



Lessons Learned: 10 Years of Neighborhood Revitalization

Since 2003, the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation (WFRF) Neighborhood Grants Program has funded the creation and implementation of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans in low-income neighborhoods throughout eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey.

WFRF's approach:

- Encourages resident and stakeholder participation in the plan's creation.
- Establishes a baseline of primary and secondary data for each initiative's evaluation.
- Encourages long-term, coordinated and data-driven investment from both the public and private sectors.
- Measures progress throughout its implementation.

From 2003 to 2013, the Foundation provided 140 grants totaling \$41,691,000, which enabled hundreds of neighborhood improvement projects within the region and leveraged \$231.5 million in direct and indirect neighborhood investment.

What we've learned:

Community Impacts

- ❖ A *comprehensive approach* to community development which addresses both physical blight and human services appears to have a longer-term positive impact on the community's housing values.
- ❖ Social projects are important for *quick, visible wins*.
- ❖ Investing in a comprehensive approach promotes both positive physical changes and positive improvement in quality of life of as perceived by residents.

Effective Grantmaking Strategies and Funding Choices

- ❖ A rigorous grantmaking model, when purposeful, can *strengthen the capacity of grantee organizations*. The Foundation's continuum of grants, a culture of learning and evaluation, increased due diligence in selection and assessment, and collaboration with a variety of community organizations contribute to helping organizations and neighborhoods become "investment ready".
- ❖ A *long-term commitment* to a place allows grantees to move quickly from planning to implementation, gives them budget stability, and enables the hiring and retention of high-quality staff. It also aids in leveraging other funding dollars, and allows the organization to focus on doing the work.

- ❖ *Resident driven approach* heightens understanding of resident needs and priorities.
- ❖ A *culture of evaluation and learning* helps to build the capacity of an organization to identify effective practices and to tell their story.
- ❖ *Emphasis on collaboration* helps to leverage organizational strengths, bring a broader array of resources and expertise to bear in grantee neighborhoods, and increase the capacity of community-based organizations.

Elements for Success

A neighborhood's ability to successfully implement a comprehensive revitalization plan relies heavily on:

- ❖ The *organizational capacity* of the lead organization in terms of fiscal management and leadership, ability to raise funds, provide back office support, manage cash flow, assemble and finance physical development projects, and maintain strong relationships with residents.
- ❖ *Commitment* to place based work
- ❖ Stakeholder ability to gain local *political will*
- ❖ Leadership *commitment and flexibility*
- ❖ Community *readiness and engagement*
- ❖ *Building* toward implementation from the planning stage
- ❖ *Adequate staff resources* for plan implementation