



Case Study

Streamlined Funding Process for Baltimore's Summer Youth Programs By Creating a Funding



In 2014, while working for a foundation, Sheryl brought together several philanthropic organizations and led the launch of a summer funding collaborative. Previously, Baltimore City summer programs were supported by multiple Baltimore philanthropies. Each funder acted independently and on its own timeline, which resulted in complexities for the summer programs that included:

- Their need to submit multiple applications in different formats to numerous organizations;
- Uncertainty around the number of youth a program could serve, as funding decisions typically occurred in late spring or early summer; and
- The delivery of different final outcome reports to each funder.

Process & Outcome

To streamline and simplify this process for programs and maximize the impact of the available philanthropic funds, Sheryl contacted three funders she believed would be interested in working together to build a better system. In just a few months, the three partnered on a common summer funding application, an objective scoring tool, standardized evaluation measures and outcome reporting forms.

The *shared application* made it easier for organizations to apply for summer funds from multiple organizations and facilitated stronger communication between the funders for more efficient and impactful funding decisions. The *objective scoring tool* promoted consistency and helped the funding partners evaluate applications using the same criteria while allowing each to assign more weight to certain criteria based on individual funding priorities. The *shared evaluation and reporting form* allowed the funders to assess the quality of programs and begin to create a citywide system of high quality, community-based summer programs.



While each organization had its own processes and specific priorities, thorough discussion and open communication allowed them to build a shared framework. There were a few concerns raised around the impact of the new process on the summer programs and the funders; some programs, for example, worried they might receive less funding through this process. Sheryl listened to the concerns from both groups and addressed them, adjusting as necessary.

Once the collaborative had operated for one summer, Sheryl began soliciting feedback. While feedback from the programs and funders was positive overall, constructive feedback was received around the application and the reporting process and incorporated into the processes in subsequent years.

A Solution for the Long-Term

Under Sheryl's leadership, the collective, which started with three funders and a budget of \$1 million, grew to 14 partners and over \$3 million in accessible funding within two years. Today, the collaborative is a partnership between public, private and nonprofit institutions, all of which share the goal of delivering viable summer program options for families, including academic support to reduce summer learning loss, youth work opportunities and a variety of enrichment activities.

Based on the growth of the collaborative and the desire to ensure sustainability, Sheryl suggested it be housed and administered by an intermediary organization; she led the process to identify and select an intermediary that was acceptable to all partners. Today, this intermediary annually awards approximately \$3.4 million in grants to support up to 90 high-quality summer programs that serve 10,000 children and youth from low-income families throughout Baltimore City.

