WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

Funders “spark” to achieve ambitious goals that are larger and more complex than any one funder can achieve alone. Some efforts follow a collective impact framework and seek to reform large public systems that allocate public dollars and regulate how services are delivered at the county or municipal level. Other efforts seek to affect an ecosystem by changing perceptions, ways of doing business, and/or structures through which the nonprofit sector achieves its goals. Whatever their ultimate goals, funders “spark” in order to achieve outcomes that are sufficiently ambitious and important to justify the time and costs of partnering.

Over the past few years, we’ve observed that collaborative initiatives of all types and sizes that gain traction over time exhibit certain success factors similar to those of a collective impact model. We’ve seen that funders really “spark” when there is:

1. **Effective Framing:** An issue needs to be defined in ways that are salient for funders and other key stakeholders and broad enough so that many people can see themselves as part of the solution. This works best when there is an initial initiative to fund.

2. **Targeted Use of Resources:** Effective collaborative leaders understand and articulate the different roles that private and public funders can play. Philanthropic resources are best used to convene partners, to develop strategies and test innovative ideas, and to support evidence-based practices and advocacy in the social sector. Operations and scaling are best supported with public funds.

3. **Multiple Entry Points for Private Funders:** Multiple avenues through which the diversity of funders can invest enables an initiative to diversify and sustain long-term philanthropic support as some funders exit and new funders invest.

4. **A Sense of Urgency:** A catalytic event or growing awareness of a problem can be utilized to drive collaboration and motivate collective action.

5. **Patience:** Urgency gets partners to the table, but patience keeps them together to achieve a long-term vision to stay the course through inevitable obstacles.

WHAT’S NEXT

While we know that working collaboratively presents a unique set of challenges, we firmly believe that funders collaborating for clear results and greater impact is worth the effort. We are committed to helping members build their capacity to be strong partners, so in 2015 we identified five cross-cutting competencies that we consider to be critical to fostering successful collaboration:

1. Promoting diversity, equity and inclusion
2. Supporting nonprofit capacity and effectiveness
3. Using evidence-based practices and data to inform funding strategies
4. Incorporating innovation and risk-taking into grantmaking
5. Leveraging change at the systems level through partnerships and advocacy

Moving forward, these competencies will be infused throughout our work and woven into the 50+ educational programs that we provide annually for members. We will continue to build on the momentum already achieved to advance solutions within the original five issue areas, while also embracing a broader approach to build funders’ capacity to effectively work together and improve practice so that we can spark solutions across a greater number of vital issues.

In 2016, Philanthropy Network will undertake a strategic visioning process to assess our progress against the goals of the 2013-15 Strategic Plan, attest to what has been achieved, reset or refine goals where necessary, and forge a path to accelerate the vision of Sparking Solutions to harness opportunities that deliver on philanthropy’s promise and potential for Smarter Giving, Greater Good.

**In 2013, Philanthropy Network Greater Philadelphia adopted a new, three-year strategic plan that advanced an action-oriented and problem-solving approach to philanthropy. Later that year we launched Sparking Solutions, an effort to actively promote and foster collaborative philanthropy that improves conditions, creates opportunities and changes lives in Greater Philadelphia.**

**JOIN US!**

Philanthropy Network Greater Philadelphia is the region’s membership association for organizations and individuals active in philanthropy. Serving primarily Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, Chester and Delaware counties, plus adjacent areas, Philanthropy Network champions the role of philanthropy in improving the quality of life in the region and educates and inspires members to do their best giving.

We welcome new members and partners.

For more information, contact Maari Porter, Executive Director at 215-790-9700 x4 or maari@philanthropynetwork.org.

philanthropynetwork.org @philanthropyPHL
Philanthropy Network’s three recent fall conferences have served as a forum to explore the application of Sparking Solutions and ways that philanthropy, nonprofits, businesses and government can work collaboratively to more effectively address complex social issues.

ISSUE AGENDA
Philanthropy Network identified an initial Sparking Solutions Issue Agenda around five critical, poverty-related social and economic problems:
1. Reading by fourth grade
2. Promoting youth safety and youth development
3. Increasing access to health care
4. Preventing and ending homelessness
5. Reducing hunger and fostering healthy eating

MEMBER INVESTMENTS
Philanthropy Network members give an estimated $1 billion annually. In response to a survey conducted in spring 2014, 71 members provided information on their total giving and the amounts, types and purposes of support directed to the Sparking Solutions issue areas. The research revealed that in 2013, respondents gave $55 million—22 percent of total reported regional giving of $248 million—to Sparking issues.

GIVING TO SPARKING SOLUTIONS ISSUE AREAS INVESTMENT

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<th>Grade Level Reading</th>
<th>Youth Safety</th>
<th>Access to Health Care</th>
<th>Homelessness</th>
<th>Hunger</th>
<th>Total Sparking Giving FY13</th>
<th>Total Reported Regional Giving FY13</th>
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<tr>
<td>$19M</td>
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<td>$10M</td>
<td>$5M</td>
<td>$5M</td>
<td>$55M</td>
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NOTE: These numbers, while significant, most certainly under-report giving totals. Since this baseline data was collected, we know that Network members have made substantial additional investments across these issues.

2013: COLLABORATION
The 2013 conference served as the official kickoff for Sparking Solutions, where attendees were introduced to the Network’s efforts to actively engage members in collaborative philanthropy.