

# CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-PERFORMING REGIONAL FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

NATIONAL FUND FOR WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS  
UPDATED AUGUST 2018



The National Fund defines a regional funder collaborative as an organization that brings together local funders around a shared strategic vision for workforce development in a particular region. A regional funder collaborative pools and aligns resources from philanthropic, corporate, public, and other funders in an investment strategy to carry out its vision. It includes public and private funders who have the authority to make decisions regarding the disposition of their organization's workforce-development funds.

Collaboratives that are highly effective at solving workforce-development challenges tend to share the characteristics listed below. These characteristics are consistent with the National Fund model.

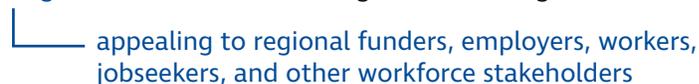
A high-performing regional funder collaborative...

## 1. OPERATES WITH A CLEAR AND COMPELLING PURPOSE

- a. Addresses the **needs** of both employers and workers

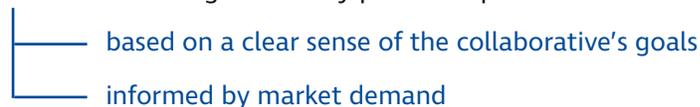


- b. Has a **strong** set of reasons for creating and sustaining itself



## 2. DEVELOPS AND SUPPORTS EMPLOYER-LED INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

- a. Establishes and follows **criteria** for investing in industry partnerships.



- b. Advocates **employer leadership** as the basis for effective industry partnerships



- c. **Engages** with employers and guides partnerships to success



- d. Helps industry partnerships build their **capacity**.



### 3. SERVES LOW-SKILL, LOW WAGE INDIVIDUALS\*

\*This characteristic is central to the mission of the National Fund, but it is not necessarily required for success as a regional founder collaborative.

- a. Focuses on the long-term interests of low-skill, low-wage individuals.
- b. Brokers support services for low-skill, low-wage individuals.
  - transportation, day care, case management, etc.
- c. Helps develop practices for career advancement.

### 4. GENERATES SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FROM FUNDERS

- a. Convenes a broad range of funders as active members.
  - both public and private
  - community foundations, United Ways, workforce investment boards, local and state governments, etc.
- b. Receives financial commitments that consistently meet or exceed matching requirements.
  - for the National Fund, a 4:1 match

### 5. EXECUTES A DEMAND-DRIVEN STRATEGY

- a. Strives to understand employer needs and designs a strategy to address them.
  - for worker skills and education
- b. Uses a formal process to develop its partnership strategy.
  - draws on labor-market information and other economic insight
  - engages key stakeholders in the region
  - identifies at least one industry sector that has employment and advancement opportunities for low-skill, low-wage workers
- c. Connects work to regional economic development entities.

## 6. WORKS UNDER STRONG MANAGEMENT

- a. Has a collaborative chair that **leads** actively.
  - ensures collaborative members are involved in strategy, fundraising, grantmaking, and evaluation
- b. Has an **efficient** governance structure.
  - includes committee structure
  - supported by detailed record keeping to track policy, financial, and grantmaking decisions
- c. Is run by experienced **full-time** staff.
  - report directly to the collaborative
  - are committed to professional development
  - are actively involved in peer-learning activities
- d. Has a fiscal agent that is **equipped** to support the collaborative's financial and programmatic work.
  - with well-designed controls and systems
  - with an appreciation for the collaborative's work

## 7. ADVOCATES EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

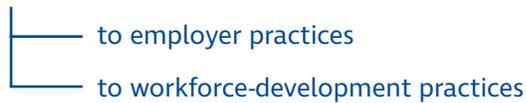
- a. **Collects** participant-level data from all industry partnerships
  - an understanding of the industry sector and the
  - a demonstrated ability to engage and work with employers
- b. Tracks progress against **goals**.
  - is responsive to changing market conditions
  - maintains good relationships with employer and workforce partners
- c. Reviews and revises its strategy based on **data** and best practices in workforce development.
  - from industry partnerships, other regional funder collaboratives, planning grants, and evaluations
- d. Invests in an **evaluation** strategy.
  - provides regular analysis of the collaborative's performance, as well as an evaluation of its investments

## 8. GENERATES SYSTEMS CHANGE

- a. Has a well-articulated strategy for generating change in one or more **systems**.

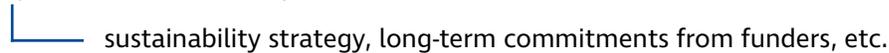


- b. Generates systemic **changes** that align with its overall mission.



## 9. ENSURES STABILITY

- a. Takes **steps** to sustain effective practices.



- b. **Re-energizes** itself periodically.



## 10. COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY

- a. Has a **clear** brand identity.



- b. Has a communications strategy that supports its **goals**.



## RESOURCES

[National Fund Principles: Collaborative Partnership Achievements](#). Barbara Baran, Stephen Michon, Suzanne Teegarden, Leanne Giordono, and Kendra Lodewick. Exhibit I-1 (page 10), Exhibit I-6 (page 16). August 2012

[The Origins of Regional Funding Collaboratives in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#). Charles Goldberg. January 2011.

[Achieving Financial Stability Through Regional Workforce Funder Collaboratives](#). The Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, United Way Worldwide. 2011.

The [National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#) is a national network promoting economic opportunity and prosperous communities through investment and innovation. Based in Washington D.C., the National Fund partners with philanthropy, employers, workers, public and private community organizations, and more than 30 regional collaboratives to invest in skills, improve workforce systems, and generate good jobs. The National Fund supports civic and business leaders in promoting evidence-based practices and policies that build shared prosperity.



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