



# Funding Learning Networks *for* Community Impact

## *Lessons from the Capacity Building Fund*

A grant program of Third Sector New England





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Written by  
Ann Philbin  
and  
Deb Linnell

Edited by  
Jonathan Spack  
and  
Patricia Harris

# Acknowledgements

The writing of this report was a truly collaborative effort. We have many people to thank. First, we wish to thank Deborah Linnell, the former Director of Programs at Third Sector New England (TSNE) and the architect of the Capacity Building Fund (CBF) as we know it. Simply put, without Deb, there would be nothing about which to write! We thank her for her intelligence, vision, commitment, support and trust.

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We wish to thank the members of the Board of Directors and Jonathan Spack, Executive Director, of TSNE for their many years of support and dedication to TSNE and the CBF. And the members of the Advisory Board for the CBF whose leadership and commitment allowed CBF to seed the many efforts which are described in this report.

The main body of this report is based on a review of notes from the quarterly meetings of each of the six CBF cohorts and the quarterly reports submitted by funded networks over the eight years of the CBF’s operation. CBF has learned all that it has learned through the incredible work of participants in funded networks and their willingness to generously share their experiences with us in a variety of ways over time. We owe the most to these folks, who have been willing to experiment with new ways of working together and have achieved great things as a result.

In addition, several key leaders of CBF funded networks agreed to participate in interviews about their experience and reviewed write ups of those discussions and drafts of the report. These individuals included:

**Mark Shoul**, from Hands Across North Quabbin;

**Pam Pollock** from the YMCA’s “Thirty Under Thirty” Initiative

**Janet Penn** and **Beth Hoke** from the Sharon Pluralism Network

**Meg Kerr** from The Land and Water Partnership’s Infrastructure Collaborative and the Coalition for Transportation Choices;

**Jessica Wilson**, formerly of Teens Leading the Way

**Julie Rapaport**, consultant to Leadership Through Literacy

A number of people immersed in the field of network development offered key insights, including Laurie Goldman, Lecturer in Urban and Social Policy at Tufts University and member of the CBF Advisory Board, Robin Katcher, Executive Director of the Management Assistance Group (MAG) and Paul Vandevanter, author of *Networks that Work*, who met with us at TSNE early in the process of writing this report and helped shape our thinking about its contents. Finally, we wish to thank Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), whose Fall, 2011 conference, “Growing Social Impact in a Networked World,” offered a powerful venue for exposure to the thinking and practice which are shaping the expanding field of collaborations and networks.

Finally, we wish to thank the many other supporters, colleagues and partners who have worked with us, learned with us, challenged us and supported us at CBF over the life of the program. We have all been co-creators of this process and share in the credit for the body of experience and knowledge that it has generated. We are so grateful to all of you for your openness, energy, commitment, vision and generosity. This report can only make an attempt to share a small piece of the CBF experience so that others may benefit from it. We hope its contents speak to your experience, create an opportunity for further learning and inspire further experimentation and collaboration!

Ann Philbin  
*Capacity Building Fund*  
Third Sector New England

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# Introduction

This report represents a challenge to funders of nonprofit activities everywhere to rethink their model of grantmaking. Its findings suggest that there may be a better alternative to the conventional way of making grants—one-year awards to individual organizations working separately on issues that impact whole communities. That new way aggregates the wisdom and power of nonprofits to effect positive change and harnesses the natural human impulse to collaborate to advance the common good. And it's not only more effective than current practice but also more cost-efficient.

**...findings suggest that there may be a better alternative to the conventional way of making grants.**

Funding for nonprofit capacity building has always been scarce. Although there is some evidence that this small pot of money may be expanding slightly, virtually all capacity-building grants are still made in the same old way—to help individual organizations improve their internal capacities (McCray, 2011). There's nothing wrong with that per se, but for funders and nonprofits whose missions are about social change and social and economic justice, its impact is limited at best.

This report details what Third Sector New England learned from our eight years of funding networks of nonprofits. We think we're onto something. The idea of developing new systems and strategies for expanding connectivity and collaboration in the nonprofit sector—and across all sectors—has gradually been gaining traction. We believe that as younger leaders, comfortable in a socially networked world, begin to assume power and exert more influence in our sector, that trend will accelerate. We believe, too, that a natural outcome of increased organizational collaborations will be a reassessment of the way philanthropic dollars are distributed, from the current focus on individual organizations to more efforts to build *community capacity*. It is our hope that this report will help to stimulate the conversation.

Jonathan Spack  
*Executive Director*  
Third Sector New England

*Funding Learning Networks for Community Impact* is one of many publications from Third Sector New England that keep nonprofits and grantmakers informed with timely research, emerging trends, and innovative practices in the nonprofit sector. Download a copy of this report from our website: [www.tsne.org/publications](http://www.tsne.org/publications)

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# Executive Summary

Imagine nonprofits engaging with other nonprofits or businesses, schools, civic organizations, or town or city government to create the change they seek in the world. Imagine a funding program that paid these groups to learn how to do this. What might change in their processes, outcomes, and impact?

Third Sector New England's Capacity Building Fund (CBF) was designed as an experimental grant program that funded nonprofits to learn to work in collaboration toward a common goal. It was designed around a key assumption about how nonprofits achieve change—namely together, not alone. It was also designed to provide a counterpoint to the traditional funding of individual nonprofits, and instead provided funding to groups of organizations that shared an aspiration for their community or their issue. This report documents what we learned from the CBF grantees and what they learned about how to make a community impact that goes beyond their individual, organizational mission.

“Funding Learning Networks” shares lessons learned for those in the sector interested in acting through networks to effect change—but perhaps more importantly, it promotes funding that is grounded in nonprofits' self defined needs for support, learning, and doing in order to help them make the change they seek in the world. It is a call to trust the people on the ground and know that they understand both what community progress looks like and what self-defined initiatives and capacity are required to get there.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FUND PROGRAM DESIGN

The only prerequisite the Capacity Building Fund (CBF) required of its grantees was that the network consist of at least five organizations that had identified a common, social-change goal. These five or more organizations needed to commit to a process of mutual planning and learning to build collective and individual organizational capacity. Network members chose the type of capacity building or learning they felt was necessary to create a foundation to reach their shared goals.

Some groups that applied were newly formed for the purpose of the grant application, while others were already existing collaborations or coalitions. Nonprofit status was required of lead organizations but not of all network members. There was a selection process led by an advisory board that weaned typically 65 to 70 letters of intent from Massachusetts and Rhode Island down to 15 planning grants. Groups were supported with \$4,000 to plan their project in-depth and write an Implementation Plan. Eight to 10 groups were then selected for \$25,000 each to implement their capacity building/learning project.

## DATA FOR THIS REPORT

Lead grantees of the learning networks were asked to attend “meta meetings” with representatives of all of the networks in their funding cohort. These gatherings created space for discussion of the successes and challenges individual groups were experiencing and promoted reflection and peer learning. Quarterly meetings were a key space for learning for CBF staff. CBF also conducted an internal evaluation in 2007; sponsored a literature review on networks in 2009; and commissioned a study by Tufts University in 2010. This report draws on those efforts, but is primarily based on learnings gleaned via participation in and notes from those quarterly meetings, a review of quarterly reports written by each network in the five cohorts, and extensive interviews with representatives of networks which were part of the CBF.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

Our learning echoes many of the findings emerging from studies of networks:

- Process is as important as product.
- Relationship building and subsequent trust building are critical first steps, and without the time and space for these, the “products” or “outcomes” of the project will be less successful.
- Creating shared aspiration, vision, and goals is the glue that holds people together.
- Some level of shared expectations about levels of participation, decision making, and communications is important even in the most loosely knit of groups.
- There are distinct roles and functions that emerge in these groups that are quite different from those in hierarchical institutions.
- Groups working this way achieve important impact.
- People need opportunities to learn how to collaborate and to use that process productively. Participatory processes that promote inclusion and collective leadership and individuals who can bring facilitative skills and tools to the network building process are key success drivers for these kinds of endeavors.
- Funding groups to collaborate can be a vehicle for promoting work across difference, building democratic participation and rebuilding communities. The “infrastructure of relationships” which is one of the strongest outcomes of network building is a critical component of any change process and enables change beyond institutional boundaries as it strengthens community capacity to achieve social, economic and political justice.

## OUR HOPE

The Capacity Building Fund grantees exemplify the power of partnership among people willing to create mutuality of purpose and to act as humble co-learners and dynamic doers in order to help grow the common good. Our hope is that the knowledge gained through this funding will motivate others to replicate and improve on the model.



# Overview and Methodology

***In short, the CBF made grants to organizations to learn together so that they could achieve together.***

From 2004 to 2012, Third Sector New England and clusters of nonprofit organizations joined in a unique program to further social change through united effort. TSNE's Capacity Building Fund (CBF)— the catalyst for this experiment — supported networks of nonprofits and other organizations to plan, learn, and build relationships that would enable them to work together to achieve common goals. In short, the CBF made grants to organiza-

tions to learn together so that they could achieve together. The CBF was supported by board-designated funds from a special revenue stream.

This report recounts and reflects on the entire eight-year journey and is greatly enhanced by candid and thoughtful comments from many of the participants. The work of the many networks of nonprofits supported by the CBF is impressive in itself. Perhaps equally important is the fact that TSNE and the grantees learned together. Our hope is that TSNE's experience in laying the groundwork for collaboration and supporting the self-defined needs of organizations and communities will inspire other funders to follow a similar path.

In order to place the work of CBF networks in context, TSNE asked former staff member Maria Elena Letona, Ph.D., to conduct a literature review of networks in 2009. Her work contributed importantly to many aspects of this report. We use the term “learning network” to describe each CBF grantee network, but other terms such as “coalition,” “collaboration” or “partnership” are equally applicable. The meaning of “network” is straightforward enough, describing a group of people and/or organizations coming together in common purpose to accomplish what they cannot accomplish on their own. It is what goes on in networks — or what gets exchanged in them — that differentiates one group from another.

The networks supported by the CBF mirror the practical definition in the book, *Networks That Work* by Paul Vandeventer and Myrna Mandell:

- “What: Many different organizations working in concert.
- Who: Organizations, institutions, governmental agencies, corporations, foundations.
- Why: Around a common, defined purpose.
- How: As equal partners.”

# Background and History of the Capacity Building Fund

The Capacity Building Fund (CBF) represented a new approach to grantmaking for Third Sector New England (TSNE), a nonprofit management support organization serving the New England region primarily. The mission of TSNE is to help create a more just and democratic society by building the knowledge, power, and effectiveness of nonprofit organizations that engage people in public life. In addition to its fiscal sponsorship, executive transitions, consulting and training programs, TSNE has been a grantmaker, albeit on a small scale, since 1990. In 2001 it began to make capacity-building grants to help strengthen individual nonprofit organizations in such areas as governance, fund development, and technology.

In early 2003, consultant Deborah Linnell conducted a review of the grant program and concluded that making grants to individual nonprofits to build their fundraising and other administrative capacities could produce results, but was not the most effective way to build long-term capacity for larger social change. Linnell joined TSNE later that year and was charged with coordinating the redesign of the Capacity Building Fund in 2004 to stimulate the kind of meaningful social change that TSNE sought to support. TSNE then commissioned a report written by Laurie Goldman, Ph.D. of Tufts University, to present a framework for thinking about the work required for organizations to join together to pursue their goals for social change. Dr. Goldman defines that goal in “The Tasks of Partnership: Collaborating, Connecting, Communicating, Coordinating, Coaching, and Championing for Social Change”:

“Social change is how we transform institutions and systems, advocate for policy reform, develop our sense of ourselves and one another as powerful agents, and build vibrant communities and influential movements.” (Goldman, May 2012).

The new Capacity Building Fund grant program marked an important shift for Third Sector New England away from funding individual organizations to a more comprehensive strategy of funding collective learning projects of self-defined, nonprofit networks in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The basic concept was that through a shared learning experience, each organization would gain new skills and knowledge to further its own mission. At the same time, the learning network of organizations would develop the capacity to work jointly to tackle issues beyond the scope and power of any single organization.

TSNE did not define the learning agenda or dictate the composition of the learning networks. Instead, the aim was to support the kinds of initiatives that, for a variety of reasons, are often relegated to the back burner or not funded at all. In the early stages, staff accepted proposals that were more conceptual than fully delineated. Through the CBF,

TSNE provided strategic financial support to nurture exploration, experimentation, and learning.

Grants were made to a lead network organization to convene groups of five or more other organizations that wished to work in unison to address an issue of shared concern. Although in practice most grants were made to networks comprised solely of nonprofits, grantees could be a mix of nonprofit, civic, and faith-based organizations, along with businesses and unions—in short, any group willing to work with other partners to make a positive impact at the community level. The preference was for newer, less entrenched groupings of partners, which, it was thought, might have more openness and adaptability to the kinds of processes and outcomes CBF was seeking to support. Over time, this perspective changed, and CBF ended up supporting more existing networks of organizations.

Ultimately, 67 learning networks were funded across Massachusetts and Rhode Island between 2004 and 2011. Grantee networks received initial planning awards in the \$4,000-to-\$5,000 range based on a three-page letter of intent that described the learning group's purpose, intended collective learning, and ultimate goal. During each funding cycle, a grant review committee selected about 15 networks for funding from a pool of about 65 applicants. The small grants supported an in-depth planning process.

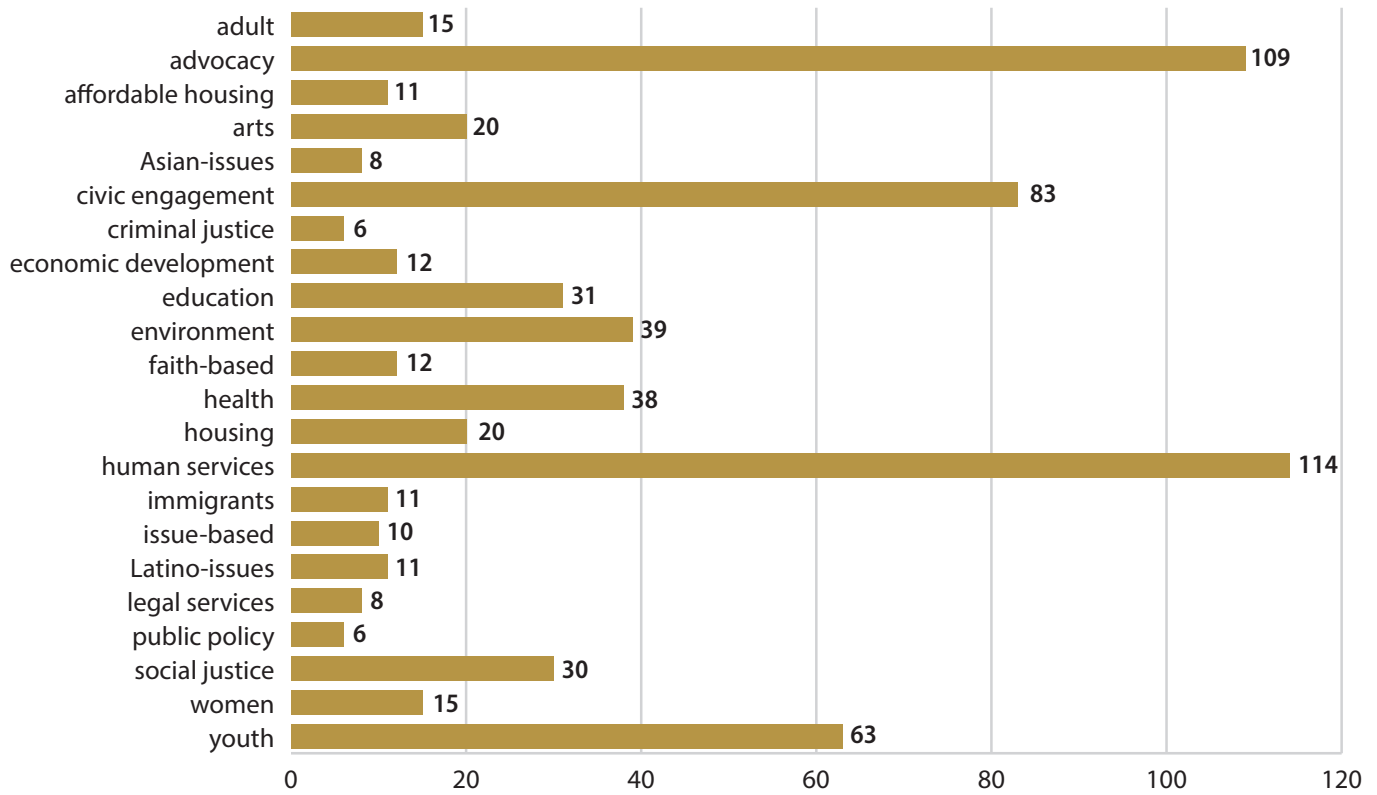
Many of the planning grantees followed up 12 to 18 months later with Implementation proposals that described the collective learning project in greater depth. Typically, nine or 10 were funded at \$20,000 to \$25,000. Groups received Implementation grants to build their long-term capacity for social change. In two instances, the CBF provided a second round of Implementation funding (called Continued Learning grants) to further the collaborative efforts.

Many organizations from the human services and advocacy fields embraced this network-building plan, and thus organizations in these fields received the bulk of the grants for planning, but many other nonprofit fields were represented as well. In addition, more than half of CBF grantees were networks outside the Boston area that typically have fewer available resources and have, by necessity, developed strong collaborative skills. The CBF provided an opportunity for those groups to learn from each other and to share their collective knowledge and experience with other groups in Boston and beyond that were not yet as actively involved in collaboration.

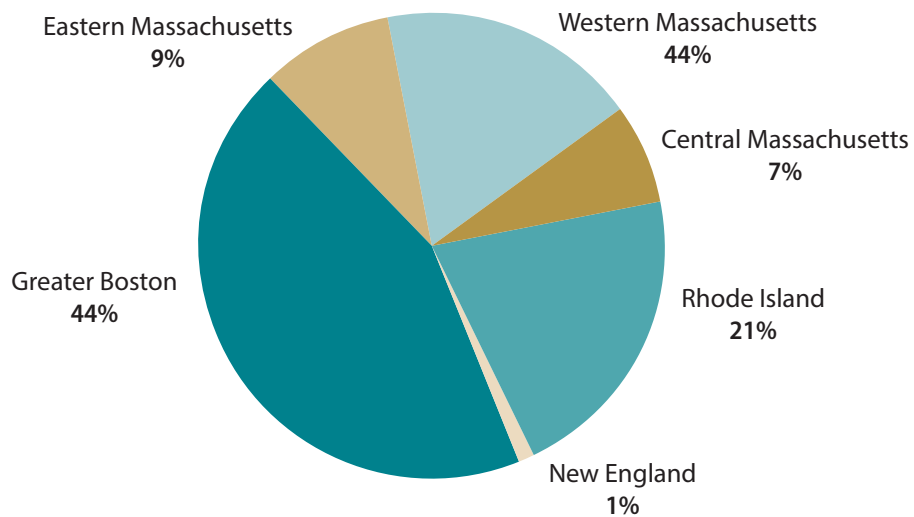
To continue to refine the CBF and gain further insight about learning networks, TSNE staff member Heather Harker conducted an internal evaluation in 2007. Her findings confirmed some of the key assumptions underlying the program, such as the value of peer learning and the need to fund time for organizations to plan. The evaluation also confirmed that both process and trust building played significant roles in the success of a network. At the same time, the evaluation pointed to practical changes that improved the funding process:

- The deadline for planning grants was changed so that applicants would not have to complete the bulk of the work during the summer.
- The time for planning grantees to develop their Implementation proposals was increased from four to six months.
- Second-year Continued Learning grants were introduced.

## GRANTEES WORKED ACROSS MANY FIELDS:



## GRANTEES WERE LOCATED ACROSS THE REGION:



# Assumptions Underlying the Design of the Capacity Building Fund

The Capacity Building Fund (CBF), as a funding strategy, assumed that social change could be achieved to a greater effect by investing in groups of organizations working toward a collective community or social impact, rather than by awarding grants to individual organizations.

In light of steadily increasing competition for funding, this emphasis on collaboration is particularly timely. Money for innovation, research and development—what might be called “risk money”—is always in short supply in the nonprofit sector. In addition, some foundations have begun to disinvest in small community groups that are at the heart of social change and funding for social justice work is still a very small part of the philanthropic agenda nationally.

The CBF sought to create a new support structure that would model ways for small groups to work together, build power, and leverage funding from other sources to support their joint efforts. With this long-term goal in mind, the CBF was committed to supporting the work of building networks that might not have an immediate outcome, but engaged organizations in a learning process that would build capacity to achieve common goals.

With a commitment to building capacity for nonprofit organizations through networks that are built to change, not built to last, the CBF abandoned traditional funding strategies to support learning networks that broke down barriers between nonprofits and other likeminded organizations and that responded instead to self-identified needs from the field.

Consulting and grant program staff at TSNE, in conjunction with colleagues at TSNE’s affiliate Center to Support Immigrant Organizing, designed the Capacity Building Fund program. In doing so, they drew on their significant experience working with nonprofits, building collaborations and coalitions, and evaluating both collaborative endeavors and traditional project-based funding for individual nonprofits.

***In light of steadily increasing competition for funding, this emphasis on collaboration is particularly timely.***

The following list of assumptions represents the thinking of TSNE program designers as well as new assumptions that coalesced as the CBF evolved. While not every assumption proved to be correct consistently across all grant cohorts, each assumption did bear out at some points with any number of individual networks.

- People, and the organizations they represent, will learn better and more quickly with their peers than in isolation.
- Even large nonprofit organizations cannot achieve scale to create social change in isolation; networks of nonprofits are more effective.
- Networks composed solely of nonprofits may not be able to achieve social change alone. Cross-sector networks (schools, government, businesses, faith-based organizations, unions, etc.) are more successful than individual nonprofits or homogeneous groups of nonprofits. Just as citizen activists have to come together and not be constrained by any individual sector, groups in various sectors and fields can learn from each other and have more impact and power in addressing common issues.
- Groups will have more success accomplishing goals that they have set for themselves rather than objectives defined by outside parties. Nonprofit and other organizations can best define what they need to learn without being constrained by standard foundation-defined areas for capacity building.
- Process is as important as product. It is essential to give groups the time to articulate and then implement the processes that lead to desired outcomes.
- Implementation will proceed more smoothly if people have the time and opportunity for planning. With time to plan, people are better able to make decisions and determine how to best steward minimal resources. In addition, the planning process helps build the strong ties and trust that will move implementation forward.
- Newer groups, rather than existing collaborations and coalitions, will bring a clean slate to the process of learning and formulating plans to address a community issue of common concern.

# Emerging Themes and Important Trends

One of the most exciting aspects of the CBF was the opportunity it created to be in dialogue with practitioners about what was for TSNE a new approach to supporting community change. Those who helped shape the CBF as well as the participants who received funding support for their network building efforts were able to take advantage of opportunities to gather to reflect on the experience and to look at the big picture impact of their work. At CBF, we created regular opportunities to evaluate and analyze what we were hearing from funded networks and share that information in a way that would benefit others engaged in similar efforts.

*There are several “big picture” lenses on this work—everything from possible stages that network development might follow to key roles that seem to make these efforts more successful...*

The research and writing of this report has offered us an opportunity to look back on that conversation historically, engage in further dialogue with practitioners, and develop an emerging clarity about the possible implications of this work. What follows is a product of this process of integrating lessons learned and an attempt to answer the questions: Why does this matter? What is the potential impact of what we have seen?

There are several “big picture” lenses on this work—everything from possible stages that network development might follow to key roles that seem to make these efforts more successful; from consistent “how-to’s” that have emerged across collaborative efforts to ways in which learning to collaborate is affecting community-change processes. We share these “emerging themes and important

trends” in the collaborative spirit in the hopes that by doing so, we can stretch our learning to its next phase, engage others in the conversation, and make a contribution to the developing field of collaborative work and network development. We hope what is shared here excites you and fills you with hope and new ideas. It certainly has done those things for us.

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING NETWORKS

Although the networks were organized around differing issues and goals and had their own individual characters, many moved through similar stages of network development. The first stage tended to be the most clear-cut. Member organizations focused on getting to know each other, developing trust, and sharing their needs. From this process, networks began to develop a common vision, determine the focus of their work, and identify how each member would contribute. At this initial stage, some networks reported that one person, or a small group of people, took the initiative to move the group forward.

Subsequent phases of network development were less distinct and were not experienced in the same way across networks. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some general conclusions. Often, the second stage was characterized by a much broader sense of shared ownership and greater participation by all members. Individual organizations began to identify more strongly with the larger coalition and to consider their membership as a key part of their work. At this stage, members often began to “brand” their network by developing a website, for example, or working on a collaborative funding proposal. This greater sense of partnership was an important stage in the development of the network and greatly enlarged its scale of work and impact on the community.

The third significant stage occurred when networks felt the need to begin the transition to a more permanent structure, often at the conclusion of CBF Implementation funding. While some members expressed concern that a more traditional structure would be too constricting, others were convinced that the networks would not be able to continue to function on limited resources and staffing. They insisted that clear roles should be defined—and supported by member organizations—for the network to survive.

The CBF ultimately evolved into three stages of grants, which in many ways mirrored and supported the three key phases of network development:

- **Initial Planning grants** supported relationship building, enabling networks to decide what they wanted to learn and to address and set up operating structures.
- **Implementation grants** helped networks coalesce as they addressed challenges such as member turnover, different readiness factors, unequal involvement of members, and the tension between allowing time for the process of network building and the desire for results.
- **Continued Learning grants** helped to solidify networks by supporting paid staff persons to keep the process moving forward once each group had clarity about what it wanted to accomplish. At this point, some networks took steps to institutionalize the members’ learning and to sustain their work.

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ROLES AND FUNCTIONS THAT SERVE AS “SUCCESS DRIVERS”

There is a growing dialogue about the key roles or functions needed for a network to thrive. Most of that dialogue has been about a role now called “weaver” by many in the field. In general, the network weaver is viewed as the person who helps people connect with one another, reach out to new people and incorporate those people into the effort. A weaver is often seen as a “promoter” of relationship building, a core aspect of network activity. In the experience of the CBF, there are various functions related to network development that are critical. They may be considered part of the “weaver” role, or they may have different titles. They include the following:

- **Facilitation:** Developing the agenda, helping encourage groupwide participation, supporting leadership development and participatory process
- **Supporting and revisiting vision development**
- **Holding the big picture for the group and helping to keep the purpose clear**



## Out of Many, One

A number of collaborations described the stage of work in which organizational partners were ready to identify in a stronger way with the larger coalition and name their membership in it as a key part of their work. This stage included opportunities to “brand” the collaboration, e.g., by developing a website or doing joint fundraising using a collaborative proposal, etc. Arriving at this stage represented an important development in a collaborative’s path, one which usually involved closer partnerships and enabled a larger scale of work and impact.

Meg Kerr, who helped found a CBF-funded network called the Coalition for Transportation Choices, describes this stage of their work: “Turf [was] a big issue. I spent hours on the phone with individual members and participants, and we had breakout groups. Every time a subgroup put out a work plan, others would say, ‘You are already doing that; you are branded [for that].’ It was a huge issue. When we moved to transportation, it was already the central work of some of the groups, but we had done enough groundwork [in the first coalition] that it was not a big issue. . . . We [had] built relationships, and we had also established the presence of these coalitions (the Infrastructure Collaborative, the Coalition for Water Security, the Coalition for Transportation Choices) within the wider community. [Eventually] the coalition itself became the entity, and that balancing act between the coalition and your own organization just became less of a challenge. Individual member organizations were pleased to be part of the coalition; they did not need their ‘flag at the top of the flagpole.’ They were OK with the coalition being at the top of the flagpole.

“It is [also about] naming, a culture, getting a website, participating as a coalition, speaking to power as a coalition and with your home base organization. When you’re operating, [you have to have] ‘rules of engagement’ as a coalition. So, for example, as a member of the coalition, you can’t [publicly] disagree with a position the coalition is taking or you have to leave. . . . We had rules for our coalition. It needs to be stated because you’re trying to make big changes.

“That’s all part of gaining a strong collaboration. And that helps with the tension between the individual organization and the coalition. If the coalition becomes a respected, powerful voice, then you’re proud to be part of it. It is value added to your member organizations.”

- Note-taking and other documentation tasks that contribute to maintaining institutional memory, capturing the learning, and keeping the group on track
- Coordinating administrative tasks related to calling and holding meetings, communication among network members, and documentation of network plans and activities; and
- Supporting capacity building of individual network members as well as of the network as a whole

In order to identify “success drivers” for networks, it is important to delineate these functions, clarify the skill sets they require, and articulate how they evolve change in relation to network development. Moreover, clarity about the essential functions will facilitate the development of training for these particular roles.

As networks transition to a more institutionalized phase of work, it appears that retaining the more facilitative functions helps keep the networks flexible and viable. To keep the network spirit alive and to build and maintain a culture of collective visioning and joint effort, the relevance of the endeavor must be continually restated and reshaped so that the core commitment to and benefits of collaborative work remain strong.

Another perspective on the core functions that contribute to the success of learning networks is contained in the report prepared by Dr. Laurie Goldman and students at Tufts University (Goldman, May 2012).

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ **META-NETWORKS CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANDED LEARNING AND MUTUAL SUPPORT**

CBF organized quarterly meetings of funded networks, which created a space for joint learning among each cohort of networks. In a sense, this space became a kind of “meta network” primarily linked by the collaborative journey in which each participating network was engaged. Networks reported that these meetings helped rejuvenate them, remind them of the “why” of their efforts and reinforce several key points:

- 1. We’re not alone.**
- 2. This is important work.**
- 3. We are learning things.**

Throughout the seven years of CBF funding, each successive cohort expressed interest in meeting with networks in earlier cohorts in order to learn from one another about the process of network development. We organized such an exchange for the fourth cohort. Not only was it highly beneficial to each of the participating networks, but it generated a level of dialogue about how to deepen and expand the networking that we had not heard previously. Network representatives began to share ways in which CBF could help further their work by helping to convene all of the networks funded by CBF over seven years in order to jointly discover more about what they are learning and achieving in this “new way of working” and understand how to make that work more successful and impactful.

One of the core lessons from CBF’s investment in network development is that if you bring people together and help them to discover common cause, they will end up working more effectively to solve shared problems and will build a network of relationships that is a key resource in that work. Many of those involved in collaborative work speak to the

## Hands Across North Quabbin

Hands Across North Quabbin has been working to “promote a culture of collaborative problem solving” at the community level in the North Quabbin area. Mark Shoul, executive director of HANDS, together with Janet Penn, the founder of another CBF-funded network, the Sharon Pluralism Network, is helping to spearhead the creation of a new “network of networks” called the Massachusetts CommuCulture Changing Learning Network. MCCLN will be comprised of groups that are either 1) developing, coordinating, and leading networks dedicated to building a more collaborative culture; or 2) offering technical support to those efforts. It will help create an infrastructure to support this work statewide in Massachusetts.

When asked about why this next stage of development is so important, Mark Shoul replied: “The reason it’s the next step is there is no harder thing to do in human affairs than to shift an entrenched culture, an entrenched civic culture. And since nobody knows how to do this yet, it requires a tremendous amount of learning from people with different perspectives on how to do this, so we can figure out this problem.” Shoul and his colleagues are applying the same principles and practices of collaborative community problem solving which have shaped the work of HANDS to address this next stage of their work.

As mentioned above, another benefit of bringing together more networks that are addressing a similar issue or using a similar approach is it helps break isolation, offer support, and remind people of the importance of the work.

According to Mark:

“People make rational choices about whether to collaborate [with] people of different backgrounds and points of view based largely on whether they think it can be successful. This belief is a key success driver. And one of the most powerful things that underlines that it can work, that’s it’s worth my while, is there’s a lot of other people doing it. [I believe that] making the currently invisible number of people committed to this shifting culture, new way of working together thing, visible is one of the most powerful things you can do to motivate people to do this hard work.” As is recognized in community-organizing circles, one of the benefits of “getting more people into the room” is that “the potential for collective power,” as Mark calls it, is revealed. According to Mark, “It’s the revealing that’s the game changer. Otherwise, people don’t come together.” Mark, Janet, and their colleagues are attempting to provide these opportunities to those working to build a culture of collaborative problem solving by creating the MCCLN.

importance of continuing to gather wider and wider circles of people involved with networks to share the challenges and lessons learned in those efforts.

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ NETWORK STRUCTURES AS KEY COMPONENTS IN COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Many of the participants in the networks supported by the CBF report the emergence of something new and important: an “infrastructure of relationships” that becomes a vehicle for accomplishing collective change. The relationship building and trust at the core of the network development process can become a resource for other joint efforts. “One of my biggest ‘take-aways’ from this work,” says Phillip Davis, former CBF grants coordinator, “is that if groups can establish a functioning network, then the structure set up to deal with the original challenge becomes a resource for dealing with other challenges as well.” After seven years of observing network development, Davis is convinced that “groups that set up this kind of structure have more impact and are more equipped to solve community challenges.”

As it becomes increasingly clear that networks can play an important role in developing community capacity to achieve social, economic, and political justice, funding agencies are being asked to consider important questions about the most effective means of support. Is the shift to more collaborative work and a structure to support it a key building block in community change work? Are individual organizations hampered in their efforts to make changes in their communities if funders do not invest in a network structure?

In the community-organizing world, people often talk about movement building. In most cases, “movement” refers to cross-cutting streams of activity that reach beyond any set of organizations, that are broad in scope and deep in commitment and impact. Movements build over time and are laid upon a framework of ongoing activity. They often come together or leap forward at key moments, spurred by one act or set of actions. Some activists who are dedicated to building social movements for change believe that networks offer a concrete way to expand beyond a single issue, organization or region. Because they are about shared vision, relationship, joint ownership, and collaboration, they create a vehicle through which something collective can happen. Networks can generate an ever-expanding “infrastructure of relationships” that moves people beyond the individual into a commitment to shared purpose that leads to real progress. In every sense of the word, they offer potential “building blocks” for community change.

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ NETWORKS FACILITATE NEW WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

One of the most frequently mentioned themes that has emerged via the CBF-funded networks concerns the “way of working together” that people are learning and the possible implications of that methodology. Referred to by some as “the methodology of learning networks” (YWCA) and others as “learning to collaborate” (Hands), a description of this method of working together usually includes the following:

- Participatory processes
- Decentralized decision making
- A focus on relationship building

## Connections between the youth development model and approaches to “working in a collaborative way”

A number of networks that the Capacity Building Fund supported were focused on supporting young people in work for social justice. Two of these, Teens Leading the Way (TLTW), based out of United Teen Equality Center (UTEC), and 30 Under 30, an initiative based at several area YWCAs, have helped draw the connections between the approaches that are necessary to help young people transform themselves into agents for change and the work necessary to promote “working together in more collaborative ways.”

## Teens Leading the Way

### “IT’S A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH.”

UTEC is connected to the business of workforce development and, according to Jessica Wilson, former director of development and administrative coordinator for TLTW, that work is all done through an apprenticeship method. For Jessica, the work it took to help young people build collaborative group skills was like an apprenticeship for “soft skills.”

“We had youth at all different levels of development. Some had been through the program before and were willing to take on certain roles and coach other members so that it wouldn’t be the same people doing everything. We allowed a looser structure so that things could unfold as they needed to and things could get invented if they needed to. There were people looking out to see if everyone was OK and participating, or, if the conversation went in an unproductive direction, they could stand up and point that out and ask what people thought. Leadership could come from anywhere, and that was a huge help. The door was open to everyone. The way things were organized reflected the idea of a network; it was a collaborative effort.”

When asked how young people developed these skills and capacities, Jessica added, “That piece was intentional for us. Everyone had the opportunity to lead a meeting or a conference call or a conversation. Youth participated in board meetings, public speaking opportunities. They got the sense that everybody appreciated their point of view, that it was OK for them to speak up about things, and they didn’t need to have as many years of experience or as many years of education—it was OK to say how you felt. [In addition,] we could have one-on-one meetings with someone if they needed it. It took years of cultivating that before [young people] felt comfortable speaking up. But all that background work was key. You have to have those supportive functions to help it gel.”

As a developmental process, learning the skills of working collectively takes time, time that is often not granted or even valued. According to Jessica, “We live in a fast-paced world in which you’re tweeting and Facebooking everything, and you want everything to happen right now, and even a year seems like a long time. But for a network, it’s not. If I look at where we were, at times, it could be frustrating; it seemed like six months later, we were still doing the same stuff. But, that’s how it is, and that’s what I learned reflecting on being a part of this network.

I look at it now and say, “Hey, you put another year in, and all kinds of crazy stuff starts happening.” Extending the time lines is key and is important for funders and networks to hear so they don’t get frustrated. That will give you the traction you need to get to the next level. We always felt that way with the kids we were working with at UTEC. Kids who have dropped out, are system-involved, are young parents, etc. We had to be able to say to them, ‘You’re not going to fix your entire life in

*continued next page*

six months. You took sixteen years to get where you are; it's probably going to take another sixteen years to get you to a new place.' We were constantly battling with the need to produce results over a certain period, and it was outrageous.

"These are values that youth work holds, and yet the funding world seems [to have] decided that this open process is not OK. They keep looking for numbers. We are given a short amount of time to do things. It's so key to reinforce how important these processes are and the time they take. The ability to be participatory and have discussions that lead somewhere is dramatically brought down when you have to be focused on everyone getting a GED by X date."

The experience that CBF had with networks like TLTW helped us to see that, in many ways, the pieces you need in place to help young people transform themselves are the ones we are going to have to have in place if we are going to transform a community or a society. The process is grounded in creating that same opportunity for people to learn, be supported, and transform the ways in which they work together.

## YWCA

### **"YOUNG PEOPLE NEED OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP THESE SKILLS."**

Pam Pollock works with another CBF-funded network called 30 Under 30, which has worked within the YWCAs regionally to develop strategies and processes to involve more young women under 30 in the work and leadership of the YWCA. Pam adds a piece to this story of the connection between youth development work and learning to work collaboratively:

Early on in their process, the YWCAs discovered that they needed to get more young women under 30 into the room if they were going to understand how to involve this constituency more in the organization. Pam notes, "Young women don't have the confidence, the experience, the knowledge base, because they haven't developed that. They haven't had a lot of job experience. But everyone brings something to the table. Our challenge was, how can we use this [opportunity] so these women can become our colleagues as we develop their skills?"

The YWCAs involved in the "learning network," as they called it, developed a leadership program for young women to help them learn the skills necessary to be more involved in the Ys. But, as part of the work done with the now five different cohorts who have moved through the program, Pam and her colleagues have learned a big lesson about the readiness of young women to work together in a collaborative way. "We assumed the young women would use technology to work together [on the team-based projects to which they were assigned]. But we found out that these women are using social media, but they are not [comfortable] talking to one another. It's all text messaging and Facebook. They really didn't know how to do a group process. They just broke the work into pieces and delegated them out to everyone. You find that they don't have the social skills. Even the most accomplished young women don't have that kind of capacity to work together and the social skills it requires. That was what we learned. We thought they would be able to figure that out. They are between 20 and 28 years old and are young adults, but we are going to have to figure out a way to help them learn these skills of collaboration and joint work more directly."

It appears that without opportunities to learn more collaborative ways of working together, they are not often reinforced in the larger society. The work to name these approaches, to implement them, and to continue to learn the "how-to's" of more collaborative endeavors is a critical piece of any transformational process. As Jessica Wilson said, we need to support more "apprenticeships in soft skills," especially among our young people.

- Joint analysis of root causes
- Collective approaches to problem-solving; and
- A willingness to value process equally with product and to recognize process as product

Many describe this way of working as a new “culture” of shared effort that represents a “paradigm shift” from more individualized, isolated, and organizationally based change strategies. Participants in and observers of the increase in “networked” or collaborative activity among nonprofit and community activists describe how this methodology helps cross former boundaries (organizational, geographic, racial or ethnic, etc.) that have evolved in the nonprofit world. There is a recognition that this new way of working needs to be identified and clearly articulated so that it can be more fully understood and practiced.

But almost everyone involved with networks or collaborative endeavors speaks about the very large impact this shift will have. For example, approximately a third of the networks that CBF funded with Implementation grants were organized around a community-change process. Communities that have utilized networks as a way to build participation in community problem solving have described one outcome as “learning a new way of working together”, one that builds toward a more “collaborative culture.” This culture of collaboration is nourished through the more de-centralized, participatory, democratic approaches that tend to dominate network building processes. The consequences of this work, according to those who have begun to apply it to community change processes, include the following:

***Pluralism work... has to do with feelings of safety and belonging, which must be laid on a foundation of mutual understanding and compassion.”***

### **Working across difference**

The Sharon Pluralism Network (SPN), which has been working to create dialogue about and support for a “more pluralistic” community, sees networks as vehicles for learning to work across difference. Through building a collaborative process involving leaders and community members from many different faith, cultural and racial backgrounds, SPN believes people can learn ways to “jointly face common challenges and work toward common purpose.” Participants in SPN believe they are creating a new model for living and learning through their efforts. Pluralism work, they note, “has to do with feelings of safety and belonging, which must be laid on a foundation of mutual understanding and compassion.” SPN’s work has uncovered a shared need for training on deep, compassionate listening as well as experiences of what it looks like to really hear and understand a different point of view. As they continue to convene a group of diverse participants representing the range of communities living in and around Sharon, SPN believes the network is offering those opportunities for contact, understanding, listening, and deep sharing of experience. These opportunities are the basis upon which people can and are learning to work together across their differences.

Hands Across North Quabbin is a CBF-funded network that was formed to “create conditions that lead to an increase in mutual trust between residents of different backgrounds and points of view,” conditions which HANDS members believe “can significantly increase the capacity of residents to cooperate successfully to address [our] community’s



most pressing challenges.” In their work to create spaces for joint learning, relationship building, and action, HANDS has identified a key side effect, what they call a “culture of collaboration.” They believe that by “creating ways to bring people together across social fault lines to do simple things together,” they have built the foundation for broader and deeper work on behalf of the community.

### **Building democratic participation**

The work of networks like Hands Across North Quabbin is focused on creating the “social capital” necessary to catalyze and support joint action for community problem solving. HANDS believes that this social capital comes in the form of trusting relationships. The dialogues, projects, and evaluation processes which have been the core of HANDS’ work have created a vehicle for people to talk together about the pressing needs of their community, come up with progressively larger ways to tackle those problems, and learn from those activities in order to expand their efforts on behalf of the community. HANDS’ activities offer an entry point for people to participate in and learn about community-change processes. They create ways for people to get involved, to participate, and to build a foundation of relationships and experiences that will invite and allow others to participate as well. These components, which allow people to discuss their community’s problems, come to agreement about ways to improve the community, and offer ways for people to get involved, are cornerstones for civic engagement, citizen participation and democracy building. Mark Shoul, the executive director of Hands Across North Quabbin, talks about “building local democracy via dialogue and joint action,” something he calls “deliberative democracy.”

In this case, and in many more, networks which bridge diverse organizations, geographic areas, populations, and issues are creating vehicles for people to participate in the decisions affecting their lives. Many believe that these kind of collaborative endeavors are critical to the larger society’s task of building democracy.

### **Re-weaving community ties—Rebuilding community**

One last related lens through which to view the “learning how to work together” facet of network development is the lens of community building. Many participants in CBF-funded networks have spoken about how network activity helps to create a dialogue about what you can do together that no one person (or organization) is capable of creating on their own. Many view this more collective, collaborative work as an antidote to the more individualistic or organization-centric approaches that have dominated nonprofit and community activity for a long while. Part of what happens when people have time and space to build relationships and an opportunity to develop and implement joint strategies for common purpose is that they are reminded that they themselves have the resources necessary to make change, if they work together. As illustrated by the networks focused on community-change processes, people in networks “re-weave” ties that have been eaten away by the side effects of growth and development in an industrial and technological age. They are reminded that trusting relationships and a sense of mutuality are at the core of any community, and the knowledge that we are all “in it together” inspires commitment and clarifies purpose in the face of complex societal problems.



## Sharon Pluralism Network

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIP AND RE-WEAVING COMMUNITY AS PART OF A STRATEGY FOR “WORKING ACROSS DIFFERENCE”

The leaders of the Sharon Pluralism Network say their work to create a more “pluralistic community” has focused on building relationships and mutual understanding. “A lot of the work with SPN was getting people to the table and building the relationships, which took an unbelievable amount of time,” says Beth Hoke, director of SPN. “Most of the projects were gatherings to build a sense of community—photo exhibits, [cultural evenings], dialogues, film, etc...”

Adds Janet Penn, founder of SPN and current director of YouthLead, “Bringing people together around common cause is one model; another is [offering] people [opportunities] to understand people who are different from [them]. [We think this is essential in situations] where there needs to be more bridge building as opposed to divisiveness. We don’t bring people together because we want to do a specific project. Instead, we have this idea that the town would be better served if people could work better together in general.”

According to Beth, “Research shows that if people are more homogeneous, there tends to be more social capital within a community. People who are different from each other don’t tend to come together and work together, so that’s what we are trying to get at.”

SPN leaders and their allies have learned that a core piece of working across difference in their community has been to overcome the fear that separates longer-term and newer community members who bring cultural, racial, and religious differences, to name but a few. As noted by Beth and Janet:

“Fear is a very powerful motivator in human beings. When people are really fearful, they are not going to listen. I don’t know if [people] articulate it as fear. It gets translated into dislike or mistrust of people who are different from you. They wouldn’t say, ‘I’m fearful of them.’ It’s more that you fear they—people who are different from you—are going to take resources from you that you want to have. In a town where new people come in, the people originally there see their life and their home changing, and they have no control over that.”

One of SPN’s approaches has been to have cultural-awareness workshops in which immigrants have talked about their experiences and why they might react in certain ways to certain parts of life in the U.S. “For example,” says Beth, “one of the people who agreed to be on the [cultural-awareness] panel was a woman who was a surgeon in Russia and has been working with the woman who teaches the ESOL classes. She told a story about walking here in her neighborhood when the police stopped her because someone else had reported a suspicious person in the area. This woman was terrified by the fact that the police had stopped her [because her experience of the police in her home country had been so bad]. She came and talked and told that story. The police officers in the room were really struck by how afraid she was. They had no idea she would be so fearful. This woman went back to her community to say that police here are OK, and her friends saw a person they know and like not fearing the police. [It’s] a small piece, but she overcame her fear. Hopefully that’s how you make change. That is the nature of this work.... [It shows] how important it is to have the time to have relationship.”

Through its long-term efforts to use networks and collaborative efforts to build relationship and understanding across difference, SPN is helping people overcome the fears they have that newer members of the community will threaten their “way of life” by helping people to discover how they are also similar, how they all seek to be understood, respected, and valued as contributing members of the community. It is like helping people to find the road back to that shared need for community and promote their ability to build it with one another. “You have to reconstruct the community with new people included,” notes Beth. “We tend to vilify the old people who don’t want change, but it’s natural for people to want to keep what they are comfortable with, [what they have benefited from].”

Building a culture and practice of collaborative problem solving and mutual support also helps reinforce a sense of belonging and a sense of being valued, which are basic human needs. As representatives in CBF's fourth cohort of grantees shared at their last meeting, "It is now more second nature for people to reach out to each other." We at CBF believe this reinvigoration of community ties is a key ingredient in any investment in community change.

## MOVING PAST THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONSTRUCT, THE ORGANIZATIONAL FORM OR ORGANIZATIONS AS THE MAIN VEHICLE FOR CHANGE

At a gathering of funders of network activity organized jointly by Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) in 2011, speakers challenged participants to look beyond the current organizational framework in the nonprofit sector. Over and over, participants talked about a new way of working that crosses organizations, constituencies, issues, and geographic locations and builds connectivity powered by openness, trust, sharing, mutual support, and a shared commitment to more creatively and collectively working to address the world's problems. The energy this process has unleashed is infectious, and the patterns of work it is creating are new and different. Many spoke about where these new forms of work will take us, how fast this process is unfolding, and whether the organizational form will be relevant in a couple of decades (or less!).

Network activists spoke to the problem of having a capacity-building paradigm that is ill-suited to more collaborative endeavors because it is rooted in models of "organizational effectiveness" which don't necessarily incorporate the lessons of these newer forms of work for change.

Certainly it is important to recognize that organizations are not going to disappear anytime soon, and people need some kind of structure within which to define, plan, carry out, and evaluate their efforts. But it is also critical to remember that organizations are a vehicle for larger-level change, a strategy—one among many—for problem solving and progress on large issues.

As those issues get larger and more complex, and as we take an honest look at the effectiveness of "organization-centric" models of fundraising, planning, and community involvement, it is important to stay open to emergent ways of working and the paradigm shift they might portend. One speaker at the GEO conference called upon participants to experiment, make mistakes, and make efforts to "operate out of this emergent form in order to push change forward." There was a shared perspective that only through doing things differently and reaching out beyond normal boundaries and constructs for our work can we tap into what is most exciting and promising about this network "phenomenon" and experience perhaps a new paradigm for working together for the common good.

Within the CBF-funded network world, we have also felt a kind of unleashing of new energy, of working and thinking "outside the box" of standard practice. Participants in CBF-funded networks have talked about "paradigm shifts" in their thinking and the challenges of operating in those new ways while the old structures still predominate. We sense the importance and feel the potential of the new forms of work we have been supporting, and we need and want to work with others to understand fully their implications for the work we most care about—the work of community change.

# Lessons Learned by CBF-Funded Networks

Bringing organizations together was a central concept of the Capacity Building Fund. Third Sector New England regularly hosted orientation meetings for planning grantees and quarterly meetings of each cohort of grantee networks. The quarterly meetings created a meta-network of grantees—a network of networks where participants could learn from each other and offer mutual support. Network representatives were very candid in these sessions in discussing their challenges and sharing the lessons that they learned along the way. This section distills the key lessons and offers firsthand testimony to the power of networks.

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ LESSON 1: **Process is product.**

Perhaps the area of learning that has been most frequently named by CBF-funded network participants is the importance of the process aspects of the work of network development. Whether it was about the “culture of working collaboratively” or relationship building as the core “outcome” of the network, participants spoke of either the importance of the process elements to achieving desired outcomes or named those process pieces as outcomes in and of themselves. Perhaps this dichotomy is a false one, and the biggest piece of learning is that process is outcome.

***“Bringing people together who have never talked is a result; it’s new engagement.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“It’s empowering to bring together similar organizations that were previously isolated. It’s hard to get people to realize that coming together was a big success. People had met via the network, and when a homicide happened, they were better able to work together in response.”***

—Fields Corner Connect

***“Failure isn’t the end of the world. The important thing is to learn from failures and to bounce back for the next time. Instead of agonizing over everything in an effort to be perfect, an attitude to try something even if we’re not sure about it has helped us grow and learn from experience.”***

—Y4C

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ **LESSON 2: Relationship building is the crux of the process and the key to achieving outcomes.**

The core role relationship building plays in the development of collaborative endeavors was reinforced by virtually all funded networks. But perhaps more importantly, there has been a shared realization that unless time is created and processes are developed that facilitate the development of deep and lasting relationships, desired outcomes will simply not be achieved or will not be sustainable. The key role of trust in this process has been highlighted, and there has been a strongly expressed desire to share lessons about the components or stages of the relationship-building process.

- The most important part of this process is the relationship building which unfolds from the start, and the core piece of that relationship building is the development of trust.

***“You need to develop trust, build relationships, and learn how to hear each other before you do more difficult work together.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“Learning about different approaches and developing trust is the cornerstone for successful multiethnic worker organizing and leadership development. Because management divides workers, using racism and xenophobia to keep the workers apart, when workers build alliances and come together, it breaks management’s most useful weapon against them. Bringing the organizers and directors [of worker centers] together to figure out how to do this best is the pre-condition to being able to develop worker unity across worker centers on a large scale.”***

—Immigrant Worker Center Collaborative (IWCC)

***“Developing trust is developing social capital.”***

—Mark Shoul, Hands Across North Quabbin

### ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ LESSON 3: **How you carry out the process matters.**

There have been several important lessons shared by CBF networks about the kinds of process interventions and practices that promote successful collaborative work. These components of effective process work are critical to raise up and clarify so that this side of the work is further demystified and the “how-to’s” of collaborative process are clarified.

- Develop a shared vision for the joint work so that everyone is clear about purpose. This is a group-building process that is crucial for the network’s development. This vision/shared purpose should be regularly revisited so that folks can be reminded about why they are working together and how what they are working on connects to that larger purpose.

***You have to be clear up front about questions like, “Why are we doing this?,” “Who are we doing this for?,” “What’s the value of all of us coming together?”***  
—CBF Network Participant

***“It’s about how much people see overlap between their own and the collaborative interest. Need is a basic building block of relationship development.”***  
—CBF Network Participant

***“One thing we’ve learned, and I’ve learned in my work in the community, is let’s take the time to really identify our goals and see where everybody is coming from.”***  
—Pam Pollock, 30 Under 30

- Find the appropriate balance or linkage between process and product/outcome in each group.

Discovering the correct balance between process and product for your partnership is a key challenge for all of the networks. Some speak of the need to “keep things educational vs. operational.” Others name the problem of getting too much into project mode vs. dealing with the process and network development. Still others describe the task of balancing the needs of the group with the need to take action. However it is articulated, insights into the process aspects of this work and the struggle to prioritize these aspects equally with the orientation toward outcome is by far the most commonly named area of learning and challenge that surfaced among CBF-supported networks.

***“People are so used to ‘doing’ that the luxury of learning together is difficult to hold onto. We keep slipping back into ‘doing’ of accomplishing projects or tasks.”***  
—Leadership Through Literacy

***“We realized that it was only when we were learning as a group face-to-face that we were able to address the objectives of our implementation plan.”***

—YWCA

***“We are learning not to be too controlling about outcomes and to stick to the process as the major part of what we are learning.”***

—Hands Across North Quabbin

- Take the pulse of the group on a regular basis: Are we learning? Are we making progress? Are participants getting what they need from the group in order to stay engaged?

***“Flexibility is important; if the needs change, then the networks need to change.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“The more frequently you can review the learning together the better.”***

—CBF Network Participant

- Develop a set of basic agreements so that everyone is clear on the roles and responsibilities of group membership. Establish rules of the road to address the locus and process of decision making, conflict resolution, accountability, and other issues that may arise.

***“We developed structures and decision-making systems because we needed community buy-in. We were trying to instill goals of collaboration, and we needed to name the culture clash and get the issues out there. These structures helped create the space to do that work.”***

—University/Community Partnership

***“Networks form in different ways, and they need to develop a structure that fits that path.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“We learned that in order to institutionalize our learning, we needed to hold each other accountable at every meeting, as well as on all assigned tasks.”***

—YWCA

- Bring together people with diverse skills and perspectives, and trust them to do what they do best.

***“The Coalition brings together a range of skills in communication, analysis, background research/information gathering, community mobilization, and working with decision makers that combine to multiply***

***our actual and potential impact on transportation and land-use decisions way beyond anything we could ever manage on our own.”***

—American Lung Association in Rhode Island

***“I did all the grant writing because that’s a skill I have that I was happy to share. Other people had advocacy skills. Others had skill in public outreach, so they would participate in public forums or do work with schools.”***

—Meg Kerr

- Reinforce the need for people to share openly, raise issues, and reflect.

***“There needs to be a willingness and ability to keep coming back when there’s disagreement.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“When you hear resistance, stop and figure out why.”***

—Teens Leading the Way

- Reach out to and engage those most affected by the problem you are seeking to solve.

***“Youth participation builds youth participation.”***

—Social Justice Roundtable

***“You need to get to the broader community—go and broaden, then come back to do the work informed by that broader whole. Then, as you see it begin to narrow, you have to go back out.”***

—Roz Everdell, from DSNi, partner in GOTCHA!

***“We pulled together over 70 Chinese, Brazilian, and Spanish-speaking Latino leaders from the various worker centers to eat Salvadoran pupusas together and to march for immigrant and worker rights in the May Day march and rally. It showed workers that they were part of a broader movement of immigrant workers. It began the process of building relationships among the workers themselves.”***

—IWCC

***“One important lesson we have learned about involving young women in this process is a favorite saying of theirs about this issue: Nothing about us without us.”***

—YWCA

- Celebrate victories, however small.

## Redefining Success

### **Jessica Wilton, Teens Leading the Way (TLTW):**

“Learning to celebrate process is really important to this [work]. To be able to celebrate even things that don’t seem productive as productive is hugely important. This is the culture of UTEC (United Teen Equality Center) and youth development: constant excitement and celebration, even in the face of the most difficult tasks. You have to be able to say, ‘Yeah, we get it, we got it—yeah!’ There are defeats; not everything is going to turn out how you want it to. You have to be able to find something to celebrate there.

“Greg (executive director of UTEC) is really great at finding and celebrating the good. With one of the campaigns at the beginning, kids were calling their representatives to get a bill passed. They were lobbying, and it was hard. But there were parts when they were celebrating just learning how to do the phone script well without stumbling over their words. That part was really important. At the end, they had gotten affirmative ‘signing on’ from X number, which wasn’t quite what was needed. Say we had gotten 40 of the 50 needed to sign—it’s not enough, but it’s pretty darn good. So we went back and said, ‘Although the final thing wasn’t a success, X, Y, and Z were,’ and we even put that in our literature at the time. That’s the story we kept telling inside the network.

“So that’s the story that got told outside the network. Even though the bill didn’t get passed—the thing we all wanted to happen didn’t happen—we looked at ourselves as this really successful group, and the kids were really happy at what they achieved. They knew what the next steps were. They knew what they did right that got them as far as they got, and they could share that story. I think that’s a big part of why, when we went looking for other groups to go forth with the next [stage of the work], which is now TLTW, people signed on. They had heard the story, and they were like, ‘That’s awesome. We want and our teens want to be part of something like that.’ And now they’ve had a whole higher level of success in their efforts to get attention on the voting issue, way beyond what they did in that first round, because they learned a lot the first time.”



■ ■ ■ ■ ■ LESSON 4: **Outcomes are important to everyone.**

Often, when there is an intentional focus on process, people assume that means that product is not a priority, or people assume that outcomes are not being achieved. For these and many other reasons, it is critical to discuss progress on desired outcomes regularly, keep track of that progress by documenting what is being achieved, and create some mechanism to make these achievements continuously accessible to participants. The sustainability of the work is grounded in participants' experiences that the work is making a difference.

- Make the products of collaboration visible to all. It's important to be able to name and capture progress and what that takes. Ideally these "products" should be named in written form in order to build "institutional memory" of what has occurred, to identify what is being achieved as clearly as possible, and to make that information fully accessible to all.

***"Without the product or successes, it can be too much about meetings, so having something to show—a success or product—is important."***

—CBF Network Participant

***"People can come and go, but some products have to be visible."***

— CBF Network Participant

***"Passion drives the work, but you have to articulate goals."***

—CBF Network Participant

- The group needs to engage in a joint experience, share a victory, so that people feel the power of the network/ collaboration. This gives people something they own as an experience, and this shared accomplishment invigorates everyone. You have to see value at an early stage.

***"You need to come up with 'quick, easy wins' that tie into the network's long-term goals and set it up in a way that doesn't bog down the process."***

— ACS (Adolescent Consultation Services): Cultivating Teen Voices

***"Create sizable, realistic, achievable benchmarks for participants and outsiders (like a supervisor or an executive director) so they can see the value of the time spent."***

—CBF Network Participant

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ LESSON 5: **Identifying and assigning clear tasks and roles is a key success driver.**

As mentioned in the section about trends, the importance of clarifying the tasks and roles involved in network development and collaborative endeavors and working to assign those functions is a critical and widely shared lesson learned. CBF has learned much from its observations of participating networks and from its dialogue with those involved in this work. A critical challenge at this juncture is to identify these tasks or roles, define the skills involved in carrying them out and help to build networks' capacity to accomplish these tasks over time.

- You need someone(s) whose job it is to make things happen. Someone needs to own that work. It's important to bring on or have someone to manage the network.

***“Without a coordinator, experience has shown that the partners are not likely to have regular and sustained contact, even though they know it is what keeps the collaboration strong.”*** —Holyoke ABE/WD Collaborative

***“Someone actually has to care about this stuff. It was hugely important to us getting done what we needed to: paring down things that came up into an agenda, making sure there was a place to stay on a retreat, making sure people showed up at meetings, and making sure everyone gets fed! It was a tough role. I think that stuff needs to be shared as much as possible; it doesn't necessarily come naturally. It probably shouldn't be one person trying to do it all.”*** — Jessica Wilson, Teens Leading the Way

- Clarifying and providing the most appropriate and effective facilitation support is essential.

***“It's best if one to two people come from within to facilitate. They should be organized, good at sharing credit, able to listen, and able to manage a meeting. If the facilitator also has other talent or expertise [relevant to the network], that adds to what you do.”***

—Meg Kerr, The Infrastructure Collaborative  
and Coalitions for Transportation Choices

In order for a group to develop a shared vision, identify existing and potential conflicts, and build relationships based on trust and joint effort, it must use the space and time it has together well. One of the most important functions that must be met in a network is that of facilitation. Many of the CBF-funded networks have chosen to use CBF funds to pay for an outside facilitator for the network. Others have identified people in the network who are able to effectively facilitate the process or have rotated that role. A number of networks have described problems they encountered when the facilitator they were using took too much control of the process and didn't let the group and its ideas lead. The task of identify-

ing the kind of facilitation which is the best match for the network and finding that facilitation, either outside or inside the network, is a frequently named core challenge.

***“Facilitators matter. The facilitator’s personality, values, and engagement style have an impact on the group.”***

—Social Justice Roundtable

## ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ LESSON 6: **Organizational buy-in is a must.**

Time and time again, CBF network participants have learned that in order for their organizations to benefit from and contribute to a network-building effort, the leadership of those organizations must understand, believe in, and support the collaborative effort and ideally participate actively. For this “buy-in” to be developed, it must be clear that the organization benefits from the partnership and that its involvement forwards the organization’s mission. Frequently, there are organizational barriers to achieving this buy-in, including issues related to capacity. At the same time, the network must promote buy-in from all of its members in order for the leadership of the network to be truly shared.

- Without full support back in the home organization, participating members may face overwhelming barriers to their ongoing involvement. Executive directors and board members should not only be aware of the organization’s network involvement; ideally, they should be directly involved in that work. If that is not possible or realistic, then there need to be strong channels of communication with organizational leaders about key aspects of their organization’s involvement and its impact.

***“You need to be able to articulate what the learning is and its impact on your organization’s projects.”*** —CBF Network Participant

***“The many discussions of the challenges and benefits of supporting student ownership and leadership that we had as part of our first year’s project helped all of us as administrators remember why we do the work we do and reconnect with the core values that brought us into the field of adult basic education. The most successful connection we made was at the level of directors, who met and shared on a regular basis and explored what it meant to institutionalize student leadership in our programs.”***

—Leadership Through Literacy

***“Have EDs at the table; money to pay for their time is key.”*** —Meg Kerr

- Bringing the learning and relationship building back to each organization that is participating in the network and integrating these gains into the life of the organization is a significant challenge. But a network is only going to be effective if the participating organizations benefit from that participation. Member organizations need proof that participation in the network advances their overall mission.

***“The key to the sustainability of the learning network is that the potential product of the network’s learning needs to be the creation of a new resource that gives the individual network members a dramatically greater capacity to accomplish their individual missions.”***

—Hands Across North Quabbin

***“Our work in the network helped us to learn how to re-engage young women in the life of the organization. That knowledge, put into practice, helped reinvigorate our organization and make it possible for it to perpetuate itself. We created a behavioral change in the way we did the work, and this was key for our sustainability.”***

—YWCA

***“Connecting the community/constituency which the organization serves to the process is a key asset in helping the network’s work to have organizational impact.”***

—CBF Network Participant

- Differing levels of “readiness to collaborate,” including stability of staff, funding, as well as member organizations’ stages of development, affect participation levels. Overcoming barriers to participation, including capacity issues, is a key challenge affecting the sustainability of a network.

***“Although we feel that many of the activities the alliance works on are important, often the level of commitment required by Y4C has taken away from the work here at DARE due to our own limited capacity and resources.”***

— Department of Planning and Development

***“We paid people for the staff time as an incentive to come to meetings of the network.”***

—Food Bank Network

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ **LESSON 7: One of the most difficult tasks is to make the effort sustainable.**

From the start, CBF networks have struggled with how to continue attracting resources to the work, how to successfully welcome new partners to the effort, and how to sustain the work over the long haul. While funds are often the number one issue mentioned in the conversation about sustainability, maintaining momentum and ongoing commitment from members have also been named as key components of the longevity of these partnerships. These kind of collaborative efforts are often fueled by passion, the vision of a shared goal and a collective path toward that goal and the experience of slowly achieving it. But given the many pressures on a network's individual members, the large number of needs each individual organization faces, the competitiveness of funding efforts, and the ever-changing realities facing the network, it is simply always difficult to sustain the effort over time.

- At key junctures, the partnership needs to build appropriate infrastructure to support the work.

***“Quarterly retreats, bi-monthly meetings, and conference calls served us well.”***

—United Teen Equality Center (UTEC) for Teens Leading the Way

***“Creating some level of structure so that people feel there is momentum and they are being held in a time-effective way is key.”***

—CBF's fourth cohort quarterly meeting

- Networks must be prepared for the inevitable challenge of staff turnover.

***“It is important to have a mechanism for educating newcomers about the network's history and ways of functioning; institutional memory is a key asset that must be continually built.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“Having things documented is really important as people transition in and out. One technique is the creation of a ‘legacy binder,’ which holds materials from everything the network has done, including what has been learned about a position or experience and guidelines for a next person.”***

—Y4C, taken from AmeriCorps practice

***“Since trust is a key asset, when new people come in, there has to be another period in which that trust is built. Sometimes it just takes time for people to work together enough that they feel ‘brought into’ the circle.”***

—United Teen Equality Center (UTEC)

- Share work in a fully collaborative manner to create smoother transitions in leadership.

***“When the chair of the Coalition for Transportation Choices left, there was a lot of concern from the Rhode Island Foundation that it would be the end of the coalition. But it ended up not even really being a bump in the road. We kept chugging along; we had our systems in place. The secret was that we never hired anybody. Our money went to paying member organizations to be at the table. We had high-level people from member organizations at the table. And we all got stipends to do work for the coalition.”***

—Meg Kerr, Coalition for Transportation Choices

- Learn to make decisions about funding, develop a joint proposal, and do collective fundraising. Learning to talk in terms of the collaborative effort and to do collective fundraising is a key benchmark for network sustain-ability. Networks must also educate and excite funders about the exponential power of collective efforts.

***“It is necessary to educate funders about the strengths of network activity in terms of achieving the goals the funder hopes to achieve.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“It helps to create talking points for funders to guide your meetings with them.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“Gather materials detailing the success of this model of working in other parts of the country and use them as informational resources in your meetings with funders and as adjuncts to your proposals.”***

—CBF Network Participant

***“A critical success factor is commitment on the part of the funders to take a funding risk, sustain the project over time, and pay for project management and consulting support.”***

—The Land and Water Partnership’s Infrastructure Collaborative: RI Rivers

- Build network-wide participation and ownership.

***“We all believed that funding was important. It allowed leaders of organizations to sit at the table, plan the work, and execute the work, so you weren’t relying on the staff or interns who often ended up getting coalition assignments. If it is funded, it can become a part of the key work of each organization.”***

—Meg Kerr, Coalition for Transportation Choices

# Payoffs for Collaboration

Investing in collaborative work can yield big returns to individual participants, organizations, communities, and entire fields of work. That's one of the most exciting findings to emerge from Third Sector New England's meetings with grantees, and it should be equally encouraging to individual organizations or to funding agencies seeking to boost the impact of their efforts. Simply put, if collaborative work is done well, there is a ripple effect on everyone touched by these networks.

## Relationships built in one network can jump-start other coalitions and joint initiatives.

*“The trust that is growing between the coalition members carries over to work in other sectors and other forums.”*

—Conservation Law Foundation,  
referring to Coalition for Transportation Choices

## Participation in a network has a positive impact on individual organizational capacity.

*“All of this interaction has increased our own advocacy abilities for all issues, including use of e-communications and other communication tools. It also has greatly informed our contribution to other coalitions, such as the State Asthma Control Coalition and the Health Action Partnership and suggested ways to strengthen the development of the RI Tobacco Control Network.”* —American Lung Association in Rhode Island

*“We were able to move forward our own organizing agenda through the Y4C mayoral candidates forum. There, candidates responded directly to our questions about the Gang Unit and the Gang Database in a way that they hadn't in a setting where they were dealing with PrYSM alone.”*

— PrYSM, regarding Y4C

*“The young women have developed a network that is social, professional, and dynamic. They have called upon each other for information, shared opportunities, and advice. The Learning Network continues to become embedded in the culture of the YWCA and has become the way we do our business in developing programs.”*

—YWCA

*“One of the participants is new to the area and spoke about coming in and not knowing much about anything going on in the community. The collaboration has helped her learn a lot about the various agencies and make connections and contacts that have helped her do her job better. Her learning curve was shortened considerably because of the regular meetings with the partners.”*

—Holyoke ABE/WD Initiative

**By working together in networks, organizations increase impact on the issue of shared concern. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.**

*“Y4C has taught us how to structure a large and complex group process. We went from the original vision for Y4C to creating a structure for working together and building a foundation for citywide voice, to working on defining youth rights and getting the attention of local policy makers. Now we are poised to lead a collective campaign around education and transportation. How we made it here was both organic and strategic. Our organization has seen that we can accomplish so much more with our new friends, and now we are ready to do more.”*

—Youth in Action

*“While the coalition dynamic has meant that it takes some time to develop our shared policy positions, the result has been more focused, coherent, and more broadly appealing than any of the individual groups could have generated.”*

—Clean Water Fund

*“Hands Across North Quabbin plays a critical role for us in helping us to set up these meetings in the community because of their previously established connections. HANDS also has the cachet to influence our school committee and other community members of the importance of support for these service learning projects.”*

—Athol-Royalston Regional School District  
Superintendent Anthony Polito

**Working together in a collaborative way builds power.**



## Too Many to Ignore

### **A story from a network leader (Meg Kerr, from the Infrastructure Collaborative and the Coalition for Transportation Choices):**

“There is an Environmental Council here in Rhode Island that wasn’t as strong and powerful as it needed to be, so that had to be talked about. What came out of that conversation was what became the Coalition for Water Security. We picked river flow and water supply as the issue to work on because it was not front and center in any one organization’s portfolio. It was an important state issue, but we weren’t walking on the turf of any existing organization. That was very clear to us all; we talked about that being why we picked that issue.

“The Coalition for Water Security worked together with funding from the Rhode Island Foundation and many other foundations for three to four years. Intentionally from the beginning of that coalition, the purpose was building relationships and building the strength of the political clout of the environmental movement in Rhode Island. And other objectives had to do with sustainable water management. But we always had that dual focus, and we always checked back in at the end of the year, evaluating what we were doing. We had made an early statement that we weren’t trying to start a new organization; we wanted to kick-start an issue, get the attention politically it needed so that we could move management forward, but then we were going to back out and let the ‘regular’ organizations continue to move the issue forward. ... A key goal for all the work has been to raise the importance of the issue and make real policy change within the state.

“When you get a larger number of organizations together—and Rhode Island is small—[and you] get all the organizations reading off the same sheet of music and saying the same thing, and making this a top priority issue for this large organization, decision makers have to pay attention. That’s what this collaboration is all about.”



# Recommendations for Funders

Over the course of eight years, Third Sector New England's Capacity Building Fund (CBF) has drawn together about 450 organizations to work in 67 learning networks. The experience offers ample proof that networks of nonprofit organizations can build the capacity to create real social change. Money is always a critical factor, but so is time—the time for participants to learn from each other, build trust, and make lasting connections. The success of learning networks rests on the willingness of participants—and funders—to give as much weight to the process of relationship building as to the achievements that will come from strong collaborative efforts.

Reflecting on the CBF experience, Jessica Wilson of Teens Leading the Way noted that “This grant and this process was so much different from other collaborative funding efforts I’ve done before because it was all about the process and letting us reflect on how we work together rather than just what we accomplished. Both are important,” she said. “I’ve looked and not found other grants like this.

“From my experience over seven years working in Lowell,” Jessica continued, “the [initiatives] that have been further reaching, more memorable, more impactful, more lasting, and more fun have these components.

For funding organizations seeking to stimulate and support collaborative efforts, TSNE offers the following recommendations:

- 1.** Make these kinds of grants. It's exciting and furthers the capacity to build social capital in community-based settings. Based on the work of Milward and Provan, the impact can be far greater than making conventional grants to individual nonprofit organizations.
- 2.** Provide enough resources for the soft process goals. Recognize that building relationships and trust and developing mutuality are early and important outcomes. They lay the foundation for significant community impact.
- 3.** Commit to long-term funding of networks. Because process is so important, networks do not produce tangible results as quickly as individual organizations. But the payoff is so much greater that it is worth the wait.
- 4.** Use experienced, credible intermediaries to coordinate the work to avoid dysfunctional power dynamics and to enable grantee voices to be heard loud and clear.
- 5.** Do not overdesign initiatives—or better yet, do not design them at all; allow initiatives to seed themselves at the community level. The funder's role is to provide water for the seeds; the network's role is to provide definition to a common purpose and the way for people to work together to achieve that purpose. This may require program

staff to seek emergence, connectivity, and mutuality of purpose among leaders, nonprofits, and other organizations when seeking out investment opportunities.

6. Seed conversations on issues of community concern that must be tackled by more than one organization or group of nonprofits and see who comes to the table. Pay for the time of interested people and groups who want to continue to convene. Before rushing to implement goals, ask groups what they need to learn together and what processes they need to develop. Support the learning process first as a means to arrive at a goal-oriented plan of action.
7. Emphasize convening and human interaction over technology. The literature is in agreement that networks are the ideal organizational form to facilitate learning and innovation. As our economy has evolved from an industrial to a service economy, note Hardt and Negri, the most valued products or commodities exchanged in the labor market are knowledge, images, communication, cooperation, and ideas. Walter Powell in *Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization* notes that, generally speaking, whenever the knowledge, information, or learning is “largely intangible, highly mobile, and fungible” and where the information cannot be easily “codified, purchased, or appropriated,” the network, as organizational form, will be the best suited for disseminating information, as well as generating new knowledge and innovation.

Most literature assumes that learning networks will make extensive use of technology—email, blogs, wikis, etc.—because it transcends geographic boundaries and speeds the ability to access and share information. Some grant recipients noted that technology may play a role, but that face-to-face meetings remain the most important vehicle for creating a successful network. In their 2004 analysis of 21 learning networks, Brown and Salafsky discovered that none of the research learning networks were exclusively virtual. As they note, “Human interaction may be more important than technology to learning.” (Brown and Salafsky, 2004).

## Conclusion

External factors caused Third Sector New England to put its grantmaking programs on hold during 2012. But our experience with eight years of the Capacity Building Fund was not a one-off initiative. We are now drawing on the lessons we learned during that time to develop a new grantmaking program and integrating this learning into our other capacity-building programs. It is our firm belief that making grants to networks, if authentically informed and guided by direct community input on design and implementation, is a highly effective and impactful form of philanthropy.

# List of Participating Groups and Networks

In addition, we'd like to thank the fantastic organizations and individuals who participated in the Capacity Building Fund Nonprofit Networks initiative:

## PARTICIPATING GROUPS

2to1: The Coalition to Preserve Choice  
50-Member Network  
A Cookie Place  
A New Leaf  
ABCD Health Services  
ACT Roxbury  
Action for Boston Community & Development, Inc.  
Adolescent Consultation Services  
Adult Education for the Holyoke Public Schools  
Adult Literacy Resource Institute  
Adult/Parent Education and Juntos ABE  
AIDS Project Worcester  
All of Us or None  
Alliance for Healthcare Workforce Development  
Allston Brighton CDC  
American International College  
American Lung Association  
Amherst College  
Amherst Survival Center  
AS220 Broad Street Studio  
Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence  
Association of Fundraising Professionals (Rhode Island Chapter)  
Association of Haitian Women in Boston  
Athol Interfaith Clergy Association  
Athol Lions  
Athol-Royalston Regional School District  
Attorneys of Color Group  
Audubon Society of Rhode Island  
A.W.A.K.E  
Barnstable County Department of Human Services  
Barrington Land Conservation Trust  
Bay Area Neighborhood Council  
Baystate Medical Center  
Behavioral Health Clinic  
BELL  
Berkshire Community Action Council  
Berkshire Food Project  
Berkshire Grown  
Bethel A.M.E. Church  
Big Brothers/Big Sisters  
Bird Street Community Center  
Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center  
BOSTnet  
Boston Adult Literacy Fund  
Boston Arts Academy  
Boston Faith and Justice Network  
Boston Living Center  
Boston Medical Center, Domestic Violence Program  
Boston Missionary Baptist Church  
Boston Neighborhood Producers' Group  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Boston Tenant Coalition  
Boston University School of Social Work  
Boston Workers Alliance  
Boston Youth Moves  
Boston Youth Sports Initiative  
Bowdoin Street After School Program  
Bowdoin Street Health Center  
Boys and Girls Club of Cumberland-Lincoln  
Boys and Girls Club of East Providence  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Newport County  
Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket  
Boys and Girls Club of Providence  
Boys and Girls Club of Warwick  
Boys and Girls Club of Woonsocket  
Brazilian Immigrant Center  
Brazilian Worker Center  
The Brien Center  
Bridge Over Troubled Waters  
Bromley-Health Tenant Management Corporation  
Brookline Mental Health Center  
Brookview House  
Building Impact  
Cacique Youth Learning Center for Teens  
Cambridge Community Television  
Cambridge Educational Access  
Cambridge Eviction Free Zone  
Cambridge Family and Children's Service  
Camp Street Community Ministries  
Cape Cod Community College  
Cape Verdean Community UNIDO  
The Care Center  
Career Point  
Caribbean U-Turn  
Catholic Charities, City of Lowell  
Center for Community Health, Education and Research

Center for Human Development  
 Center for Popular Economics  
 Center for Public Policy and Administration, UMass Amherst  
 The Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in the Americas  
 The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc.  
 Center for Violence Prevention and Recovery, BIDMC  
 Centro Presente  
 Chelsea Collaborative  
 Child and Family Service of Pioneer Valley  
 Child Inc.  
 Children AIDS Program  
 Children's Aid and Family Service Inc.  
 Children's Friend and Family Services  
 Children's Hospital  
 Chinese Progressive Assn.  
 C-Integral  
 Citizens for Juvenile Justice  
 City Life/Vida Urbana  
 City Mission Society  
 City of Lowell, Health Department  
 City of North Adams  
 City of Worcester  
 The City School  
 Citywide Boston Hispanic Center  
 Class Action  
 Clean Water Action, Massachusetts  
 Clean Water Fund  
 Cleveland Middle School  
 Close to Home  
 Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corp.  
 Color of Film Collaborative  
 Commonwealth Center for Change  
 Community Activist Brenda Lopez  
 The Community Art Center, Inc.  
 Community Education Project  
 Community Gardens Greenhouse  
 Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture  
 Community Labor United  
 Community Member Ashley Benson  
 Community Member Maryanne Kufs  
 Community Music Works  
 Community Teamwork, Inc.  
 Computers for Seniors  
 Connections Co-op  
 Conservation Law Foundation  
 Consortium of Worcester Colleges  
 Consulting Collaborative  
 Cooperativa el Sol  
 Cooperative Development Institute  
 Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries  
 Cornerstone Adult Services  
 Council for Children Families and Youth  
 Criminal Justice Policy Coalition  
 CTI Merrimack Valley Regional Network  
 The Dance Alliance  
 The Dance Complex  
 Department of Planning and Development  
 Direct Action for Rights and Equality  
 Discover Roxbury  
 District Wide Student Government  
 Domestic Violence Resource Center of South Carolina  
 Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corp.  
 Dorchester CARES  
 Dorchester Higher Ed Resource Center  
 Dorchester House Multi-Service Center  
 Dorchester Nazarene Compassionate Center  
 DotWell  
 Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative  
 East Boston Ecumenical Community Council  
 EBC House  
 ECRI Fund  
 Elder Services of Merrimack Valley, Inc.  
 Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center  
 English for Action  
 Enlace de Failias  
 Environmental Council of Rhode Island Education Fund  
 Episcopal City Mission  
 Equal Exchange  
 Evangelique Echo  
 Everett Community Health Partnership  
 Everett Dance Theatre  
 Faith Unlimited  
 Family and Children's Services  
 Family Service Association of Greater Fall River  
 Family Service Inc.  
 Farm Fresh Rhode Island  
 Fenway CDC  
 First Baptist Church  
 First Congregational Church of Chatham  
 First Congregational Church of Hadley  
 First Congregational Church of Haydenville  
 First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church of Fitchburg  
 Fitchburg Spanish Council  
 Food Bank of Western Mass.  
 The Food Project  
 Food Stamp Program  
 Gandara Center  
 Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project  
 Girls Inc. of Worcester  
 The GIRLS Project  
 Girls Scouts of Central and Western Mass.  
 Greater Boston Legal Services  
 Greater Four Corners Action Coalition  
 Greater Holyoke Chamber Centennial Foundation  
 Greater Love Tabernacle  
 Greater Lowell Health Alliance  
 Green Northampton  
 Green Street Studios

Grow Food Northampton  
 Grow Smart Rhode Island  
 Haitian Health Outreach Project  
 Haitian Multi Service Center  
 Haitian Public Health Initiative  
 Hampden County Juvenile Probation  
 Hampden County Sheriffs Department  
 Hampshire College  
 Harbor House  
 Harper Center  
 Haverhill Violence Intervention Prevention  
 Health Care for All  
 Health Law Advocates  
 Henry Lee Willis Community Center, Inc.  
 The GIRLS Project  
 The Holyoke Adult Learning Opportunities Center  
 Holyoke Youth Task Force  
 Hoosac Harvest  
 HOPE Coalition  
 House of Hope  
 House of Prayer Church of God in Christ  
 Housing Action  
 Hyde Square Task Force  
 Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion  
 Institute for Community Building  
 Institute for Health and Recovery  
 Institute for Leadership and Social Justice, Boston Trinity Academy  
 Institute of Community Art, Boston  
 Interaction Institute for Social Change  
 Interfaith Action, Inc.  
 Islamic Center of New England  
 Island Grown Initiative  
 Jamaica Plain Forum Coalition  
 Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp.  
 Jeannette Neill Dance Studio  
 Jewish Family and Children's Services of Waltham  
 Jewish Family Service of Worcester  
 Jewish Family Service of Metrowest  
 Jewish Family Services of Rhode Island  
 Jewish Family Service of the North Shore, Inc.  
 Jose Mateo's Ballet Theater of Boston  
 Journey to Safety  
 Justice Resource Institute  
 The Kent Center  
 Kent House  
 Kent YMCA  
 Klal Israel  
 La Red/The Network  
 The Latina Leadership Institute of the Rhode Island Latino Civic Fund  
 Latino Afterschool Initiative  
 Latino Education Institute  
 Leadership Learning Community  
 Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Mass.  
 Leominster Spanish American Center  
 Lowell Alliance for Families & Neighborhoods  
 Lowell General Hospital  
 Lowell Public Schools  
 Lowell Teen Coalition  
 Lowell Transitional Living Center  
 Lower/Outer Cape Community Coalition  
 Luna Farm  
 Lydia Sisson  
 Madison Park CDC  
 Maloney Properties, Inc.  
 Martin Luther King Coalition  
 Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services  
 Mason Square Neighborhood Health Center  
 Mason Square Senior Center  
 Mass. Advocates for Children  
 Mass. Alliance of Juvenile Court Clinics  
 Mass. Alliance of Portuguese Speakers  
 Mass. Association of Councils on Aging  
 Mass. Association of Older Americans  
 Mass. Association of Community Development Corporations  
 Mass. Career Development Institute  
 Mass. Career Development Institute, Holyoke  
 Mass. Coalition for Health Services, Brockton Chase AIDS  
 Mass. Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health  
 Mass. Consumer Advisory Board  
 Mass. Department of Mental Health  
 Mass. Department of Public Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse  
 Mass. Department of Transitional Assistance  
 Mass. General Hospital  
 Mass. Home Care  
 Mass. Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition  
 Mass. Law Reform Institute  
 Mass. Legal Assistance Corporation  
 Mass. Medical Society  
 Mass. Senior Action Council  
 MassCOSH  
 Mattapan Community Development Corp.  
 Mental Health Association of Greater Lowell  
 Mental Health Association of Rhode Island  
 Merrimack Valley Food Bank  
 Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership  
 Metrowest Immigrant Workers Center  
 MGH Institute of Health Professions  
 MIT Office of Engineering Outreach Programs  
 Montview Neighborhood Farm  
 MotherWoman  
 Mujeres En Accion  
 Multicultural AIDS Coalition, Inc.  
 Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists  
 NAMI-Rhode Island  
 Narragansett Bay Estuary Program  
 National Partnership for Educational Access

Neighborhood Legal Services  
 New England Farm Workers Council  
 New Entry Sustainable Farming Project  
 New Life Community Christian Center  
 New Urban Arts  
 North Berkshire Community Coalition  
 North Congregational Church-Amherst  
 Northeast Action  
 Northeastern Harvest Buy Local/Topsfield Fair  
 Notre Dame Educational Center  
 Nuestras Raices  
 Nueva Esperanza, Inc.  
 Ocean State Action  
 Ocean State Action Fund  
 Ocean State Center for Independent Living  
 Open Pantry Community Services  
 Operation Make a Difference  
 Organizers' Collaborative  
 OrigNation, Inc.  
 Our Lady of Sorrows Church  
 Outreach and Services  
 Parents for Progress  
 Phoenix Academy  
 Phoenix House  
 Pine Manor College  
 Pioneer Valley Project  
 Political Research Associates  
 The Poverty Institute  
 Progressive Communicators Network  
 Project 540  
 Providence Black Repertory  
 Providence Youth Student Movement  
 PrYSM  
 Ralph C. Mahar Regional School  
 Raw Art Works  
 REACH Beyond Domestic Violence  
 REACH for Community Health  
 Read/Write/Now  
 Red Tomato/Oke USA  
 Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center  
 Renewal House  
 Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
 Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless  
 Rhode Island Committee on Occupational Safety and Health  
 Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition  
 Rhode Island Land Trust Council  
 Rhode Island NOW  
 The Rhode Island Rivers Council  
 Rhode Island Shelter  
 Rhode Island Senior Agenda  
 Roxbury Heritage State Park  
 Roxbury Youthworks  
 SABES West  
 Salem Harbor CDC  
 Salt Ponds Coalition  
 The Salvation Army Massachusetts Division  
 Save the Bay  
 The Second Step  
 Sharon Affirming Diversity/Celebrating Community Committee  
 Sharon Community Youth Coalition  
 Shirley Eustis House  
 Sierra Club, Rhode Island Chapter  
 Silver Legislature  
 Simmons College  
 Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships  
 SOAR  
 Social Capital, Inc., Dorchester  
 Sojourner House  
 Solutions Community Development Corporation  
 South Africa Partners  
 South Congregational Church-Amherst  
 South Street Youth Center  
 Southeastern Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corp.  
 Southwest Boston CDC  
 Spontaneous Celebrations  
 Springfield Girls' Club Family Center  
 Springfield Health Disparities Project Page Blvd.  
 Springfield Partners for Community Action  
 Springfield Police Department  
 Springfield Public Schools  
 Springfield Technical Community College  
 Springstep  
 Springwell, Inc  
 Straw Dogs  
 The Steppingstone Foundation  
 Swedenborg Chapel Men in Transition Program  
 Tapestry Health System  
 Target Hunger  
 Teamsters Local 25  
 Temple Israel  
 Temporary Labor Cooperative  
 Third Eye Unlimited  
 Three Pyramids, Inc.  
 Tieng Xanh-Voice, Inc.  
 Toxics Action Center  
 Trafficking Victims  
 Trinity Excellence for Education  
 Trudeau Center  
 Unitarian Church of Sharon  
 United for a Fair Economy  
 United Teen Equality Center  
 United Way of Central Mass.  
 United Way Women's Initiative  
 University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
 University of Massachusetts Extension  
 Urban Edge Housing Corporation  
 Valley Art Share  
 Valley Opportunity Council Adult Education Program



Valley Time Trade  
 Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse  
 Vietnamese American Initiative for Development  
 Voice and Future Fund of SEIU Local 615  
 Voices from Inside  
 Volunteers in Warwick Schools  
 Westbay Community Action, Inc.  
 The Westerly Land Trust  
 Western Mass. Center for Healthy Communities  
 Western Mass. Legal Services  
 Wild Oats Co-op  
 Williams College  
 Women in Recovery  
 Women's Center of Rhode Island  
 Women's Resource Center of Newport & Bristol Counties  
 Women's Health & Education Fund  
 Women's Theological Center  
 WOMR Community Radio  
 Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council  
 Worcester Public Schools  
 Worcester Roots  
 YMCA of Greater Boston  
 Young Voices  
 Youth Enrichment Services  
 Youth In Action, Inc.  
 Youth Voice Collaborative  
 YWCA Cambridge, Marshfield Branch  
 YWCA Greater Lawrence  
 YWCA New Hampshire  
 YWCA Newburyport  
 YWCA of Central Mass.  
 YWCA of Greater Rhode Island  
 YWCA of Lowell  
 YWCA of Newburyport  
 YWCA of Northern Rhode Island  
 YWCA of Southeastern Mass.  
 YWCA of Western Mass.  
 YWCA Vermont

## PARTICIPATING NETWORKS

The Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence  
 The Boys and Girls Executive Roundtable  
 Boston Dance Community  
 Boston Recycling Coalition  
 Building a Network to Strengthen Grassroots Conservation  
 Organization in Rhode Island  
 Casa Compañera  
 Catalyst for Change: Boston Regional Domestic Violence  
 Programs' Learning Network  
 The Center for Teen Empowerment  
 Coalition for Transportation Choices  
 Community After School Initiative  
 Community Outreach Partnership Center Project  
 Development Leadership Network  
 Elder E-LERT Network  
 Fairmount Community Development Collaborative  
 Fields Corner Connect  
 The Goal II Implementation Group of the Boston Adult Literacy  
 Initiative  
 GOTCHA  
 Hands Across North Quabbin  
 The Hoarding Network  
 Immigrant Worker Center Collaborative  
 The Institute for Nontraditional Leadership  
 Investing In Girls Alliance  
 Latino Tenant Leadership Initiative  
 Leadership Through Literacy  
 Learning Network to Build a Capable Cape Cod  
 Lowell Food Security Coalition, Community Food Assessment  
 Mason Square Recovery Initiative  
 Mass. Alliance of Juvenile Court Clinics  
 Mass. Council of Family Serving Agencies  
 Mass. Legal Services Diversity Coalition  
 The Metro Boston Haitian Capacity Building Network  
 North Central Mass. Minority Coalition  
 NPEA Boston Learning Network  
 Public Voice Project  
 Realizing Our Potential  
 Regional Youth Media Arts and Education Consortium  
 Roxbury Cultural Network  
 Sharon Pluralism Network  
 Social Justice Roundtable  
 Springfield Development Collaborative  
 Springfield Youth & Families Collaborative  
 30 Under 30  
 Teens Leading the Way  
 Women in Action Project  
 Women of Color Round Table  
 Y4C  
 Youth Arts Organization Cooperative

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Third Sector New England  
NonProfit Center  
89 South Street  
Suite 700  
Boston, MA 02111-2670