

A New Collaborative Model for Increased Social Impact: Public and Private Funder Alignment

A CASE STUDY ON THE YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUNDER LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Written by Andrew Wolk

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Overview

This case study details how public and private funding organizations in Boston, Massachusetts joined forces to establish a new collaborative model. Originally established and evolved through the State Street Foundation's leadership and investment, this new philanthropic innovation now has over 100 members and shared financial investment by other funders including the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, and The Boston Foundation. The case looks at how leaders came together over a four year period with a shared commitment to addressing an urgent social issue, how an organizational structure evolved, and how a theory of change developed, all in pursuit of Funder Alignment—addressing the fragmentation of the many and varied funding streams that exist in the Boston area, including state and city funding as well as corporate, community, institutional, and family foundations. The case also provides a set of lessons learned for funders working on any social issue to better work in collaboration with others in a way that does not rely solely on individual or pooled funding; these lessons also provide a window into the collaborative's evolution towards sustainability.

In 2008, as a result of growing concern within the City of Boston about a major spike in youth violence and convergence on the need for the business community to respond, the State Street Foundation ("Foundation"), the charitable arm of State Street Corporation, pledged \$1 million to formulate and lead a response to addressing this issue in underserved areas. Research conducted as a result of this pledge revealed fragmented and ill-sustained funding in target communities where violence was most prevalent. These findings ultimately led to the State Street Foundation's 2009 launch of the Youth Violence Prevention Funder Learning Collaborative.

Today, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has over 100 members—representing over \$400 million in annual grantmaking and public resources—who are increasing their understanding of how an integration of strategies can most effectively address youth violence, including workforce development, youth development

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and mentoring, and mental health, trauma, and family supports. Members share knowledge and best practices, and partner to take collective action. Each year, they have agreed on shared sets of knowledge, practices and outcomes that they then use to guide their funding decisions (see *appendix for a YVP Funder Learning Collaborative overview and member list*). Through its work and reach, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has become a recognized thought leader and resource in the local community advancing an innovative approach to a complex problem facing the city. With a diverse and growing membership, it has been able to give voice and visibility to a social issue in a way individual funders are unable to on their own.

Having envisioned, launched, and led the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative, State Street took a bold step within Boston's philanthropic community that now has shared leadership and shared financial commitment. Responding to the challenge of city-wide coordination to address violence, the Foundation created a new paradigm of collaboration that blended the funding of private grantmakers with public resources, the synergies of cross-sector leadership, and strategic rigor to drive towards community-level results. For State Street as a whole, the work of the Collaborative also informed its own grantmaking by giving it greater focus to the way the Foundation approaches its target issue, workforce development. Additionally, a common, third-party evaluation across a network of youth employment programs provided data-driven investment decisions and produced an evidence base for population-specific programming that all participating funders have leveraged. The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has also helped to deepen connections with those it is supporting in the community, other funders, city leaders, and programmatic experts; it has also facilitated greater access to teaching and learning environments for the youth and community stakeholders it has aimed to engage.

“Having envisioned, launched, and led the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative, State Street took a bold step within Boston's philanthropic community that now has shared leadership and shared financial commitment. Today, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has over 100 members—representing over \$400 million in annual grantmaking and public resources.”

Understanding a Community Issue

In the first decade of this century, youth violence had become an unavoidable element in the lives of too many Boston youths. In 2006, 65 percent of Boston Public School students reported witnessing an act of violence in the previous year. Thirty-one percent of these students said they witnessed violence in their own neighborhoods.¹ In addition, the number of shooting victims age 17 and younger had tripled between 2002 and 2007.

The State Street Foundation (“Foundation”), the philanthropic arm of State Street Corporation, was determined to understand how the business and philanthropic community could help address the rising youth violence rates. After two convenings of city stakeholders, it was determined that youth violence was a barrier to the economic health of the community and the sustainability of businesses, particularly workforces of the future. Amid a committed but fragmented funding community, the Foundation took a leadership role and enlisted the input of an Advisory Committee, convened community leaders and youth violence prevention experts,

1 Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center, Boston Youth Survey 2006

and commissioned research on ways to collaboratively move the needle on the issue. “We saw our work extending beyond traditional grantmaking to leading a new paradigm for philanthropy by convening leaders, both public and private funders, to explore how to work together towards results, while still maintaining our core focus of workforce development.” - *Joseph McGrail, Chief Operating Officer, State Street Foundation*. In 2009, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative launched with an annual Symposium, bringing together a wide array of stakeholders, including funders, practitioners, public officials, and community members.

The Foundation’s research indicated that there were six main areas that were essential to preventing youth violence: youth workforce development & education, youth development & mentoring, family supports & mental health, conflict resolution and social skill development, public awareness and policy initiatives, and community capacity-building. Major barriers to progress included the highly fragmented funding as well as gaps in funding in some of these key areas. Altogether, public and private funders were spending approximately \$250 million annually on activities related to youth violence prevention; however, they did not have a way to better align their resources, nor fill gaps that may exist, to have a measurable impact.

Moreover, the research showed that funders were not having the conversations necessary to help leverage each other’s efforts or fill these funding gaps. Some admitted that they had little knowledge about others’ activities and the areas where resources were most needed. Others felt that they lacked information about the most effective approaches to youth violence prevention. Without a space for funders to come together and learn, gaps and needs remained unmet.

The positive news was that funders throughout the city shared a similar commitment to addressing the issue of youth violence. For example, Boston had a strong nonprofit sector, innovative health care institutions, and a committed funder community engaged in youth programming even though most did not understand how their funding focus areas connected to the issue. Ultimately, funders agreed that violence prevention was a complex, multi-faceted issue that needed to be addressed across a variety of strategic areas affecting youth over a sustained period of time.

The Foundation worked under the premise of meeting funders where they were and solicited feedback as to where the funding community collectively felt that collaboration would be most beneficial. Of the original six research areas, three were identified as prime for collaboration—family supports and mental health, youth development and mentoring, and youth workforce development and education. It was felt that conflict resolution and social skill development would be addressed within the youth development strategy. The other two areas (policy and awareness and community capacity-building) would be partially addressed as appropriate in implementation strategies that would emanate from the three prime strategy areas.

“We saw our work extending beyond traditional grantmaking to leading a new paradigm for philanthropy by convening leaders, both public and private funders, to explore how to work together towards results, while still maintaining our core focus of workforce development.”

Joseph McGrail
Chief Operating Officer,
State Street Foundation

“With Funder Alignment, the focus is on the entities that control the resources, both private and public, and how they pursue collective action.”

Developing an Operating Structure

Building off the research and three identified areas for collaboration, State Street set out to develop an operating structure that could provide both public and private funders a space to learn, share, and act together. “While State Street was committed to supplying the funding and devoting the time, from the start we wanted to establish a structure that met funders where they were in terms of organizational priorities and allowed not just for shared learning, but shared leadership, and ultimately shared commitment to ensure sustainability.” – Sheila Cody Peterson, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship, State Street Corporation and Director of the Collaborative. The shared leadership model allowed for greater involvement and future sustainability. The figure below, sets out the various aspects of that structure (figure 1).

“While State Street was committed to supplying the funding and devoting the time, from the start we wanted to establish a structure that met funders where they were in terms of organizational priorities and allowed not just for shared learning, but shared leadership, and ultimately shared commitment to ensure sustainability”

Sheila Cody Peterson

Vice President of Corporate Citizenship, State Street Corporation and Director of the Collaborative

FIGURE 1: Operating Structure of the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative



State Street Foundation’s Sheila Peterson has served as the Director of the Collaborative, championing its strategic direction from the initial planning phase through the past four years of the YVP Funder Collaborative’s development. The **State Street Foundation** staff oversees this operating structure and chairs the Advisory Committee, Leadership team, and the Workforce Development & Education Working Group.

The **Advisory Committee** consists of leaders in the field who provide high-level input on YVP Funder Learning Collaborative activities and act as ambassadors within the community. Multi-sector representation is built into the leadership model; members are invited based on the expertise and background they bring to the field of youth violence prevention. The Committee includes leaders from thirteen different stakeholder groups, resulting in a diverse set of perspectives that guide the direction of the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's work. The Advisory Committee seeks representation from academia, the Boston Public Schools, business, city and state government, community-based organizations, community leaders, employers, faith-based groups, media, the medical field, law enforcement and public safety, as well as youth worker experts (see appendix for member list).

The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative **Leadership** is made up of private and public sector funders as co-chairs representing each of the three funding strategy areas. In addition, content experts from each issue area are part of the leadership team to bring deep expertise to support the Collaborative's decision making. As the Collaborative evolves, other highly committed funders have joined the leadership.

Through the building of **Strategic Partnerships**, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative recognizes that it is one part of a broader youth violence prevention solution that includes community mobilization, youth leadership, and civic engagement. It partners strategically with public and private local and national initiatives, as well as anchor programs in the five neighborhoods, that complement its activities.

Operational Support provides the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative with the necessary strategic facilitation and project management required to engage members and achieve action. In this role, Root Cause, a nonprofit consulting firm, worked alongside State Street Foundation to guide planning and implementation of the shared leadership model. Once the model was underway, Root Cause began working with all sustaining leaders in continually improving operations. Root Cause also coordinates and facilitates meetings, ensures implementation of agreed upon actions, supports internal and external communications, and measures performance and progress toward goals of the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative.

"Above all, funders will be most engaged if they can see how the work fits with their own grant making priorities and feel supported individually within the context of the broader work."

Working Groups

The majority of members are actively involved in working groups based on the three focus strategy areas identified:

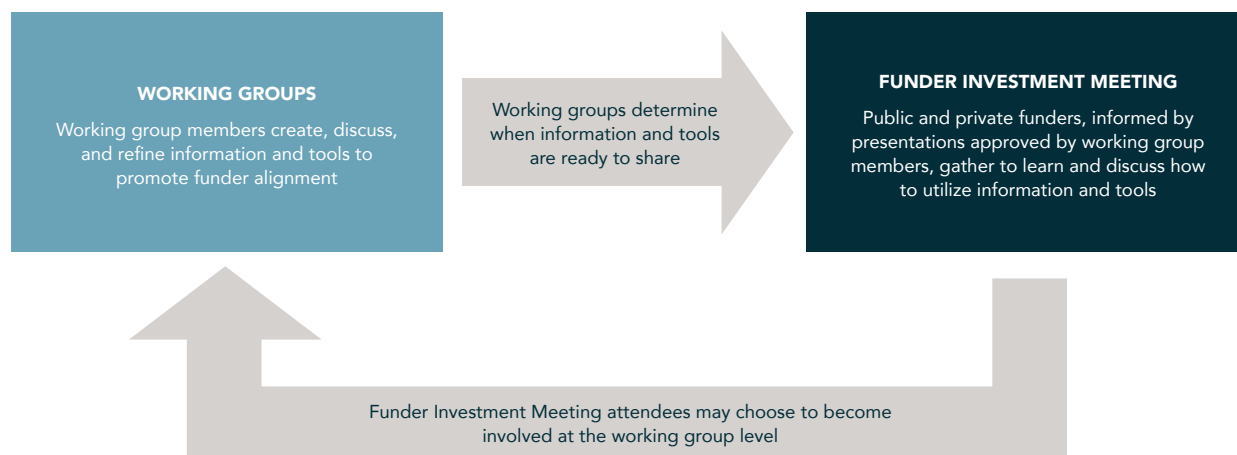
- **Youth Workforce Development & Education**
- **Youth Development & Mentoring**
- **Family Supports & Mental Health**

The working group structure anchors the YVP Collaborative's knowledge and activities. Each is led jointly by the public and private sector funding co-chairs, as well as a lead content expert. Through their participation, members share knowledge and generate frameworks to help funders align their work in these strategy areas as linked to youth violence prevention. Additionally, short-term task forces are formed from among the membership and outside experts to pursue focused, in-depth work to further Working Group goals.

Funder Investment Meetings

Based on feedback from its members, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative introduced quarterly, funder-only convenings. These meetings give funders a space where they can speak openly about investments, program quality, and grantmaking challenges. The meetings also aim to apply working group knowledge to inform funding practices among the three strategy areas (figure 2). All funders are invited to attend whether or not they are consistently active with the Collaborative. Programs and other experts are often invited to present knowledge and exemplify best practice to inform funder discussion.

FIGURE 2: Relationship of Working Groups and Funder Meetings



“Bringing funders together on a consistent basis to learn together and openly talk about the challenges of aligning funding has been incredibly valuable and eye opening for me as a grant maker.” – *Dan Sherman, Associate Director of Donor Services, The Boston Foundation*. Holding true to the premise of meeting members where they are at, this structure creates multiple points of entry for funders depending on how deeply they are able to be involved at any given time.

“Bringing funders together on a consistent basis to learn together and openly talk about the challenges of aligning funding has been incredibly valuable and eye opening for me as a grant maker.”

Dan Sherman
Associate Director of Donor Services,
The Boston Foundation

Annual Symposium

Each year, members and partners gather at State Street Foundation headquarters for the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative’s Annual Funder Symposium (see appendix for Program). The event brings together 150 key leaders from the private and public funding communities, as well as key experts. Joined by high-level public officials, State Street has had the chance to recognize the public-private alliance that is crucial to a sustainable, long-term solution: “State Street Corporation recognizes the need to commit resources not only to immediate workforce development solutions but to the long-term partnership with the city.” – *George Russell, President, State Street Foundation*.

“State Street Corporation recognizes the need to commit resources not only to immediate workforce development solutions but to the long-term partnership with the city.”

George Russell
President, State Street Foundation

Each year, the Symposium is an opportunity to raise the profile of the issue across the city, share key work it has done that year that encourages a broader set of funders and others to learn from and use, and create a space for participants to envision a path forward for the coming year and provide feedback to accelerate progress. The commitment to having an annual Symposium drives accountability for results in a transparent, public setting.

Developing a Theory of Change for Funder Alignment

In addition to the operating structure, it was also essential that the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative have a sound Theory of Change. The Foundation considered the initial roadblocks to success: 1) how to address the gaps, and 2) how to enable the funding community to work together to make progress on citywide youth violence prevention. It established the following mission statement:

To bring together private and public sector funders, experts, and stakeholders to learn share, and act in order to align funding to address gaps & barriers that prevent youth violence in South End/ Lower Roxbury, Dudley Square, Grove Hall, Bowdoin/Geneva, and Morton & Norfolk Streets.

In order to practically pursue this mission, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative sought to answer the following questions:

- Who is our target population?
- What quantifiable results or benefits do we want to achieve?
- Which strategies should we use?
- When will we achieve these results?

With the strategic and facilitation support of Root Cause, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative worked to develop a detailed model that flowed from the social problem (violent crime in Boston neighborhoods) towards measurable results (aligned and increased investment in programs to help create sustained outcomes for the youth in those neighborhoods). Through years of shared learning and research, the Collaborative developed a two-part Theory of Change that articulates its work within a broader, systemic solution to youth violence. The Theory of Change focuses on both a common framework of levers for violence prevention, as well as a model for how funders could use this framework to align their resources to contribute to sustained impact. “The United Way recognizes that consistent financial support and leadership from State Street over the past four years has provided both private and public funders the ability to do what is very hard, and make substantial progress on how we as funders both think and act together. Our commitment to join State Street in funding Collaborative operations reflects our belief in the value of this effort and the need to sustain it through shared leadership.” – Peg Sprague, Senior Vice President for Community Impact, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley.

“The United Way recognizes that consistent financial support and leadership from State Street over the past four years has provided both private and public funders the ability to do what is very hard, and make substantial progress on how we as funders both think and act together. Our commitment to join State Street in funding Collaborative operations reflects our belief in the value of this effort and the need to sustain it through shared leadership.”

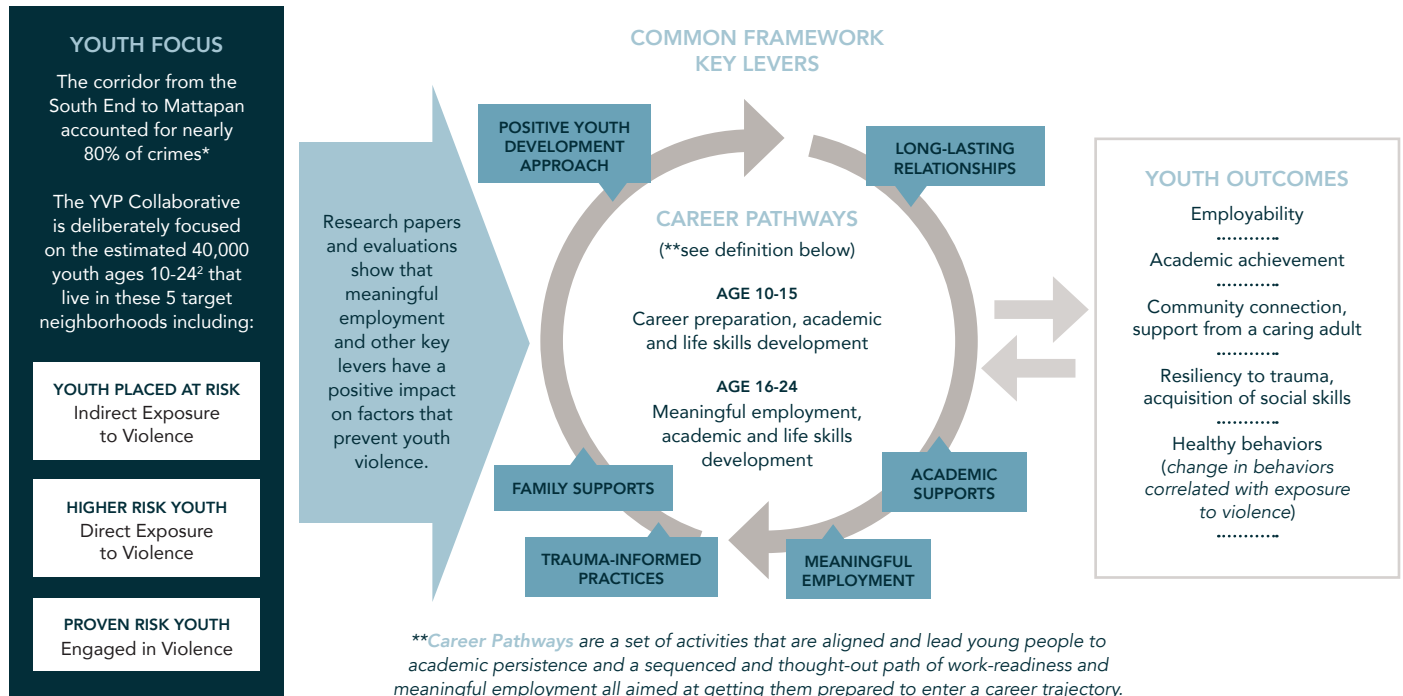
Peg Sprague

Senior Vice President
for Community Impact,
United Way of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley.

Theory of Change: Building a Shared Understanding of a Common Framework

FIGURE 3: Common Framework

Collaborative members will use a common framework incorporating a public health approach that is asset-based, cross-sector, multi-disciplinary, and sustainable. The common framework includes program practices, measures, and outcomes based on the below.



YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION

FUNDER LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

A Public Health Approach

The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative took a **public health approach** to violence by focusing on systemic and evidence-based strategies that came out of original research; from this work, it developed a set of seven Core Principles that outlined the most important elements of its prevention-based approach to violence (see *appendix*). With its emphasis on collaborative problem solving and stages of intervention, the public health lens provided an appropriate structure for identifying programming and other opportunities to support youth in neighborhoods with high violence. In addition, a public health approach made it possible to bring under one umbrella a variety of areas of a holistic, asset-based, youth violence prevention strategy. The model also prioritized multi-sector collaboration, seeing commitments from both the public and private sectors as essential to effecting sustained social impact.

2 American Community Survey Housing & Demographic Estimates 2007-2011

Geographic and Youth Focus

Committed to local, community-level impact, State Street and the original Advisory Committee members focused the work on Boston neighborhoods with high violence. When the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative launched, city statistics showed that nearly 80% of crimes were occurring in a two-mile corridor that included the following geographies:

- South End/Lower Roxbury
- Dudley Square
- Grove Hall
- Bowdoin/Geneva
- Morton and Norfolk Streets

Furthermore, these neighborhoods exhibit the highest rates of poverty and unemployment, low education attainment levels, and highest youth populations (10-24 years old) within the City of Boston. Beyond its neighborhood focus, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative recognized the need to differentiate amongst youth with varying levels of exposure to violence. Working with member experts, it identified three population focus levels to enable funders and programs to target resources and specific programming most appropriately to varying youth needs. These populations included:

- **Level One:** Youth Placed at Risk, who have indirect exposure to violence.
- **Level Two:** Higher Risk Youth, who have had direct exposure to violence or trauma.
- **Level Three:** Proven Risk Youth, who have been a perpetrator and/or victim of violence.

Common Framework: Key Levers and a Career Pathways Focus

Committed to evidence-based work, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has drawn upon research and partnerships with experts to support its activities. In addition, it has supported a series of evaluations over three years that have demonstrated the effect of meaningful youth employment on reducing behaviors known to be linked to violence (see *appendix*). Including surveys, interviews, and youth focus groups, this research set a foundation for the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's evolving focus on **career pathways**: young people, if immersed in positive youth development and connected to academic supports, work-readiness activities, and meaningful jobs during ages 10-24, could be set on a path to a successful career trajectory and away from violence. Critical to this long-term goal would be multiple **key levers** that could impact a youth's future: incorporating trauma-informed practices and mental health referral processes into programs, fostering of long-lasting relationships with caring adults, improving family supports, increasing academic supports within schools, and providing career preparation and meaningful employment opportunities, all using a positive youth development approach. The career pathways lens, surrounded by key levers, reflected the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's data-driven focus on a specific, yet systemic

element of violence prevention. This focus has also been echoed by young people participating in the research (see figure 4). “My summer job put me on a new path. It changed the way I think about myself,” said a participant from one of the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative partner programs.

Driving Towards Youth Outcomes

The ultimate goal is that all young people in the City are on a career trajectory by their mid-twenties. “Participating funders discovered that given the environmental barriers and the gap in services for certain youth populations in these neighborhoods, that particular outreach and an integration of these key levers are needed to ensure all young people in these neighborhoods reach that goal.” – Sheila Cody Peterson, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship, State Street Corporation and Director of the Collaborative.

This same long-term goal was translated into a set of shorter-term outcomes driving the entire theory of change.

For all youth living in high-risk neighborhoods, it sought to promote employability, academic achievement, community connections, resiliency to trauma, and acquisition of social skills. Fostering healthy behaviors through supportive services and positive opportunities was seen as essential to sustained outcomes for youth.

For a funder collaborative with a broad vision, it was essential to complete the foundational work of identifying the problem and focus population, developing the framework to approach it, and outlining the outcomes it aimed to achieve.

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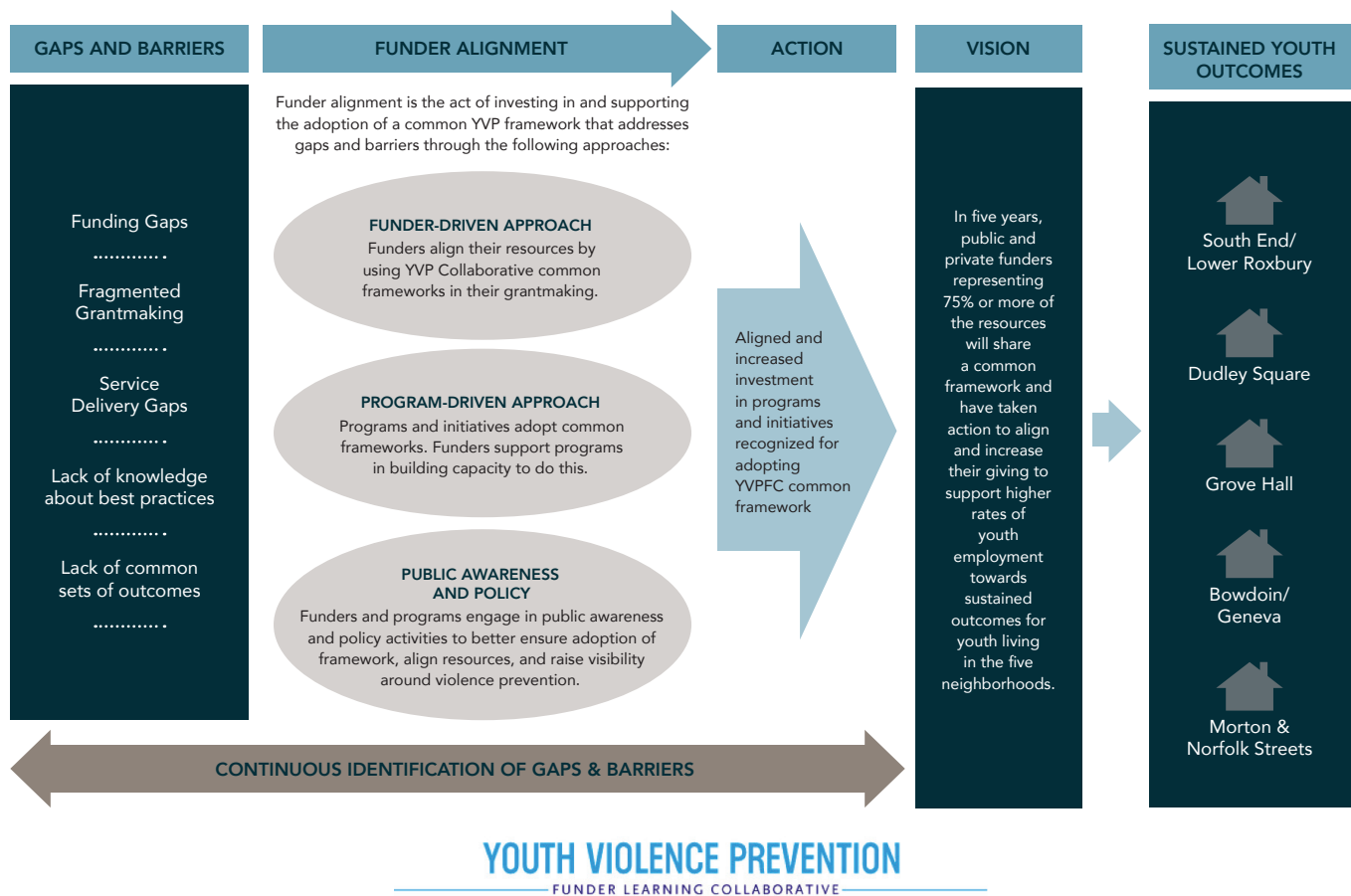
FIGURE 4: Career Pathways Framework



Theory of Change: Operationalizing Funder Alignment and Action

An organization encompassing a variety of funding sources can be hamstrung if it lacks a common understanding of goals, methods, monetary needs, and best practices. As the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative took shape, its leadership grappled with how to ensure that a large and diverse group of members could work together effectively and take collective action, while respecting each funder's priorities and processes. As illustrated in Figure 5, the second part of the Theory of Change involved operationalizing the framework.

FIGURE 5: Operationalizing Funder Alignment Model



Gaps and Barriers

Even with an understanding of best practices in violence prevention, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative uncovered and sought to address another fundamental challenge: sustained impact would not be possible without addressing existing gaps and barriers that prevented resources from being distributed most effectively. Not only were there significant gaps in funding for needs ranging from mental health supports to youth jobs; existing resources were also channeled in fragmented ways across the private and public sector funding communities. Additionally, gaps in service delivery across the city's program providers, intermediaries, and

institutions meant that young people were not necessarily being supported in the most coordinated and efficient ways. Finally, although there was clear energy from funders and service providers around the need to develop collaborative solutions, stakeholders too often lacked common practices, metrics, and outcomes that were necessary for aligned and sustained impact. These needs across the funding and service delivery communities set the premise for the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's two-part Theory of Change, which aimed to address both the knowledge and resource gaps.

Funder Alignment Approaches and Action

The Collaborative sought to put the common framework into collective action through its Funder Alignment model. Armed with the knowledge and understanding of what works, **private and public funders** could invest in and support all or part of the framework. With more funders aligning their grantmaking with the framework, resources would be channeled in more coordinated and effective ways to the areas of greatest need.

Programs and initiatives, too, could work in a similar way by adopting elements of the framework in their work. From incorporating a positive youth development approach in their program model, to training their staff to use trauma-informed practices in their work with young people, service providers could also drive Funder Alignment by putting the framework into practice. Funders could support programs by building their capacity to do this work.

To amplify its impact, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative also focused on improving **public awareness and policy** pertaining to the key levers within the framework and the alignment of resources to these. If both funders and programs could work to raise visibility around the problem and potential solutions, it could engage with the broader landscape of youth violence prevention stakeholders and have the opportunity to enact lasting change.

Sustained Youth Outcomes

Combined, the common framework and Funder Alignment model have emerged as the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's two-part Theory of Change. Yet with a complex social issue, a large body of stakeholders, and an ambitious agenda, it was clear that long-term sustained impact would take tremendous collaboration and commitment. The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative envisioned that it would have, within five years, an aligned group of public and private funders who:

- Represented 75% or more of the resources;
- Shared a common framework to the issue of preventing youth violence in Boston; and
- Would take action to align and increase their giving to support higher rates of meaningful youth employment for youth living in the five target neighborhoods.

"Through the development of this common framework, we aim to connect the dots between the different areas of work and how they all lead to a set of shared outcomes for young people." – *Rahn Dorsey, Evaluation Director, Barr Foundation.*

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Rahn Dorsey
Evaluation Director, Barr Foundation

Progress to Date

Informed by shared learning, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has had, from the beginning, a commitment to measurement and continuous improvement. With this commitment, it released its first **Report Card in 2012 to tell a comprehensive story about how a funder collaborative** can move from learning to action (see *appendix*).

The Report Card illustrates the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's key accomplishments, measures organizational health, and reports on its members' *shared understanding and utilization* of its growing knowledge base, as well as the *amount of aligned funding*. Ways of measuring this are a work in progress, but have provided members with a way to ensure it is moving towards action.

Like any complex, multi-stakeholder initiative, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative was continuously evolving as it learned how to meet members' needs and have lasting impact on the issue. To this end, the Report Card was a means of reporting and reflection that sharpened its focus on the concrete value it was providing for *funders* to drive resources towards solutions for young people. The problem complex and the solution ambitious, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative realized it was important to assess and articulate the *intermediate* work it had completed towards the long-term goal. From mappings of the funding landscape, to the creation and use of knowledge products like concept papers, assessment tools, and resource guides, the Report Card told the story of a funder collaborative's progress on the road towards alignment and impact. These results included:

- Nearly 85% of members receiving high or very high value from its quarterly Funder Investment Meetings
- Average ratings of 4.5+ out of 5.0 for the Annual Funder Symposium
- 50% or more members utilizing each of its knowledge products (guides and concept papers on youth violence prevention)
- Nearly \$8 million in private and public funding aligned with the YVP Funder Collaborative's three working group areas for youth violence prevention

In addition to the Report Card, the working groups each have contributed important knowledge based on the identification of gaps.

Members of the **Youth Workforce Development and Education** working group have provided incremental funding for much-needed youth employment through a Meaningful Employment Initiative (see *appendix*) helping to close a gap left by changes in public funding streams. The initiative has channeled more than \$3.5 million from members to programs and intermediaries, providing meaningful employment to youth living in the highest crime areas within the five targeted neighborhoods. This included particular outreach to disconnected youth who traditionally have not accessed employment opportunities. Because the initiative was coupled with an evaluation, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has been able to demonstrate with statistical significance that meaningful employment decreases certain risky and deviant youth behaviors correlated with future criminal pathways, in addition to gains in areas important to future employability. The findings have had compelling implications for State Street and other workforce development funders even beyond the scope of the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative. The research has informed the Foundation's focus on workforce development and employability for the

"The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has been able to demonstrate with statistical significance that meaningful employment decreases certain risky and deviant youth behaviors correlated with future criminal pathways, in addition to gains in areas important to future employability."

underserved. Established as a key violence prevention lever, meaningful employment impact results gave traction to the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's work and to the return on increased investments for State Street and other participating funders.

The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's **Family Supports and Mental Health** working group also uncovered gaps in solutions for youth trauma and mental health needs. Early landscape research, supported by member data, showed an *imbalanced funding landscape* in which private resources were significantly lower than public resources (see appendix). Moreover, it learned of a gap *in trauma-informed training and services* among youth programs. To address these challenges, the working group tapped members' knowledge and expertise to determine the spectrum of youth needs and identify the challenges of providing mental health services. From its foundational work, the group has produced a white paper and resource guide to support funders in applying knowledge to their grantmaking decisions to support programs in improving mental health service referrals for young people and the development of trauma-sensitive practices (see appendix). Resiliency to trauma continues to have a strong presence across the work, with the Meaningful Employment Initiative encouraging members to consider the role of trauma and resiliency in a young person's ability to learn and succeed. To this end, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative facilitated a partnership with the Justice Resource Institute's Trauma Center, a local agency, to provide training on how to understand youth mental health needs, identify when youth may be experiencing trauma, and determine how they could help to fill the service gap among employment programs.

Members of the **Youth Development and Mentoring** working group recognized early on the importance of a *positive youth development* approach within a public health violence prevention strategy and produced a white paper (see appendix). To this end, it partnered with public health experts at Health Resources in Action to develop an Assessment tool to help youth-serving organizations self-assess and understand how they were utilizing this approach in their day-to-day work with young people (see appendix). Designed to help organizations improve their programs *and* to help funders know how they could provide capacity support to help their grantees improve performance, the Assessment was part of a larger goal of ensuring that all youth have exposure to supportive environments and paths away from violence. Furthermore, the development of the Assessment was a collective endeavor led and funded by the Barr Foundation, Hyams Foundation, and State Street Foundation. Another anchor of the working group's strategy has been promotion of building *long-lasting relationships* for youth with caring adults—a key conclusion drawn from the research commissioned by the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative. Additionally, it has partnered with Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP) to share and provide training of an assessment tool with its members (see appendix). Additionally, this work promoted greater understanding of the differences between informal and formal mentoring and which may be more appropriate for different populations being served. MMP helped define another role the intermediary program members can play. They are in the natural position of being able to most effectively educate a consortium of mentoring programs on the role mentoring plays in the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's overall theory of change with its link to youth violence prevention. The programs can integrate this knowledge to show the value they bring to the total solution into their grant requests to increase funding.

Lastly, **all the working groups came together in partnership with Bostonians for Youth**, an initiative of the Trinity Boston Foundation similarly committed to ending violence in the city. Through the initiative, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative developed an RFP to select and support programs that could demonstrate the use of its framework knowledge. The grant process integrated the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's three strategies into a single body of knowledge, involved members in a participatory selection process, and used the grant dollars to fill capacity-building needs amongst programs doing work most closely aligned to its knowledge. Through its annual fundraising dinner, Bostonians for Youth raised funds and awarded grants to support three local programs working to end violence (see appendix). The following year, this same funding mechanism allowed the programs funded the prior year to collaborate on a pilot and an evaluation of how key aspects of the theory of change could be effectively incorporated into an integrated, place-based service model for proven-risk youth.

Lessons Learned Providing for a Path Forward

Funder Alignment offers a complementary but unique approach to other new philanthropic models that, like venture philanthropy and collective impact, are seeking better outcomes and lasting social change. With Funder Alignment, the focus is on the entities that control the resources, both private and public, and how they pursue collective action. There is no magic formula for making a collaboration work — it takes time and patience to keep funders engaged in dialogue towards collective action. After four years of working to bring funders together to align their actions, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has assembled a set of lessons learned that provide a foundation for others to pursue Funder Alignment and a path forward for the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative. These lessons include:

1. **Anchor funders are critical to initiating and innovating for long-term impact.**

State Street's multi-year financial commitment and dedication of senior staff to the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has been essential to its success. By publically committing dollars towards the infrastructure over multiple years while also having Sheila Peterson, VP of Corporate Citizenship, direct the Collaborative and George Russell, President of State Street Foundation, and Joseph McGrail, COO of the State Street Foundation, chair the Advisory Committee, State Street sent a clear message to other funders across Boston that this was important work that was going to be sustained so funders could feel it would be worth their time to participate.

In 2012, as State Street made an additional multi-year commitment, two additional funders stepped up with multi-year commitments: United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and The Boston Foundation. New funders committing to the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has not only demonstrated the value being provided, but has also been the beginnings of an emerging financial model for long-term organizational sustainability. In addition, the Barr Foundation and Hyams Foundation's 2012 investment in the

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development of the Positive Youth Development Assessment shows alternative ways funders can contribute to the effort. Similarly, on the public funding side, City department heads have steadfastly served as co-chairs of working groups and actively aligned their RFPs and grant allocations to the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's frameworks to more effectively address service gaps.

“There is no magic formula for making a collaboration work—it takes time and patience to keep funders engaged in dialogue toward collective action. For private and public funders across the country, this Funder Learning Collaborative with a unique approach to Funder Alignment offers an important model to learn from.”

2. Engaging both public and private funders leverages resources in complementary ways for longer-term systems change.

Public funders generally allocate the majority of resources as well as interact with the systems the issue is hoping to address. While they generally have fewer grantmaking dollars, private funders are able to be more flexible and innovative with how they spend the resources. How the two funding streams complement each other towards alignment has been key for the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative, leading it to be very deliberate in who it seeks to participate and how it works with different members.

Engaging both public and private funders requires an understanding of how they are constrained in different ways. In the early years, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative sought to support the changing of resource allocation practices. In supporting funders to align, it found that each has unique organizational constraints. For public funders, resource allocation is generally constrained by federal and state policies, and specific reporting requirements, and often requires multiple approval layers. While it is the program officers that participate, they are often bound by governance structures that require approval to change practices. The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative, as a result, has focused its time on driving towards funder agreement around a common framework. It has also focused on supporting members who allocate the resources in applying the framework within the context of how each does its grantmaking; in this way it aims to avoid the constraints of resource allocation and meets members where they are at.

3. Focus on developing long-term sustainability early on, evolving the leadership and operating structure through an intentional business plan.

An initiative pursuing long-term impact must start by considering its own long-term sustainability. Entering into a multi-year planning process, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative sought early buy-in from leaders and built an operating structure to engage members in ways that met their evolving needs. It also developed its theory of change with an understanding of the long-term arc of work that is required to solve a deeply rooted social problem.

4. Facilitation and project management are necessary for maintaining focus and engagement to achieve action.

The YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has benefited greatly from having a facilitator play a variety of roles: developing draft agendas for leaders to weigh in on, applying rigor to move the discussions to well-articulated action steps, connecting dots between funders outside of formal meetings, building relationships in helping funders see the connection to their work, representing the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative in the community and in developing partnerships, and providing continuity and structure for all meetings and communications. With a facilitator playing these essential roles, members are able to engage more with the limited time they have. Additionally, it has been

essential to have the time and resources for scheduling: coordinating calendars so that the largest number can participate is critical since members have full-time jobs in addition to participation in the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative; it has been particularly important to drive towards learning and taking action together.

5. For system-level change, a collaborative endeavor must engage a broad range of stakeholders.

Despite its primary focus on funders, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative recognized early on the importance of including a full spectrum of participants at the table. From expert practitioners to the executive directors of leading nonprofits, from direct service providers to youth leaders, the input and voices of different community members have been essential to inspiring and informing leadership of what it truly takes to make an impact in this field.

6. Multiple paths exist to funder engagement.

Above all, funders will be most engaged if they can see how the work fits with their own grantmaking priorities and feel supported individually within the context of the broader work. Members like the Trinity Boston Foundation have served as an example, partnering with members and building on the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative's knowledge to spearhead innovative demonstration initiatives within the violence prevention field. This makes informal meeting time as important as formal structured meetings. Building relationships between funders must consistently be a priority as funders are very interested in knowing more about who is funding whom and why. Additionally, a collaborative can support engagement by providing access to practical information and tools that members can use and consider adapting to their own grantmaking processes.

Over time, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative has observed that shared learning impacts not only collective action, but funders' individual grantmaking practices as well. State Street, informed by the research linking meaningful employment to violence prevention, gained momentum in its emerging focus on employability and workforce development.

After four years, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative shows signs that harnessing public and private resources to align towards collective action is an important innovation in the pursuit of better outcomes. In the coming years, the YVP Funder Learning Collaborative will be focusing on the following key priorities based on the next phase of the Business Plan:

- Evolving the shared leadership and operating structure for sustainability and shared commitment to move beyond the notion of State Street as the sole funder and leader.
- Finalizing the common framework of practices, measures and outcomes of all the key levers for career pathways.
- Encouraging programs to assess and align their activities with the framework, identify capacity needs, and share feedback to continually improve the approach. With this information, funders would be able to provide capacity-building support to drive improvements in program performance.

- Continuously collaborating and aligning with other key initiatives in the neighborhoods doing similar and complementary work.
- Implementing a strategic communications plan that raises the visibility of what foundations and businesses can specifically fund across the common career pathways framework to do their part in addressing youth violence as a public health crisis. Emphasize the need to create public urgency to address the issue that includes amplifying youth voice.
- Working in partnership with the City of Boston to introduce a city-wide Youth Violence Prevention Index.

Conclusion

For private and public funders across the country, this Funder Learning Collaborative with a unique approach to Funder Alignment offers an important model to learn from. It offers lessons in how one private funder can catalyze an entire community of funders to collectively address key community issues where disparate and fragmented funding exists while also inviting others on board to share the leadership right from the start; for the leaders, it can also have broader impact within their respective funding organizations. Resource providers must recognize that, individually and collectively, they are in control—and with Funder Alignment can take a thoughtful approach that focuses on what works.

