



Advancing Collaboration with Good+Foundation

Approach to Collaboration

Collaboration is core to our work. As a foundation that makes in-kind grants, our goal is to support strong family antipoverty programs by giving them the goods that underserved parents need to keep their children healthy and safe. In 2008 we re-examined the impact we could make with program partners by taking a close look at family demographics. We realized the incentives could be a powerful tool for building program participation. A Single Stop program in East Harlem was facing difficulties reaching single moms and undocumented parents. We assisted by testing the incentive model with diaper donations. If these parents visited the center for a single stop screening, they would receive a free pack of diapers. Within six months of implementation, the Single Stop center saw a 300% increase in enrollment within the two groups.

Single Stop reported that it could be challenging to follow up with families and learn whether or not that had enrolled in WIC or EBT following a screen. We decided to add another incentive. If the parents came in for a screening, they would still receive a pack of diapers as well as the promise of a case of diapers if they came back to demonstrate enrollment.

Through this, we saw these clients receive over \$1,500 in annualized benefits. In this scenario, we recognized Single Stop as a great social service program. They were screening families within 15 minutes, and we knew our donation could be a powerful tool to encourage parents to take the next steps. Just a single pack of diapers costs the equivalent of one hour of the minimum wage in NYC or LA.

Application of the 9 Considerations for Collaboration

Build Trust

Transparency has always been part of our ethos. In 2008, we were poised for growth and had a significant partnership with Target Corporation. We decided to scale up nationally but wanted to be cautious about growth and metrics to ensure operations were well-grounded before expanding. We always strive to be transparent and fiscally sound. It's important that our donors can trust us.

We're extremely proud of our BBB Wise Giving Alliance (WGA) Accreditation, and we make sure all of our financials since 2001 are up on our website. The accreditation process has been a fantastic tool for management, which we use as a part of our onboarding process. It's helpful for people who are making the transition from another sector into the nonprofit world and serves as a great guiding principle.

Have a Vision

In 2008, as the organization was maturing from infancy into its teen years, we were focused on scaling up nationally. We opened a Los Angeles office and partnered with LA Diaper Drive, which was then the largest diaper bank in the country. We built trust and ended up doing a nonprofit merger with them. A few years later, we wanted to focus on expanding our fatherhood work.

Most of our grantee programs, like the Nurse Family Partnership, predominantly focused on the traditional mother and child dyad, but our portfolio lacked programs that spoke to engaging dads. We began collaborating with academics to examine everything from the social and emotional development impact of a father's absence on children, to how father engagement can provide social and economic mobility.

In 2018 we collaborated with the Ascend Forum at the Aspen Institute to organize The Father Factor, a convening to talk about father engagement. We brought together brilliant

thought leaders, innovators, funders, and practitioners to take a look at this issue, and everyone was turning to us for the next steps. This moment became a defining one - we had to ensure we weren't drifting from our mission. As a small team, we developed a plan and vision around father engagement that fit neatly into the work we were already doing. We couldn't solely use our resources, but we were able to make something happen through our collaboration with the Ascend Forum and other thought leaders across the country like Joe Jones at the Center for Urban Families, Kim Dent at the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood and Jessica Bartholow at the Western Poverty Law Center.

We're now working on a toolkit to provide proactive examples throughout the country on ways that child support can be reformed to engage dads better and support children.

Seek to Assure the Success of Your Collaborators

When we think about a partnership, we focus on potential partners' needs, what they offer, and how we can make those things fit. When we enter a partnership, we talk through the MOU together, map out where the gaps are and how we can fill them, and discuss what we can bring to the table to enhance a symbiotic relationship. Our team has wonderfully high emotional intelligence and tremendous empathy; we're always keeping in mind that collaboration takes work, and we are successful when we show our partners that we value their needs and assets.

Take Stock

Our fatherhood work is a great example of taking stock and bringing different parties together. After our Father Factor convening, we realized we should be having more meetings with all of our grantee partners as a group. We have all this brilliance across the country, and we need to bring them together to share best practices and discuss challenges in the effort

to engage non-custodial fathers. We just started quarterly convenings of grantees, and now, with our familiarity and with Zoom, we're able to bring together people from all over the country. Our first national convening of grantee partners occurred in May 2020.

Start Small

We always try to pilot programs or ideas on a small scale before we start thinking about national scale-up. Our founder, Jessica Seinfeld, is a wonderful sounding board who pushes us to be more forward-thinking and innovative. Whether it's the board or team members, the push and pull of management and collaboration are essential.

Fail Fast, and Build Rigorous Feedback Loops

We weren't always quick to recognize a problem because we were forging a new path in the fatherhood space. At one point, we had a portfolio of about 19 different fatherhood programs, and we lost around four or five of those within two years because they lost their contracts. We continued looking for and losing more fatherhood programs, and we were incredibly frustrated because great programs continued to disappear due to a lack of funding. After about three years, we took a step back and recognized that our model of investing in fatherhood programs on our own wasn't working. Then, we pivoted to the Father Factor convening, started bringing groups together, and brought attention to this issue as a great way to think about poverty alleviation. We were able to broaden the community of funders and practitioners who understand the need to invest in non-custodial fathers.

Take a Portfolio Approach

The child support toolkit is a new initiative for us. We brought together leaders who agreed that child support needed to be reformed. By creating this working group, we were able to problem-solve and test ideas through great conversations and thought sharing mechanisms.

Consider Non-traditional Partners

In recent months, amidst COVID-19, we've found that people are much more open to partnerships. We knew there was an overwhelming need for formula and food items. 85% to 95% of the families we serve have now lost income, have no savings and are living paycheck to paycheck.

When we began hearing about the need for food, which we don't typically provide, we had to respond. We started a conversation and offered a large donation to the Food Bank of New York City; they needed diapers and other baby essentials that we could provide. This partnership wouldn't have occurred to us under normal circumstances. Our circles don't overlap, and their model is different from ours, but we came together due to necessity.

Keep Your Donors Apprised of Your Collaborations

Years ago, we were called Baby Buggy, and we had a strong network of supporters who were moms. We rebranded our name to the Good+Foundation and started doing more work in fatherhood, we discovered that many of our female donors were nervous about the evolution. Interestingly, what prompted them to give was helping moms and kids, and they didn't understand how engaging dads could do just that. We needed to ramp up our communications to engage our donors in a very different way.

Our communications needed to extend beyond the simple message of giving nice things to kids and families in need. We had to be much more intentional and mindful about how we crafted our messages, demonstrating that father engagement was key to ensuring that single mothers had supportive co-parents in these dads. Through in-person meetings, we were able to take our donors through the process and allow them to ask questions. The overhaul required great efforts, but in the end, it paid off.

Future Collaborations

During the coronavirus crisis, we thought about a market and exchange for goods. We've learned the benefits of collaborating to fill in needed gaps. We learned that BBB WGA created a tool to encourage groups to collaborate, reflecting what we envisioned – a platform for nonprofits to bring people together.



Katherine Snider,
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About the Organization

Good+Foundation is a leading national nonprofit that works to dismantle multi-generational poverty by pairing tangible goods with innovative services for low-income fathers, mothers and caregivers, creating an upward trajectory for the whole family.