs.

TRAIT	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
2. Charge The work a cross-sector partnership has been "hired" to do.	Thinking	Recommends solutions to a problem, but isn't responsible for implementing solutions
	Doing	Implements an agreed upon program, strategy, or advocacy agenda developed within or outside of the partnership
	Thinking & Doing	Recognizes that existing solutions aren't sufficient, and works to develop a course of action through learning and experimentation

The Partnership for New Communities had a **thinking and doing** charge because it sought to develop a course of action through learning and experimentation.

From the outset of the Partnership, the goal was clear—to support the successful implementation of the Plan for Transformation. As noted in the Partnership's own 10-year learnings report:

When the Partnership began, its strategy was not pre-determined. Indeed, part of the attraction for people being asked to get directly involved was that they could join in the strategy development themselves. Once discussion began, a number of factors were at play in deciding what to do. Paramount among them was the question of what would contribute the most to the Plan and its overall goals. This translated into consideration of what would help the prospects of public housing residents, which quickly led to employment as a key factor for residents and their families. One foundation staff person directly involved in early strategy development recalls that the "challenge... was to figure out what to do without getting caught taking on something too big, or too expensive...It gradually got settled by a process of elimination that the main

issue facing people who wanted to return to these new mixed-income developments was going to be employment." In addition to employment, there was interest in providing support for local economic activity in the areas surrounding the new mixed-income developments called for the by CHA's Plan – along with informed caution from advisors about whether The Partnership was going to be able to do that well.³

The Partnership's thinking and doing charge did not end with figuring out its own strategy for achieving their intended result. Once it decided its course of action would focus on workforce and local economic development, it used its grants to figure out which approaches—some existing, some new—would lead to their intended results. As noted in one of their reports:

For those getting Partnership support, it meant a focus on results, as well as a chance to experiment and then learn. They were told, in effect, "Do what it takes, and tell us what happens." Rather than promoting some 'model' that all programs are expected to pursue. The Partnership's approach asked what works best, for whom, and under what conditions.⁴

³ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. [Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works](#), October 2011. (Accessed: 5/8/2012). Pages 18-19.

⁴ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. [Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works](#), October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 20.

TRAIT	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
3. Authority The cross-sector partnership's "right to do work"—either the powers they've been granted or assigned to themselves.	Authorized (Real)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to do work granted or delegated by an authoritative body • Work that can be carried out is limited by the authoritative body's parameters
	Empowered (Apparent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to do work is self-actualized • Work that is carried out is only constrained by the limits the partnership sets upon itself

The Partnership for New Communities' authority is **empowered** because its "right to do work" was self-actualized and it was only constrained by the limitations it created for itself. The Partnership was not granted or delegated its authority by the Mayor of Chicago or the Chicago Housing Authority. Instead it was the empowered actions of executives at the MacArthur

Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust who, of their own volition, recruited Advisory Committee members from business, universities, and faith to participate and raised money for the Partnership's work. Empowered authority was something understood to be important, "The Partnership wanted to work with, but not under the control of, the CHA and Mayor."⁵

TRAIT	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
4. Representatives The stature and power of the individuals within their own organizations or communities who are serving as representatives to the partnership.	Designee	An individual who represents the organization or community, but does not have decision-making or implementation powers within their organization or community
	Doer	An individual who may be responsible for implementing changes to behaviors and strategies in their organization or community, but lacks the formal authority to mandate them
	Decision-maker	An individual who has the authority or influence in their organization or community to require that it change its behaviors and strategies

The representatives involved with the Partnership were a mix of **doers** and **decision-makers**.

The Partnership was overseen by a 15-member Advisory Committee of business, civic, faith, university and foundation leaders, who were all decision-makers. As Maria Hibbs, Executive Director of the Partnership noted about the Advisory Committee:

⁵ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. *Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works*, October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 19.

It was all about leadership, it was never meant to be a table of all people, representing all the interests and stakeholders who were affected by the plan. There were many other tables where they sat...This was the vehicle by which leaders could get involved with helping this major civic endeavor.⁶

And the Advisory Committee's membership was determined based on their connection to producing a successful result:

Leadership from the MacArthur Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust mapped out who they would approach to participate. They wanted this to be not only a vehicle for funding, funding things that government couldn't or wouldn't or shouldn't fund. It was really a way to get other perspectives involved...

I don't recall what explicitly what Jonathan [Fanton of MacArthur] had in mind in approaching Cardinal [Francis] George, the Archbishop of Chicago, except he has a huge flock, and in his own right, is a major CEO in the region. I think the desire was to mobilize churches to assist and, have a faith perspective around the table, to help keep in mind this is about people, not only about real estate development.

We had two university presidents...they're large employers, they have people within their organizations who study poverty, they educate people who become social workers and policy analysts, and they were neighbors [to Transformation sites] and are invested in those communities. They could do a lot of things that would help, like the Illinois Institute of Technology providing an employer-assisted housing benefit to their faculty and staff who buy homes in the nearby mixed-income development.

There were various ways that we thought particular people could help. We had someone who is a venture

capitalist and investor, and he helped think through business attraction to some of these communities.

Bank of America was a fantastic partner. They worked with us on employment opportunities and looked at sites around the Plan for Transformation sites as places for banking branches. Before, these were really disinvested communities. Bank of America was the largest corporate contributor to the Partnership. In addition to that, the bank had provided financing for some of the major plan for transformation sites, so they had money at risk.⁷

The Partnership created other tables to advance its work with the doers. The staff of the Partnership and key staff at the Chicago Housing Authority formed a colleagues group where they engaged in ongoing sharing, co-creation and problem-solving. The Partnership's Executive Director Maria Hibbs described that group as follows:

We developed the colleagues group of the program staff from MacArthur and the Trust and a few people who reported to the CEO at the CHA. If I was thinking the Partnership would go in some particular direction, they'd be the group who I'd work with on it and talk it through with. We met monthly for 8 of the 10 years the Partnership was in existence. Program officers came and went, but we always had that close group, and I always called on the members of the group to vet things with their bosses, to be the liaison to the people who were super, super busy. They helped to keep things greased in their organization so I could continue to move things forward. It was a really important layer, and it wasn't really a layer in a bureaucratic way, I'd call it a medium gear that kept the big gears going.⁸

In addition, the Partnership's leadership and staff met with residents and community representatives in a range of settings and formed short-term ad hoc groups to address emerging issues.⁹

⁶ Author's Interview with Maria Hibbs, 12/8/2011.

⁷ Author's Interview with Maria Hibbs, 12/8/2011.

⁸ Author's Interview with Maria Hibbs, 12/8/2011.

TRAIT	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
5. Level of Intervention The cross-sector partnership's action strategy.	Project/Program Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates and/or delivers an analysis, activity (or activities) to achieve a specific aim The success of the project/program is the end the partnership hopes to achieve
	Systems Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to intervene and reorient the set of behaviors, interactions, projects and programs in an existing system (or systems) in order to achieve its goals This work often includes project/program delivery, but it is not an end in itself, rather a tool for identifying changes that need to occur at the systems level in policy, practice, or funding

The Partnership for New Communities had both a **project/program delivery** level of intervention and a **systems change level** of intervention embedded in its work.

The substantive work of the Partnership for New Communities was focused on project/program delivery—it raised funds and invested them in initiatives – primarily related to workforce development and neighborhood development goals – that supported the successful implementation of the Plan for Transformation.

But, the Partnership also had a systems change level of intervention because it sought to support the reorientation of a set of behaviors, interactions, projects and programs in an existing system in order to achieve its goal. Namely, the Partnership recognized that to make big change, there needed to be new ways of working that connected key stakeholders operating at different levels and in different sectors to facilitate lasting improvements to systems that improve quality of life for people and their city.

TRAIT	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
6. Time Frame Period of time during which the cross-sector partnership's work is designed to take place.	Time-Bound	A partnership that is formed for a limited period of time
	Open	A partnership that is formed without an explicit time frame

The Partnership for New Communities was established as a **time-bound** effort (though the length of time was unknown, its timeframe was intended to be tied to that of the Plan for Transformation's trajectory).

In the Partnership's 10-year learnings report, there is a hypothesis about the value of being time-bound: "Urgency helps drive the work. Where a sense of urgency is not present, it may need to be created. Being time-limited, as in the Partnership's case, can heighten a sense of urgency."¹⁰

⁹ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. *Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works*, October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 13.

2 Factors that Influence a Cross-Sector Partnership's Success

In this section, our focus turns from traits that are core to the Partnership for New Communities, to the five factors that can accelerate or limit its success.

FACTOR	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
1. Formation Catalyst The reason or opportunity for creating the cross-sector partnership.	Leadership Interest	When leaders recognize an opportunity, or seek to address a problem out of perceived obligation or altruistic self-interest
	Key Opportunity	When policies, practices, data, innovations or new/redirectioned funding streams require or catalyze cross-sector partnership to occur
	Crisis	When an emergency event or increased awareness of a persistent problem galvanizes cross-sector players to come together to address the problem

The Partnership for New Communities' formation catalyst was a mix of a **key opportunity** and **leadership interest**. The key opportunity was the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation- the largest, most ambitious redevelopment effort of public housing in the United States.

The Plan for Transformation alone would not have resulted in the Partnership for New Communities. The formation of the Partnership required the leadership interest of Jonathan Fanton, then the president of The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, who worked with the Chicago Housing Authority leadership, then Mayor Richard Daley, and The Chicago Community Trust (Chicago's community foundation), to bring the Partnership for New Communities into being.

¹⁰ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. *Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works*, October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 5.

FACTOR	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
2. Structure The arrangement of and relations between stakeholders in the cross-sector partnership.	Formal	Reflects an arrangement of and relations between stakeholders that have established procedures, roles, and commitments, which are codified through operating documents, MOUs, contracts, etc.
	Informal	Reflects an arrangement of and relations between stakeholders that possess fluid procedures, roles and commitments

While The Partnership for New Communities was formally structured as a donor-advised fund housed at the Chicago Community Trust with a 15-member Advisory Committee and oversight from the Trust's Board. It actually operated using an **informal** structure because its stakeholders relied on fluid procedures, roles and commitments to achieve their intended results. As Maria Hibbs, the Executive Director of the Partnership describes it,

From the outset, we knew [the Partnership] was going to be time-limited, but we didn't know what the time was. We didn't have, for example, terms to serve. So no one could say "okay, I'll be on this for 3 years, and then I'll be off." It was more like, "this is three years, this is five years, how much longer?" So, some people did lose interest, other people remained really engaged throughout...Those who stayed, they personally saw this as something very good for the City. It was a personal thing, it was not only something they were representing their institution about. It became something that they had an emotional affinity with, or an intellectual affinity with.¹¹

Instead of using memoranda of understanding or contracts, the Partnership relied on open communication, engagement and the progress of the work as the organizing structure. According to Hibbs:

We didn't ask a lot of people to be on [the Advisory Committee]. We met quarterly, we didn't have lots of subcommittees. I communicated with them between meetings via email or publications, sometimes visited with them between meetings. They may have been invited to special events that the CHA had, or dinner at Jonathan's [Fantom, then CEO of the MacArthur Foundation] home with them and the Mayor. Those were some of the ways that kept people engaged, but some of them saw what it could mean to Chicago, and that change was actually happening. Then there were some who were just so overextended, they couldn't remain interested.¹²

¹¹ Author's Interview with Maria Hibbs, 12/8/2011.

¹² Author's Interview with Maria Hibbs, 12/8/2011.

FACTOR	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
3. Financial Resources How the achievement of the cross-sector partnership's goal is supported financially.	None	The partnership's work is not financially supported
	In-Kind	The partnership is supported through in-kind contributions
	Dues	Members contribute money to participate in the partnership
	Fees	Stakeholders (within or outside partnership) pay fees for the products or services the cross-sector partnership provides
	Sponsorship	Stakeholders (who may or may not participate in the cross-sector partnership's work) fund particular components of the work
	Grants	Private and public grants support the work of the cross-sector partnership
	Redirected/Aligned	Existing public funding streams within stakeholder organizations are formally redirected or aligned to support the work of the partnership

The Partnership for New Communities' financial resources were a mix of **grants** from private and public entities, and **redirected** funding streams where stakeholder organizations formally redirected or aligned their financial resources to support the work of the Partnership.

FACTOR	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
<p>4. Positioning</p> <p>How the cross-sector partnership positions itself in relation to other individuals, organizations and partnerships working on the same issues and/or in the same geography.</p>	<p>Opposer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May or may not be recognized in its area of work and/or geography, and does not possess the track record, relationships or membership to ensure that its own agenda can become reality • Positions itself to oppose the work of individuals, organizations and partnerships with which it does not agree. Outside stakeholders often do not work with this partnership, or if they do it is to prevent opposition to their own agendas
	<p>Supporter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognized as a “player” in its area of work and/or geography, but does not possess the track record, relationships or membership to ensure that its agenda will become reality • Other individuals, organizations and partnerships will work with this partnership because supporters are positioned in a way that adds value and legitimacy, but does not guarantee results
	<p>Leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognized as the expert, authority or chief influencer in its area of work and/or geography based on its track record, relationships and/or membership • Positioned in such a way that other individuals, organizations and partnerships believe they need this partnership’s blessing/support to get work done

The Partnership for New Communities evolved from a **supporter** partnership to become a **leader**. Initially the Partnership was recognized as a “player” in its area of work by virtue of the stature of its members and because it had money to dole out. The Partnership made use of its supporter status to get work done:

The decision to work with rather than against the system was very important because it also allowed the Partnership to feature improved performance, better data and accountability as the work unfolded. One Advisory Committee member noted, “The biggest

lesson...was that the solution cannot be imposed. It must percolate up. If I have power, (providers) will do what they must do to comply but it won't build their capacity to solve problems.”¹³

By virtue of how the Partnership for New Communities worked—it focused on results, it worked with the system, it communicated openly, it raised and granted a lot of money, and it stayed involved with the work for over a decade in a very productive way—it evolved to become positioned as a leader.

¹³ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. *Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works*, October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 19.

FACTOR	TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS
5. Lifespan What happens to the cross-sector partnership when it accomplishes or abdicates its goal.	Sunset	When a cross-sector partnership ends either because it achieved its mission, it has reached its time boundary, or it has ceased to be relevant
	Institutionalization	When the cross-sector partnership continues and its role relating to an issue/in a geography becomes the norm
	Reboot	When the cross-sector partnership winds down or builds upon its existing work, and starts a new or expanded agenda

The Partnership for New Communities is an example of a cross-sector partnership with a lifespan trait of **sunset**. In announcing its sunset, the Partnership communicated that it had achieved its mission of supporting the Chicago Housing Authority in successfully implementing the Plan for Transformation:

Today Chicago is well on its way with the Plan. About 80 percent of the public-housing units slated for construction or rehabilitation have been completed. Neighborhoods are improving, and residents are making strides with employment and earnings. The CHA has improved its credibility among constituents, its operating performance and financial management and is well-positioned to continue moving forward with the Plan.¹⁴

¹⁴ Partnership for New Communities. *Partnership Sees Finish Line, Heads Into Final Stretch*.

Online at: <http://www.cct.org/sites/cct.org/files/CCTPartnershipFinalStretch2011.pdf> (accessed 1/30/13).

3 Behaviors of High-Impact Cross-Sector Partnerships

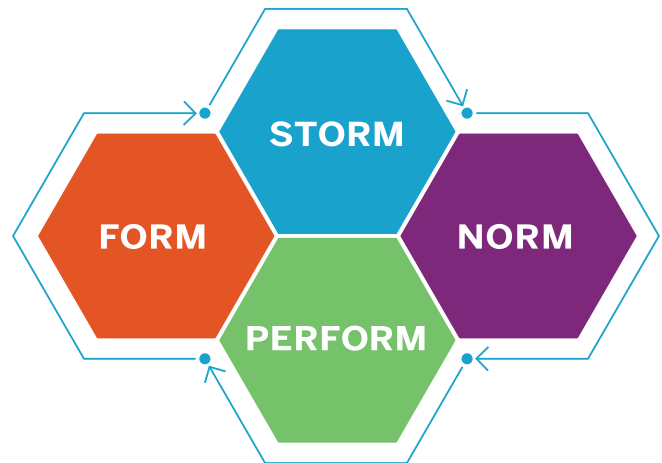
In the previous two sections, we focused on traits and factors that form the foundation and influence the effectiveness of the Partnership for New Communities. In this section, we will turn

our attention to how the Partnership exhibits two behaviors that we have observed to be key for all cross-sector partnerships.

BEHAVIOR 1:

Trust Building & Maintenance

The trust building and maintenance cycle is not set up in a way that makes it possible to assign a cross-sector partnership a specific type. Instead, it is a tool for reflecting on how a partnership has or has not built and maintained trust and engaged with the different stages—form, storm, norm, perform—that have been identified and explored for decades in the literature on group dynamics. As such, this section will share reflections on the role of trust within the Partnership for New Communities.



Stage	Definition
Form	<i>Forming is the stage when partners first come together. It has been described as the 'honeymoon' period for a partnership because it is when partners are excited about the newness and potential of the effort.</i>
Storm	<i>Storming is when partnership members stop being polite and start getting real. This might involve airing fundamental differences of opinion and approach among partners, struggling to figure out objectives, roles, and leadership in the partnership and also feeling threatened by working with partners who you don't know, don't trust or view as competitors.</i>
Norm	<i>Norming is the stage when roles and partner conflicts are sorted out and the partnership's focus turns towards the work. Objectives and rules of engagement get clearer; a sense of partnership identity forms, and conflict moves from among partners to between the partners as a group and the problems they are trying to solve (ie us vs. us to us vs. them).</i>
Perform	<i>Performing is when the partnership reaches a steady state where it can do the work it needs to do to achieve its intended goals.</i>

Forming is the stage when partners first come together. It has been described as the ‘honeymoon’ period for a partnership because it is when partners are excited about the newness and potential of the effort. As noted earlier in this case, when the Partnership for New Communities formed, its strategy was not pre-determined. The members of the Advisory Committee were recruited by the MacArthur Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust’s leadership and agreed to take part in finding the way to achieve their intended result—supporting the successful implementation of the Plan for Transformation.

When the Partnership for New Communities formed, its strategy was not predetermined. The members...agreed to take part in finding the way to achieve their intended result—supporting the successful implementation of the Plan for Transformation.

Many members of the Advisory Committee did not have a deep knowledge of the complex set of issues related to the Plan for Transformation. So, in the beginning, “the Partnership’s Advisory Committee met and discussed options, staff listened...they consulted directly with a variety of practitioners, policy makers and program analysts. Over time, they slowly built relationships, trust and working knowledge.”¹⁵

As the understanding of the issues grew, it was necessary for the Partnership’s Advisory Committee to start identifying its path forward. When Executive Director Maria Hibbs was asked about the Partnership’s experience with storming, she reminisced:

One of the [first points of tension] was just trying to find our own strategic niche. What are we going to do that other groups aren’t. It was trying to determine what our strategies would be. We were going to focus on the economic infrastructure of these places that had been so disinvested. And Cardinal George said “but, it’s not only the economy, it’s about people.” I would say “but the economy is about people.” That was one minor bit of tension, and we were able to work through that. It’s not only about new commercial opportunities for these neighborhoods, it’s about helping people get jobs.¹⁶

The tension between people and economy was worked through. But, as the Committee worked to craft its interventions, it brought about another storm. Hibbs describes it as follows:

One major point of tension was whether we would tackle the issue of workforce development at all. At least one key funder and member didn’t think very highly of the workforce development system. To me, if one of the key tenets of the Plan for Transformation was to move people to self-sufficiency, how are we ever going to do that if they don’t have a job? People will never move beyond public housing if they don’t have a job or a career trajectory.

For a year we discussed a workforce development initiative and how we would seek to change the system.

¹⁵ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. *Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works*, October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 19.

¹⁶ Author’s Interview with Maria Hibbs on 12/8/11.

The system doesn't serve these people very well. Why is that? What could we bring to the table? How could we make that system change? It took a number of meetings, and the intervention of members of the colleagues groups with their principals between meetings to move the idea forward.

It was probably the third meeting when we were talking about this, and I was trying to lay this all out, I was trying to advocate, and it was the business people around the table who said "this is really a no brainer, this is what we have to do. The plan will fail if people aren't preparing for work." One of the reasons it would fail was there was a requirement at most sites that public-housing residents moving into the new mixed-income housing were working or engaged in services on their way to work. If there were a couple new housing units in these developments that couldn't be filled, because people weren't eligible, that would be terrible for the plan.¹⁷

For many cross-sector partnerships, the hard work of "storming" is skipped over or done in a way that can be unproductive. What is unproductive storming? When a group identifies a tension but avoids addressing the conflict so it sits under the surface, or when the storm overtakes everything else, instead of trying to understand what is driving the differences in opinion, belief or value. Both skipping and unproductive storming can neutralize the effectiveness of cross-sector partnership in achieving its intended result. In the case of the Partnership for New Communities, they were able to have these "storms" in a productive way that staff described as follows:

...these discussions were "focused and constructive, but could be tough... People would get criticized and challenged, and would listen, and not get too defensive. And just as important, all that stayed at the table. It kept being emphasized that all this needed to be kept at that table." These discussions, along with improved and timely data, trust among participants, and an attitude of constructive criticism and a focus on results that count, contributed to an environment within which people could genuinely adapt and learn.¹⁸

When the Advisory Committee weathered a storm, they were able to take up norming, the stage when roles and partner conflicts are sorted out and the cross-sector partnership's focus turned towards doing the work. Their objectives and rules of engagement got clearer, a sense of partnership identity formed, and conflict moved from among partners to between the Partnership for New Communities and the problems they were trying to solve.

As Hibbs described what happened after the debate over intervening in workforce development:

We were able to frame it as an imperative, that people who were skeptical about workforce development could say there was another reason we can't allow those units to remain empty. And for the business people, again, they were all about helping people get jobs, and qualify for work just like anybody else.¹⁹

Having learned and built trust together, and worked through their storms and gotten clearer on their objectives, strategies and roles, the Partnership began performing, reaching a steady state where it did the work it needed to do to achieve its intended goals. In its 10-year learnings report, this stage was described as follows:

¹⁷ Author's Interview with Maria Hibbs on 12/8/11.

¹⁸ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. *Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works*, October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 20.

¹⁹ Author's Interview with Maria Hibbs on 12/8/11.

...a tone of mutual respect, transparency and shared risk taking; effective management and administrative functions; and ability to learn and adapt over time. In addition, two organizational capacities were repeatedly identified by interviewees as particularly important to their favorable assessment of The Partnership: staff leadership and effective communications...The Partnership's staff is commonly viewed as highly focused and consistently effective in managing the many relationships needed to get the work done. As one observer noted, staff spends considerable

time on relationships that need "tending, updating, reassurance, persuasion, listening, tough or soft talk." Staff leadership was relentless in the pursuit of results, meeting with Advisory Committee members and others before and after meetings, providing consistent follow up, mediating differences and helping key players find ways of moving forward together. This means "setting tables, but not orchestrating them;" "being gentle but firm, welcoming yet assertive" and "never losing focus or dropping the ball."²⁰

BEHAVIOR 2:

Problem-Solving

Like Behavior 1, the problem-solving cycle is not set up to assign a cross-sector partnership a specific type. Instead, it is a tool for reflecting on the approaches that a cross-sector partnership has used to address a complex social or economic problem.

When the Partnership for New Communities launched, it had a clear goal to support the successful implementation of the Plan for Transformation, but it did not have a pre-determined strategy for how to do this, though its members knew from the beginning that one of the activities it would undertake was raising money and making grants. This cross-sector partnership undertook all four stages of the problem-solving cycle throughout its work through a combination of clarity of result and openness to several possibilities of what would lead to that result.

The Partnership started by problem-defining: the process of observing events and patterns to gain greater insight into the source and nature of challenges. Its members did this by meeting with expert practitioners, policy makers,

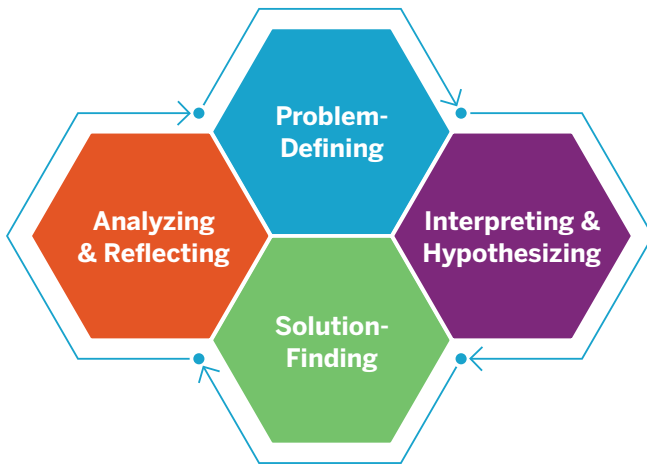
and program analysts. They maintained this by engaging with stakeholders—from residents and community group leaders to the staff of the Chicago Housing Authority, throughout the lifetime of the initiative.

The Partnership also created interpretations of what its members observed, and then developed hypotheses about what needed to be done to yield different results. There were two clear interpretations—one focused on people, the other on local economic activity:

Paramount among them was the question of what would contribute the most to the Plan and its overall goals. This translated into consideration of what would help the prospects of public housing residents, which quickly led to employment as a key factor for residents and their families...In addition to employment, there was interest in providing support for local economic activity in the areas surrounding the new mixed-income developments called for the by CHA's Plan – along with informed caution from advisors about whether The Partnership was going to be able to do that well.²¹

²⁰ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. [Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works](#), October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 17.

²¹ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. [Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works](#), October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 18-19.



Stage	Definition
Problem-Defining	<i>Observing events and patterns to gain greater insight into the source and nature of challenges</i>
Interpreting & Hypothesizing	<i>Interpreting what has been observed, and then developing hypotheses about what needs to change in order to yield different results.</i>
Solution-Finding	<i>Identifying and testing solutions to a recognized problem.</i>
Analyzing & Reflecting	<i>Determining if the solutions are effective and learning from them to gain a better understanding of the problem and the solutions that are needed to achieve the partnership's intended result</i>

Both interpretations seemed plausible, and the Partnership's form of solution-finding was to turn them into two areas of grantmaking. They did not pre-judge what programs would create the most jobs or foster the most economic activity, instead treating

each grant like an experiment that would further their learning: "Rather than promoting some 'model' that all programs are expected to pursue, the Partnership's approach asked what works best, for whom, and under what conditions."²²

²² Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. *Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works*, October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 20.

This meant that their relationship with grantees was different than traditional grantmakers. The Partnership did not treat their meetings with grantees as “dog and pony shows” where grantees reported on how well everything was going. Instead, they were forums for analyzing and reflecting on if solutions were effective and learning from them to gain a better understanding of the problem and the solutions that would be needed to address the problem and achieve the Partnership’s goals. These meetings were described as follows:

For those getting Partnership support, it meant a focus on results, as well as a chance to experiment and then learn. They were told, in effect, “Do what it takes, and tell us what happens....Another part of The Partnership’s approach to better practice was the creation of honest, constructive forums. Many of its meetings, including those of its Advisory Committee, Strategic Advisors, and even informal “colleagues group,” became forums for discussing and trying out ideas, reporting on progress, and getting serious about results. Indeed, we heard from CHA and other institutional leaders how meetings with The Partnership’s Advisory Committee and staff became “serious” moments. One knowledgeable funder of workforce programs observed, “Their discussions have been honest. People were invited to offer ideas, and critiques. Those of us with some experience on certain issues were encouraged to express ourselves and to say what we thought...”

People took their encounters with The Partnership very seriously, and believe these improved their own thinking and ability to communicate with others about the realities of their agency, organization or work. For this learning cycle to be robust, mistakes and shortcomings must be identified and discussed for innovation to be turned into progress, or program improvement.²³

²³ Brown, Prudence and Dewar, Tom. [Collaboration, Leadership and Political Will: Learning from a Civic Intermediary that Works](#), October 2011. (Accessed: 1/31/2013). Page 20.

C Three Key Insights from this Case

There is no one right way to structure a cross-sector partnership. Most partnerships possess—for legitimate reasons—a quirky set of traits. However, the case of The Partnership for New Communities reveals some interesting and useful insights into structuring a cross-sector partnership to achieve impact, particularly because this is the earliest model of cross-sector partnership that was examined in this research, and the only example that has come to an end. With that in mind, we'll highlight three key insights, but we know that there are many more.

1 What gives you the right? The connection between authority, representatives, and positioning.

When people and institutions come together to try to address a complex social or economic problems, they are often faced with the question: who has granted you the right to do the work? This question of authority is fundamentally connected to the stature and power of individuals involved with the partnership as well as how the partnership itself is positioned in relation to other individuals and organizations working on the same issues.

In the case of the Partnership for New Communities, the cross-sector partnership had the option of being granted formal authority (trait 3) to partner with the Chicago Housing Authority on the Plan for Transformation, but chose instead to work utilizing their informal authority.

Part of what enabled the Partnership to do this was that the representatives (trait 4) serving on the Advisory Committee were established leaders and decision-makers in their own institutions and communities in Chicago—whether top executives for global businesses and esteemed universities or the leader of the Catholic Archdiocese.

While the Advisory Committee members had top credentials in their own fields, the Partnership for New Communities did not start off its journey being positioned (factor 4) as a leader in the arenas of housing and workforce. Because of its members' admitted lack of expertise about what would support the success of the CHA's Plan for Transformation, the Partnership was initially viewed as a supporter.

Through the development of its strategy — a process which focused on listening to, learning from, and funding other organizations operating in the space — the Partnership's positioning evolved to that of a

leader. While there is no way to know for sure, it seems unlikely that the Partnership for New Communities would have been able to achieve the same scale of result had it approached its work differently.

2 Developing the strategy for a cross-sector partnership by linking charge and the problem-solving cycle.

Cross-sector partnerships often form because there is a group of individuals or organizations that want to implement a particular strategy. If the problem has a known solution, this can work very well, and the partnership will have a 'doing' charge. However, if the problem—like so many complex social and economic problems—has no known solution, the approach of starting from a particular strategy is deeply flawed. By skipping over the important steps of problem-defining and interpreting & hypothesizing, it is easy to develop solutions which mischaracterize the source(s) of the problem and what can plausibly address them. Since many factors contribute to complex social and economic challenges, we believe that a cross-sector partnership which has a 'thinking & doing' charge is more effective when it forms around achieving an intended result and develops the strategies for achieving that result together.

In the case of the Partnership for New Communities, the connection between their thinking and doing charge (trait 2) and the problem-solving cycle (behavior 2) played a very prominent role in their work. The Partnership was not formed around the implementation of a specific strategy, but instead around the goal of helping the Chicago Housing Authority successfully implement the Plan for Transformation.

The Partnership's Advisory Committee recognized that they did not know how to do that, and realized that their job was to develop a course of action. The

Partnership's members spent their time learning and listening to many voices involved in the work in order to gain greater insight into the source and nature of the challenges. From what they observed, they were able to identify two areas that they felt needed to change in order to yield their intended results—jobs and economic activity.

The Partnership then used its grant funds to test many different solutions. The Partnership wasn't beholden to the orthodoxies of philanthropy, workforce development or economic development. As a result, they used their grant dollars to figure out which approaches would be most effective for the populations that they were focused on, and then used what they learned from those investments to inform their course forward.

3 Don't overstay your welcome; plan for sunset by tying results to time boundaries.

In social change work, organizations and cross-sector partnerships sometimes persist past the point of being useful. One effective way to avoid this is to tie the partnership's intended result to time boundaries in order to plan for it to sunset.

One of the great lessons from the Partnership for New Communities is how it was structured, from the beginning, to come to an end. The Partnership's intended result (trait 1) was general—to support the CHA's successful implementation of the Plan for Transformation—but it knew from the beginning that it was operating in a time-bound timeframe (trait 6). While it wasn't clear how long it would take to support the Plan for Transformation's success, it was clear that the Partnership would only exist for a limited amount of time. From its inception, the Partnership for New Communities knew that once it achieved its goal, its lifespan (factor 5) would come to an end and the Partnership would sunset.

D What's Next?

At Living Cities, we have three goals in sharing this work. We want to:

- 1 Ground theory in the experience of a real partnership, to help other cross-sector partnerships achieve measurable impact.**
- 2 Spur greater openness and learning about what has worked with cross-sector partnerships, and equally importantly, what has not.** We believe that learning and problem-solving are open processes, and that by approaching them this way, the social change field can have better results more quickly.
- 3 “Turn up the heat” on cross-sector partnerships, their members, and funders.** With so many big challenges in the world today, and a limited amount of intellect, time, and money, funders and participants involved with cross-sector partnerships need to be using these resources to achieve measurable impact. And, if a partnership is not going to be able to do that in its current state, we want to activate people to change the way those partnerships are working, even if it means being brave enough to say that a cross-sector partnership is not going to achieve its goals and should come to an end.


Our hope is that this work is just the beginning of the conversation, and the learning that needs to happen to advance cross-sector partnerships to address the toughest challenges our world and its people face today. We recognize that many of these ideas are not new, and a significant number of partnerships have utilized some or all of these traits in structuring their own work. But, we hope that this case study and its companion paper have piqued your interest in joining the conversation, sharing your insights and experiences, as well as providing feedback and ideas. Join us online at livingcities.org or on Twitter [@Living_Cities](https://twitter.com/Living_Cities) using hashtag [#xsector](https://twitter.com/hashtag/xsector).

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Maria Hibbs for her continued willingness to share her work, insights and feedback in the development of *What Barriers? Insights from Solving Problems through Cross-Sector Partnerships* and this case study. To learn more about the Partnership for New Communities, visit: <http://www.cct.org/impact/partnerships-initiatives/strengthening-communities/partnership-for-new-communities>

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Join the conversation and find additional resources about cross-sector partnerships at LivingCities.org or on Twitter [@Living_Cities](https://twitter.com/Living_Cities), or by using the hashtag **#xsector**.

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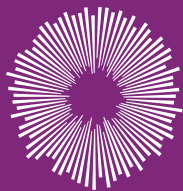
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