

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-PERFORMING REGIONAL FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

NATIONAL FUND FOR WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
UPDATED October 2021



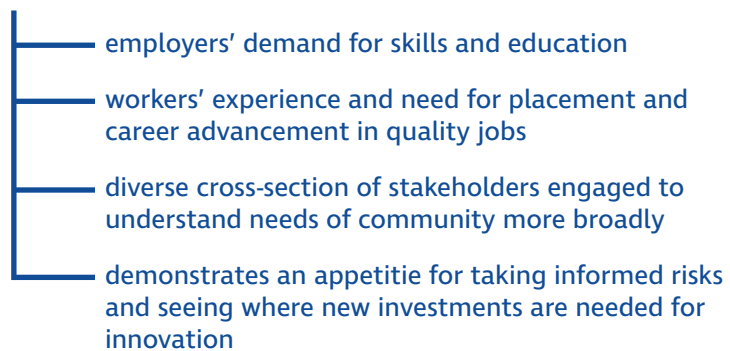
The National Fund defines a regional funder collaborative as an organization that brings together local funders around a shared vision for workforce development in a particular region. A regional funder collaborative pools and aligns resources from philanthropic, corporate, public, and other funders 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 tackling workforce development challenges tend to share the characteristics listed below. These characteristics are consistent with the National Fund model.

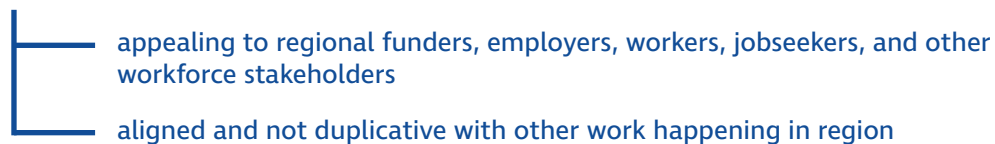
A high-performing regional funder collaborative...

1. OPERATES WITH A CLEAR AND COMPELLING PURPOSE AND VALUE PROPOSITION

- a. Understands and addresses the **needs** of both employers and workers.



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

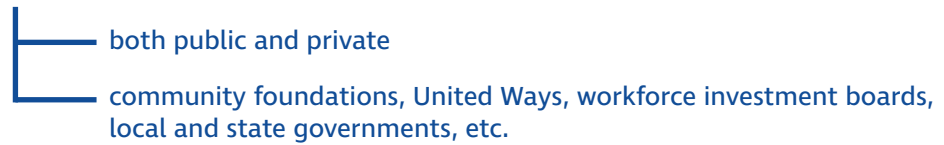


2. ADOPTS A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

- a. Advocates beyond organizational interests for a better overall system.
- b. Addresses complex workforce problems with systems thinking-informed strategies to change conditions that hold problems in place.
- c. Focuses on treating causes, rather than only symptoms by examining the underlining conditions of power and relationships that drive events.

3. GENERATES SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FROM FUNDERS

- a. Convenes a **broad range** of local funders as active members.



- b. Receives financial commitments that consistently meet or exceed matching **requirements**.

for the National Fund, a 1:1 match

4. FOCUS ON LOW-WAGE INDIVIDUALS*

- a. Understands the impact of systemic racism and gender bias on the experience of low-wage workers.

- b. Focuses on the long-term interests of low-wage individuals.

- c. Brokers **support services** for low-wage individuals.

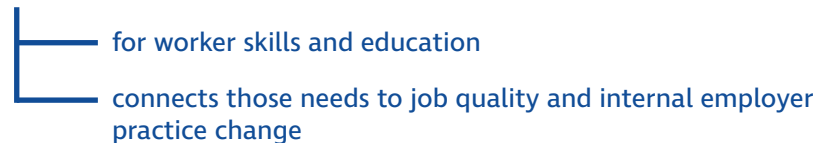


- d. Helps develop practices for career advancement in quality jobs.

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

5. EXECUTES A DEMAND-DRIVEN STRATEGY THAT CENTERS JOB QUALITY

- a. Understands **employer needs** and challenges and designs a strategy to address them.



- b. Uses a **formal process** to develop its partnership strategy.



- c. Connects work to regional economic development entities.

6. 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.
 - help translate an identified demand for skills to the creation of an industry partnership
 - discuss and activate employers on job quality and racial equity
- d. Helps industry partnerships build their **capacity**.
 - for management, service delivery, employer engagement, and data collection

7. 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
 - has decision-making protocols to ensure stakeholders have a shared voice
- c. Is run by experienced **full-time** staff.
 - reports to the collaborative
 - are committed to professional development
 - are actively involved in peer-learning activities
- c. Has a fiscal agent that is **equipped** to support the collaborative's financial and programmatic work.
 - reports to the collaborative
 - are committed to professional development

8. ADVOCATES EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

- a. Collects participant-level data from all industry partnerships and programmatic work.
 - └─ has effective data systems and ability to use data to drive decisions
 - └─ disaggregated by race and gender
- b. Tracks progress against goals.
 - └─ is responsive to changing market conditions and new legislation
 - └─ 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 collaboratives, planning grants, and evaluation
- d. Invests in evaluation.
 - └─ provides regular analysis on the collaborative's performance, as well as an evaluation of its investments

9. COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY

- a. Has a clear brand identity.
 - └─ distinct and/or aligned with brand of its fiscal agent depending on goals
- b. Has a communications strategy and capacity that supports its goals.
 - └─ fundraising, generating systems change, engaging employers, recruiting program participants, etc.
 - └─ views one of its roles as increasing community awareness of workforce issues and solutions

10. ENSURES STABILITY, RELEVANCE, AND LONGEVITY

- a. Takes steps to sustain effective practices.
 - └─ sustainability strategy and long-term commitments from diverse funding sources
 - └─ involved as an influencer in community efforts, including legislation and emerging need in the community
- b. Re-energizes itself periodically.
 - └─ through strategic planning or commitment exercises

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.

About National Fund for Workforce Solutions

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions invests in a dynamic national network of 30+ communities taking a demand-driven, evidence-based approach to workforce development. At the local level, the National Fund's partner organizations contribute resources, test ideas, collect data, and improve public policies and business practices that help all workers succeed and employers have the talent they need to compete. Learn more at www.NationalFund.org.

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