Kids Matter Here

An Analytic Review of the 10-Year Good Neighborhoods Initiative

by Tom Burns
with Prue Brown, Marie Colombo and Siobhan O’Laoire

September 2017
In 2006, the Foundation began to make the first in a series of staffing additions to better support the initiative. Its first move was to create a new staff position to oversee the array of evaluation, research and learning activities that GNI would require. Another new position was added the following year to guide its expanded changemaking work. Over this period, the Foundation also developed an expanded external communications strategy to help in presenting the Foundation's new programmatic focus to external partners and the broader public.

Anticipating the transition from neighborhood-focused planning toward a sustained period of internal and external capacity building, it chose a team from the Center for Youth and Communities at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University in 2007 to serve as the initiative's evaluator during the anticipated multi-year Readiness Phase. The Brandeis team worked with Skillman Foundation staff to clarify assumptions about expected neighborhood change results and created a framework and benchmarks for assessing progress in its capacity-building efforts. A national advisory group was also established and met several times to provide feedback on the framework and progress measures that Brandeis was developing.

Within the Foundation, additional staffing and organizational adjustments were also made to better integrate programmatic support for the Good Neighborhoods Initiative with other program investments, primarily the Good Schools: Making the Grade Initiative which operated from 2006-2010 and the Good Opportunities program, which was created in 2006 as a vehicle for making more concerted use of both grants and non-grantmaking resources to change policies.
and systems for the benefit of Detroit's children. It worked with Brandeis University and other consultants to create an initial theory of change to guide this move toward increased integration; that effort produced specific strategies and outcomes and an evaluation framework to build accountability for progress toward identified readiness indicators.

Over the period from 2008-2010, the Skillman Foundation moved forward with a multi-dimensional community capacity-building strategy that included intensive engagement, training and leadership development work at the neighborhood level.

The establishment of neighborhood governance boards comprised of residents and nonprofit stakeholders began in 2008 and continued throughout the Readiness Phase. Governance board elections and first board meetings were held in the fall of 2009. During 2010, those governance boards formally adopted community plans for children and youth in their neighborhoods. In fall 2010, lead agencies were identified to manage board administration and finance. Community liaisons who had worked in the neighborhoods during the planning phase became paid executive directors once the governance group structure was formalized. By 2011, there were executive directors in place to support the governance groups in all six neighborhoods.

During the Readiness Phase, the Foundation made the decision to concentrate its youth development grantmaking within the six neighborhoods. It also invested in the creation of a new data center, now called Data Driven Detroit (D3), to make better quality information more widely available for a range of Detroit stakeholders.

The Creation of Data Driven Detroit (D3) as a New Local Information Resource

Beginning in 2008, the Skillman Foundation worked in partnership with the Kresge Foundation and the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Project to launch an independent locally based data center, Data Driven Detroit (D3) to meet the increasing need for high-quality data and information within Detroit and the region. The Foundation provided a significant share of the operational funding for D3; it established an Advisory Committee of local stakeholders to guide D3's continuing development and expansion into one of the larger and better recognized data centers in the country that serves as a resource for local data-informed decisions.
2010 THEORY OF CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Young people are more likely to be safe, healthy, well educated and prepared for adulthood (1) when they are embedded in a strong system of supports and opportunities, (2) when they attend high quality schools, (3) when their neighborhoods have the capacities and resources to support youth and families, and (4) when broader systems and policies create conditions under which youth can thrive.

This ecological model, created by the Center for Youth and Communities — Heller School for Social Policy and Management, reflects the 2016 goals the Skillman Foundation has established for the Good Neighborhoods and Schools initiative. The model also recognizes that the Foundation's work exists in a larger political, economic and social context that impacts the way the strategies are translated into practical, feasible tactics.

SYSTEMS & POLICY
- Other Funders
- Private Sector
- School Systems
- Post-secondary Institutions
- Local, State and Federal Government Agencies
- Citywide Organizations
- State Legislature and Congress
- Mayor and City Council
- Media

NEIGHBORHOOD
- Investment Pipeline
- Community-based Anchor Organizations
- Ability to Influence Policies & Resources
- Engaged Residents, Stakeholders, Youth
- Culture that Values Academic Achievement
- Leadership Capacity
- Self-determining Planning & Advocacy Body

SOSO
- Hubs
- College & Career Exposure & Access
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Youth Employment Preparation & Work Experience
- Youth Development Programs
- Drop-in Centers
- Basic Services

SYSTEM REFORM & NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS
- Citywide master education plan
- Small high schools
- Network of education intermediaries
- Education report card
- High-performing neighborhood schools
- Information to choose best schools
- College enrollment & financing vehicles
- Early care & education

1 SHEP = Long-term youth outcomes: Safe and Healthy, Educated, and Prepared for Adulthood
2 SOSO = System of Supports and Opportunities
3 Neighborhood Capacities
4 Broader Systems & Policy = Strategies permeate each circle and include both intentional and opportunistic activities
THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION
Good Neighborhoods for Kids Ecological Model

THEORY OF CHANGE
Young people are more likely to be safe, healthy, well educated and prepared for adulthood (1) when they are embedded in a strong system of supports and opportunities, (2) when there are high quality schools, (3) when their neighborhoods have the capacities and resources to support youth and families, and (4) when broader systems and policies create conditions under which youth can thrive.

This ecological model reflects the 2016 goals The Skillman Foundation has established for Good Neighborhoods for Kids. The model assumes that the Foundation’s work exists in a larger political, economic and social context that impacts the way the strategies are translated into practical, feasible tactics.

1 SHEP = Safe and Healthy, Educated, and Prepared for Adulthood
2 SOST = System of Supports and Opportunities
3 Neighborhood Capacities
4 Systems & Policy = Strategies permeate each circle and include both intentional and opportunistic activities