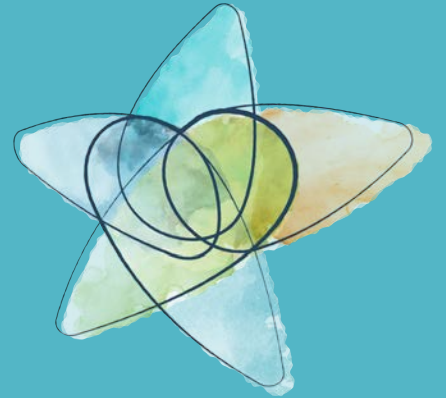


DECEMBER 2021

Funding Collaborative-Led Initiatives

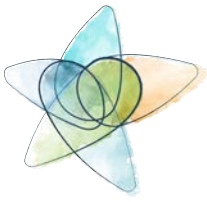
BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS



healthyJEFFCO
ALLIANCE



Prepared by AGING DYNAMICS
Approved by Healthy Jeffco Alliance
Collaborative Funding Action Team



About Healthy Jeffco Alliance

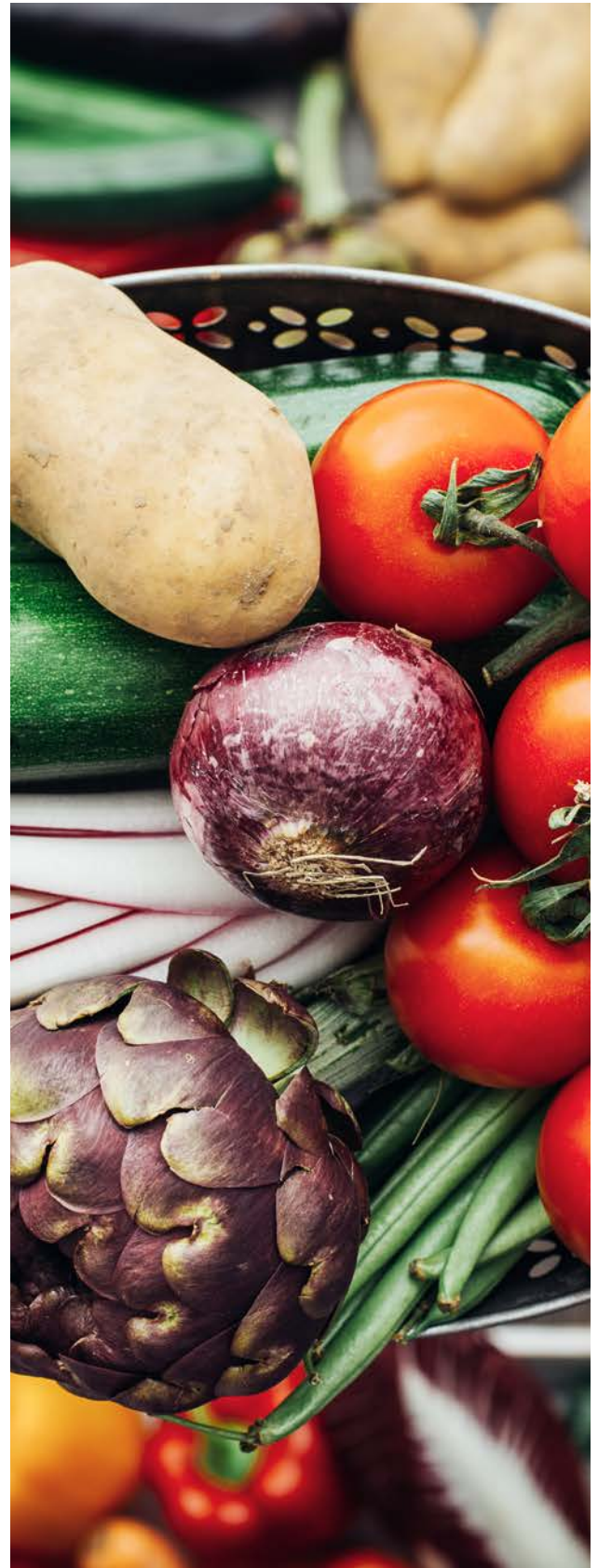
Healthy Jeffco Alliance is a collaborative, cross-sector partnership committed to a connected, thriving community where health and opportunity are possible for all. It is taking a community-based approach to how health and wellness are defined in Jefferson County throughout the lifespan.

Purpose We exist to cultivate a connected, thriving community where health and opportunity are possible for all.

Beliefs We believe community is rooted in connection and collaboration, and we ALL have value to contribute.

Superpowers We embody a culture of humility, and we constantly strive to be more inclusive in who we are, and how we operate.

What We Do We facilitate conversation, connection, and collaboration among the people and organizations of our community to make health and opportunity possible for all.



Systemic Challenges Require Collaboration

Across the country, philanthropists are thinking differently about how to make a bigger impact. Institutions, individuals, and businesses investing philanthropic dollars into communities— as well as those on the ground— are increasingly aware of the power of inclusion and collaboration in tackling complex social problems. But when US residents are reporting historically low levels of trust in our institutions, including decreasing trust in the healthcare system, how do we develop collaborative solutions?

When asked who they had “quite a lot” or “high” trust in, 44% of survey respondents said the medical system, but 70% said small businesses, according to a 2021 Gallup poll. **This makes small business owners the most trusted group today.**

The Collaborative Funding Action Team of Healthy Jeffco Alliance began exploring the topic of collaborative funding as a means to more effectively address social problems. The group took an honest inventory of where community inclusion, effective collaboration, and coordination of resources break down and hinder progress.

“The scale of the issues that nonprofits are tackling—climate change, homelessness, racial justice, income inequality—feels too big for any one nonprofit or funder. And the scale of the impact these organizations hope to achieve—to change systems, not just symptoms—can be just as overwhelming.”
(Grant, Wilkinson, Butts, 2020)

When Community Based Organizations (CBOs), grassroots initiatives, and community members collaborate they are far more likely to affect long-term, sustained impact. They can share resources, bring more diverse perspectives to the table, and outlive any one mission. However, building collaborative-led initiatives is fraught with barriers and power dynamics such as unequal distribution of power.

They require time, flexibility, and support to form, develop a vision, and begin working together—foundational components which are misaligned with current funding time-frames and expectations. Wherever collaboration falls on the continuum, barriers exist. This paper begins to address those barriers and how funders, CBOs, and community leaders* can develop and implement solutions.

"Community leaders" refers to community members, small business owners, grassroots initiatives, collaboratives, & thought leaders.



Solution 1: Build Trust

BARRIER: COLLABORATION REQUIRES A HIGH LEVEL OF TRUST THAT NEEDS TO BE BUILT OVER TIME.

Trust needs to be built within the community, amongst organizations, and with funding institutions. Building trust takes time, however funding opportunities often have immediate or short deadlines that require collaborations to already be in place. Existing barriers to trust include:

- Community input is a necessary component to any systemic change, but communities have often been overlooked and ignored.
- Organizations with similar missions and/or in a similar geographic location have often

historically competed for limited funding, and may view one another as competitors. The Collaborative Funding Action Team spoke to a lack of trust between themselves and funding institutions that has to be addressed for effective collaboration.

COLLABORATION IS NORMAL. BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, 68% OF NONPROFITS REPORTED THAT THEY COLLABORATED WITH OTHER NONPROFITS, (NONPROFIT SECTOR SURVEY, 2018)

COMMUNITY SOLUTION: BUILD TRUST BETWEEN COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBOS) AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.

1. Executive Directors should form round tables to meet regularly, welcome guest speakers, and secure skills-building opportunities.
2. Celebrate the work of other CBOs and community leaders in newsletters and social media.
3. Participate in funder-provided gatherings and learning opportunities.
4. Host community gathering opportunities, without an agenda, to get to know community members and leaders better.
5. Attend community-organized events.



FUNDER SOLUTION: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES WHERE ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERS CAN BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOP SHARED GOALS.

1. Host, financially support, and attend convenings for local health based organizations and other community leaders who work in the health space.
 - a. Offer opportunities to develop strategy together.
 - b. Provide skill-building sessions on developing and nurturing strong collaborative partnerships.
 - c. Invite local guest speakers to present on health topics urgent and emergent in their communities.
2. Host less formal meet-and-greets where leaders can get to know one another– and invite your staff and board members.

 *The best thing a funder can do is create an environment where organizations can get to know each other and develop trust,”*
(Lois Savage, president of the Lodestar Foundation, SSIR)

Solution 2: Amplify the community voice.

BARRIER: IT IS CHALLENGING FOR CBOS AND FUNDERS TO MAKE SPACE FOR THE COMMUNITY VOICE–

both to learn *how to do it* and to implement community input as part of the strategy.

Challenges include:

- Implicit bias on the behalf of funders and CBOs that community members aren't skilled enough or knowledgeable enough to make their communities healthier.
 - CBOs limited capacity makes it easier to simply make decisions with those who are already in the room.
 - In most cases, CBOs are reluctant to share or give up power.
 - Community members feel the power imbalance between CBO professionals and themselves which makes them reluctant to participate.
-

COMMUNITY & FUNDER SOLUTION #1: INVEST TIME, RESOURCES, AND ENERGY INTO COMMUNITY POWERBUILDING.

Community power building recognizes community-led work is the strongest form of community engagement. Community members are those who have the closest ties and deepest knowledge of the needs of their communities and should be directly involved with identifying and addressing the needs of their communities.

1. Fund and host skill-building workshops/series for community members to develop the skills necessary for community members to feel confident and prepared to take on a leadership role.
 - a. Formalize training programs for unique cohorts including youth, business owners, bilingual community members, etc.
 - b. Introduce cohort participants to other community leaders.
 - c. Offer a team-based learning experience where cohorts solve real problems in their communities, e.g. [the Jeffco Family Leadership Training Institute](#).
2. Create space for community members to host and lead community input sessions, grantmaking initiatives, evaluation criteria, policy advocacy efforts, and events.

COMMUNITY & FUNDER SOLUTION #2: EDUCATE ORGANIZATIONS AND BUILD MORE DIVERSE STRUCTURES.

1. Assess current organizational structure and where it falls on the continuum of being an anti-racist organization.
2. Organizations should participate in continuous Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training to learn the importance of and how-to's to include diverse community voices at the table.
3. Both CBOs and funders should work to create boards of directors who represent the diversity of the communities they serve.
4. Hire staff members and recruit volunteers from within the community, commit to mentoring and providing educational opportunities that bring them up to speed.

COMMUNITY SOLUTION: CENTER THE COMMUNITY VOICE BY LOWERING, AND EVENTUALLY ELIMINATING, BARRIERS TO ACCESSING COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

1. Think beyond surveys and focus groups. Consider other formats for gathering community input that are informed by community members themselves (see #2).
 - a. Alternative options include less formal facilitated community conversations and story circles.
 - b. Host input sessions online or in hybrid formats as well (do not require cameras).
2. Ask community members how/when/in what ways they would like to participate.
 - a. Clearly define your intentions for involving community members (see continuum Figure 1. Learn more at <https://tinyurl.com/CEContinuum>).

b. This is more easily accomplished through existing trusted influences. Options include leadership training cohorts, community liaisons, or by forming an advisory committee with representatives from diverse communities.

- i. Offer representatives a stipend for participating.
- ii. Invite community liaisons to co-create their role as trusted connectors.
- iii. Have representatives personally call members of their community to inform activities.

Figure 1. Community Engagement Continuum by Tamarack Institute

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
GOAL	To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and solutions.	To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision from development to solution.	Shared leadership of community-led projects with final decision-making at the community level.
STYLE	"Here's what's happening."	"Here are some options, what do you think?"	"Here's a problem, what ideas do you have?"	"Let's work together to solve this problem."	"You care about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?"

A continuum that ranges from "inform" to "empower". Learn more about Tamarack Institute's Index of Community Engagement Techniques at <https://tinyurl.com/CEContinuum>.

- 3. Schedule community gatherings to occur after an existing standing meeting that has regular participation.
- 4. Ask community members' preferred language and ensure interpretation services are available and all print and digital outreach is available in preferred languages.
- 5. Provide food, welcome kids, and offer childcare.
- 6. Compensate community members for their time and expertise.
- 7. Invite community members to provide feedback on gatherings, what went well, and what could be done better to create a more inclusive space.
- 8. Meet communities in ways that are meaningful to them and grounded in their unique cultures. For example, the United Indian Health Institute (UIHI) brought its programmatic team together to talk about evaluation. They began with a traditional weaving lesson to convey the idea that documentation and learning should be "woven" into every program.

Solution 3: Bridge cultural divides.

BARRIER: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND COMPLEX PHILANTHROPIC MODELS, PROCESSES, AND LANGUAGE ARE OBSTACLES TO EQUITABLE FUNDING PRACTICES.

The Collaborative Funding Action Team of the Jefferson County Health Alliance spoke to a cultural and racial divide between themselves and funders. This is reflected in findings in The Race to Lead, a study by Bridgespan and Echoing Green. This barrier limits

opportunities to make connections with funders, build rapport, and secure support. Grant decisions flow through committees who may not be embedded in the community, may fail to recognize existing community assets, and/or unconsciously devalue lived experiences and diverse perspectives.

Community assets include existing networks, leaders, skills, and knowledge.



FUNDER SOLUTION: CREATE CONDITIONS TO SHARE POWER BETWEEN FUNDERS, CBOS, COLLABORATIVE-LED INITIATIVES, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

1. Gather input from community members, grassroots initiatives, and CBOs on how to develop a more equitable funding culture that includes all voices.
 - a. Report back on findings to the community and share what funders will do to apply these learnings to practice.
2. Get to know CBOs and collaboratives.
 - a. Send program officers and grants professionals out into the community to build long-term relationships; this will help them understand the needs of the community, get to know the organizations that already work together, and perform on-the-ground research.
 - b. Require a certain number of volunteer hours from board members and staff.
3. Attend events hosted by community members and local health-based organizations.
4. Recruit board members, staff members, and volunteers from within the community who already are deeply connected to the needs and strengths of their communities. Ensure this goes beyond tokenizing or checking a box by having a genuine representation of the diversity of your communities at the table.



Solution 4: Improve Equitable Access to Funding

BARRIER: GRANTSEEKERS HAVE LIMITED CAPACITY AND ARE OFTEN OVERWHELMED BY THE UNIQUE AND COMPLEX REQUIREMENTS OF GRANT APPLICATIONS, EVALUATIONS, AND FINAL DELIVERABLES. THIS BARRIER MEANS THAT FUNDERS ARE LOSING OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE AN EQUITABLE IMPACT.

Individual funders have unique application dates and processes, reporting requirements, and metrics. Grant seekers often need to research opportunities, make contacts, and fill out the same grant applications year over year. This requires a nuanced understanding of funders and funding boards, one that The Collaborative Funding Action Team of Jefferson County pointed out is not equitably shared across all communities. Furthermore, funders use, and expect grant applicants to mimic, unfamiliar complex vocabulary and syntax.

FUNDER SOLUTION: ASSESS YOUR CURRENT GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS WITH AN EQUITY LENS AND APPROACH.

1. Run a readability test on all Request for Proposal (RFP) language before publication to remove jargon and improve comprehension. Click on [this online readability tool](#) to test your language, (Grace, 2018).
2. Grant committee familiarity with certain organizations can give them an advantage over lesser-known organizations. Grace of E.G. Nelson (2018) shared that her organization addresses this by setting limits on which and when “outside information”– knowledge that doesn’t come from the application– can be shared during application review.

The Collaborative Funding Action Team identified two types of language barriers:

1. Grantwriter speaks English as a second language.
2. Proposals are written in the language of white professionalism. Funders use and expect grant applicants to mimic, unfamiliar jargon and complex vocabulary and syntax.



3. How transparent is your grant review process? Offer a scoring rubric so that applicants know exactly what you prioritize.
4. Adopt/Adapt/Create a continuum and self-assessment with community voices informing the entire process from start to finish.

FUNDER SOLUTION #2: STREAMLINE THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS AND MAKE IT EASIER FOR GROUPS TO APPLY.

1. Create a common application that funders share so applicants don't have to fill out so many applications.
2. Encourage different submission formats (written, oral, video, in-person, creative).
3. Allow more time for submission for communities with less grant application experience (open early for community-based, grassroots organizations).

FUNDER SOLUTION #3: HELP BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY.

1. Provide hybrid (online and in-person) group education and support sessions to walk through grant requirements, language, and timelines.
2. Offer technical assistance to grant writers both one-on-one and in a hybrid group model.
 - a. Review grant requirements.
 - b. Teach nonprofits hard skills like how to build out a grants calendar, maintain materials with commonly asked questions, build a budget, and storytelling.



COMMUNITY SOLUTION #1: FIND WAYS TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS.

Building formal collaborations makes organizations stronger in the long term, frees up back-end expenses, and increases impact.

COMMUNITY SOLUTION #2: BUILD CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION AND OTHER HEALTH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS.

1. Create a grant writing group for people to meet up, communicate, ask questions, and help one another access funds.
2. Identify well-fitting collaborations amongst your peers and apply for grants together.

*“One organization is not going to create the systems-level change we need. We need folks coming together in partnership to move the needle.”
Kristen Scott Kennedy, Chief of Staff
The Council on Foundations.*

Solution 5: Fund more creatively.

BARRIER: STATIC FUNDING STRUCTURES INHIBIT THE CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING POSSIBLE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE-LED AND COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES.

Funding processes follow a set calendar and strict financial structures. For collaborative-led initiatives, there is insufficient time between an RFP announcement and deadline to identify collaborators, build relationships, and establish a clear vision. On the other hand, when timely opportunities arise to serve the community, they can be missed if they don't fall in line with the funding schedule.

The Collaborative Funding Action Team also pointed out that there can be misalignment between the metrics funders want to measure success by and the metrics that are meaningful to building effective community-led change.

FUNDER SOLUTION #1: GET CREATIVE IN HOW TO FUND.

1. Offer multi-year grants strategically informed by the community.
2. Partner with local community organizations and fund through them to help identify and distribute within smaller Jefferson County communities.

FUNDER SOLUTION #2: INVEST IN COMMUNITY POWER BUILDING.

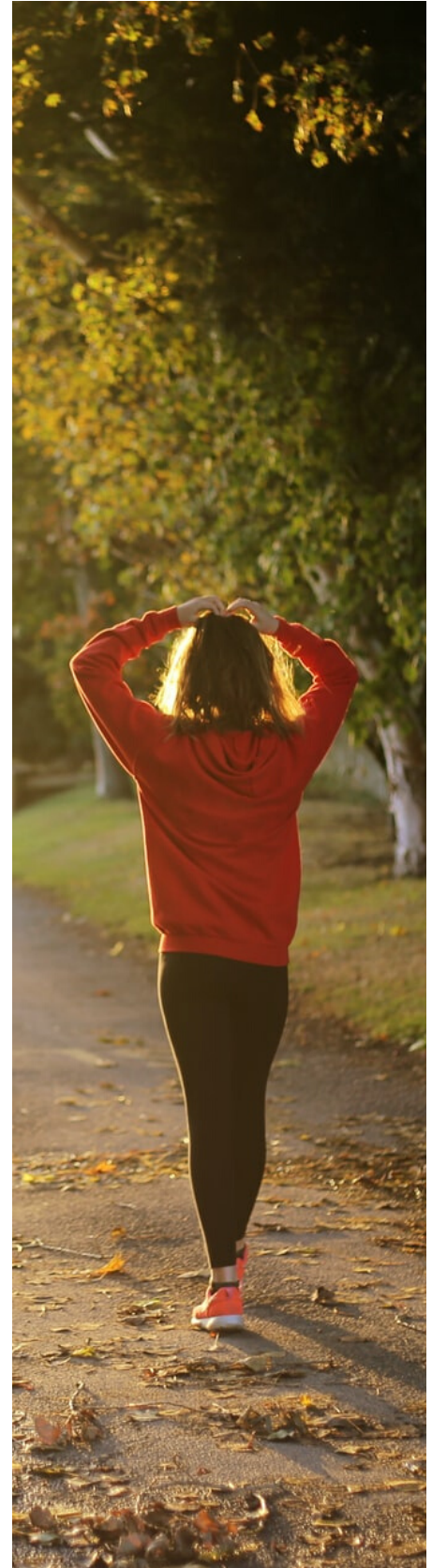
Funding community power building helps funders and communities address the root causes of issues and respond to emergent needs rather than react to symptoms. It is a significant step towards eliminating inequity and systemic oppression by redistributing power to those most impacted by inequity and oppression.

1. Create organizational structures that develop community capacity to not just inform projects, but *lead projects and project activities*.
2. Fund leadership trainings and cohorts for youth and adults to learn organizing skills.
3. Fund training on the healthcare system, advocacy, and grantmaking.
4. Invite community leaders to meet with other leaders, your organization's staff and board, and connect them with CBOs.

FUNDER SOLUTION #3: BE VIGILANT ABOUT ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF PROBLEMS RATHER THAN SYMPTOMS.

and think outside of the box about who the organizations are that can make that impact.

1. Take inventory of your history of grantmaking. Whom have you funded? What were they addressing? What was their long-term impact?
2. Fund smaller and newer, or less experienced organizations.
3. Fund those CBOs and community-led initiatives who may have previously been off your radar but who are already making a difference in their communities.



FUNDER SOLUTION #4: COLLABORATE WITH OTHER FUNDERS TO WIDEN THE SCOPE OF YOUR IMPACT.

1. Pool your funds to offer larger, multi-year grants that support long-term change.
2. Create a multi-funder grants committee that brings a deeper and broader perspective.
3. Design grant awards that encourage collaboration.
4. Partner with local community organizations and fund through them to help identify and distribute within smaller Jefferson County communities.



FUNDER SOLUTION #5: OFFER NON-MONETARY SUPPORT.

1. As part of your strategic funding plan, provide ongoing technical assistance to CBOs and collaboratives.
 - a. Make staff available to answer questions and provide specific assistance to help CBOs and collaboratives become more resilient and effective.
 - b. Purchase and provide grant research software (like Foundation Center) to help CBOs and collaboratives identify additional funding streams.
 - c. Survey local organizations and grassroots initiatives to determine common greatest needs beyond funding, and respond with training support for those that are most critical to strengthening organizations.

2. Introduce grantees to other funders and like-minded organizations.
3. Highlight grantees' work in newsletters, press releases, and events.

In Tahoe-Truckee, CA, the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation asked this question in their common application, 80% of nonprofits reported they needed better board governance. TTCF created the Four-Part Nonprofit Board Training Series that taught the best in board practices and graduated more than 100 board members in four years.

Solution 6: Planning for a more strategic future.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS FOR FUNDERS TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE-LED INITIATIVES, INCLUDING PROVIDING NON-MONETARY SUPPORT, FUNDING FEASIBILITY STUDIES, PROVIDING TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND HELPING CONNECT COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER FUNDERS AND DONORS.

1. Commit to ongoing DEI training and adopt racial equity practices within your organization. Utilize analysis tools like [Dismantling Racism's racial equity stages](#).
2. Develop/Adopt/Adapt a guide for prospective collaborations, developing best practices, and sharing evaluation frameworks.
3. Create funding growth models where startups or informal community efforts can access larger funds as they increase capacity and accountability. The Sustained Collaboration Network (SCN) is composed of more than 100 local foundations with pooled-funding initiatives and has a two-part model.

Two basic initiative funding types:

1. **Exploration:** An exploration grant helps two or more nonprofits access consultants— e.g., lawyers, facilitators, and analysts— to perform feasibility assessments to see if collaboration makes sense and how it would work. They range from \$10,000 to \$40,000. If a sustained and supported collaboration is feasible and everyone signs off, then the collaboration can receive an implementation grant;
2. **Implementation:** These grants average \$30,000 but can be up to \$100,000 depending upon location and complexity. They help cover costs such as integrating board and staff, breaking leases, combining spaces and systems, etc.



“First and foremost, what guides us is to always assume that nonprofits know what they're doing. Our work is really driven by the needs and desires of nonprofits and the questions that they ask. We represent money, we represent knowledge, we represent a network. And I think all of those things wrapped up add value to the community.”

Cavagnero, NYMAC.(SSIR)



Conclusion

To have the type of impact that funders, organizations, and communities seek, we can integrate a more strategic and equitable approach to collaboration— one that builds community power, crosses sectors, and involves all parties from education through evaluation.

The Collaborative Funding Action Team of the Jefferson County Health Alliance and relevant research point to the benefits of intentional and formal collaboration that address long-term health issues by bringing more diverse perspectives into the solutions process. Funders have the power to address our community's health challenges by building peer-based partnerships with collaborative-led initiatives, CBOs, and community members. Jefferson County health organizations and funders are at an advantage since they already know one another and have a foundation to begin from.

While it will take patience and trust, if everyone commits to our shared vision of a healthier, thriving Jefferson County, both funders and CBOs can explore and implement collaborations of every sort.

Definitions Page

Action Team: People working on specific strategies of the Healthy Jeffco Alliance.

Collaboration: Take action and track impact by helping diverse teams work together to engage in community-focused initiatives and collect relevant data to drive strategic learning.

Collaborate: To work jointly on an activity, especially to produce or create something.

Collaborative Funding Models: Models that pool funds from funders and philanthropists for organizations and initiatives supporting similar goals. Funders will agree upon a shared vision, objectives, and proposal process.

Collaborative Solutions:

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): A public or private nonprofit organization.

Community-led Initiative:

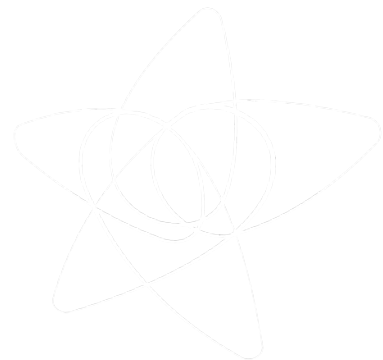
Community Power-building:

Diversity: The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and demographic backgrounds such as genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages, abilities, etc.

Equity: The practice of social justice where there is an absence of disparities affecting a specific outcome.

Inclusion: The practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who may have been historically excluded or marginalized. This includes authentic and empowered participation, and a true sense of belonging, (Annie E. Casey Foundation).

Grassroots Efforts: Those efforts are organized at the community level and generally working on the frontline of a local region.



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