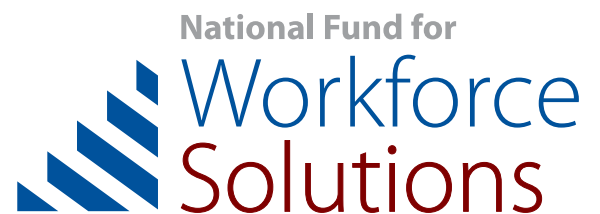


CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-PERFORMING REGIONAL FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

THE NATIONAL FUND FOR WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

AUGUST 2014



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.

- └ employers' demand for skills and education
- └ workers' need for job placement and career advancement

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

- └ appealing to regional funders, employers, workers, jobseekers, and other workforce stakeholders

2. DEVELOPS AND SUPPORTS EMPLOYER-LED INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

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

- └ based on a clear sense of the collaborative's goals
- └ informed by market demand

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

- └ employers take ownership of industry partnerships or assume joint ownership with labor-management committees

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

- └ especially to help translate an identified demand for skills to the creation of an industry partnership

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

- └ for management, service delivery, employer engagement, and data collection

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

a. Focuses on the long-term interests of low-skill, low-wage individuals.

b. Has a **deep understanding** of low-skill, low-wage individuals.

- └ characteristics, challenges, etc.
- └ strategies for leading them to careers that pay family-sustaining wages

c. Helps develop practices for career advancement.

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

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.

- systematically
- securely

b. Tracks progress against goals.

- for helping jobseekers and incumbent workers
- for serving employers
- for generating systems change

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.

- public policy
- institutional behavior (e.g., of educators, of funders)

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

- to employer practices
- to workforce-development practices

9. ENSURES SUSTAINABILITY

a. Takes steps to sustain effective practices.

- sustainability strategy, long-term commitments from funders, etc.

b. Re-energizes itself periodically.

- through strategic planning or recommitment exercises

10. COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY

a. Has a clear brand identity.

- distinct from the brand of its fiscal agent

b. Has a communications strategy that supports its goals.

- fundraising, generating systems change, engaging employers, recruiting program participants, etc.

RESOURCES

[National Fund Principles: Collaborative and Partnership Achievements](#). Barbara Baran, Stephen Michon, Suzanne Teegarden, Leanne Giordano, 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 partners with businesses, communities, and philanthropies to develop employer-driven workforce strategies to help low-wage workers and jobseekers obtain career opportunities, while creating talent supply chains that close skills gaps and strengthen local economies.

The National Fund is an unprecedented initiative of national and local funders whose goal is the career advancement of low-wage workers using a model of substantial employer engagement to increase the potential for successful outcomes. The unique value of the National Fund rests on its support for local communities to organize and sustain regional funder collaboratives that invest in worker skills and their key regional industries.

The collaboratives are catalysts for generating additional investments in creating sectoral workforce partnerships, training workers, and improving workforce practices.

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