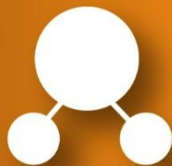


Issue Brief #8: Sustaining Evidence- Based Work after the SIF



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
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Issue Brief #8: *Sustaining Evidence-Based Work after the SIF*

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About CNCS

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1. Introduction

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Classic program leveraged public and private resources to grow community solutions based on evidence of results.¹ The National Assessment of the SIF Classic program sought to document and capture the impact of the SIF on key program stakeholders. Findings from this multi-component independent assessment, conducted by ICF and sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Office of Research and Evaluation, tell the story of the SIF and identify lessons learned.

Key Research Questions:

- How do SIF grantees and subgrantees think about sustaining the work beyond SIF funding?
- What approaches do SIF grantees and subgrantees take to ensure the work lives on?
- How do SIF grantees support their subgrantees' sustainability efforts?

The SIF Classic program made grants to experienced grant-making organizations, which identified promising programs within communities through an open and competitive process. The SIF grantees matched the federal funds dollar-for-dollar and distributed the combined funds to high-performing nonprofit organizations that implemented the promising programs. SIF subgrantees also matched the funding they received dollar-for-dollar. All SIF-funded interventions underwent rigorous, independent evaluations to advance the base of evidence for the funded intervention. Programs were funded for five years, but grantees and subgrantees committed to ensuring that the programs they implemented would not end with the completion of SIF funding. The program required that subgrantees develop scaling plans, which often address sustainability, and SIF grantees actively supported subgrantees in their sustainability efforts by providing meaningful engagement, support, resources, and connections to help subgrantees thrive during and after the SIF. As a result, several years into their grants, many subgrantees were well-positioned to continue their evidence-based work beyond the period of SIF funding.

This issue brief shares best practices and lessons about ways that SIF Classic grantees and their subgrantees approached sustaining evidence-based programs. The brief focuses exclusively on SIF Classic, so all references to SIF structure and its operations concern SIF Classic. The brief first discusses how grantees and subgrantees defined what it means for work to be sustainable. It then presents an overview of approaches they used to sustain key elements of the work financially, programmatically, and organizationally. The brief also includes examples of the support that grantees provided to help subgrantees sustain their programs. It presents action-oriented recommendations for grantees, private and nonprofit organizations, and policy makers.

This issue brief was informed by interviews with five SIF grantees and two subgrantees of each grantee organization. At the time of the interviews, grantees and subgrantees were preparing for their SIF grants to end within 12 months.

2. Defining Sustainability

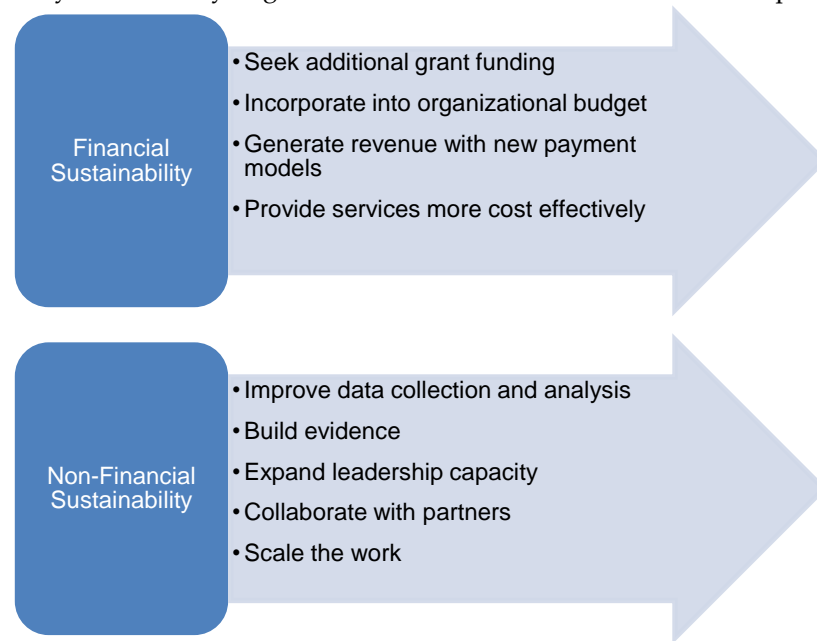
Grantees and subgrantees defined sustainability in several ways.

- Programmatic: Continuing the program as it was implemented under SIF Classic;

¹ The SIF Classic program was one of two SIF grant programs funded by CNCS from 2010 to 2016. The other was Pay for Success (PFS). The Classic program united public and private resources to evaluate and grow innovative community-based solutions that have evidence of results in low-income communities. PFS was a contracting and financing model that leveraged philanthropic and private dollars to fund services up front, with the government or other entity paying after they generated results. This issue brief focuses on SIF Classic only, and references herein to the SIF structure and how it operated refer to the SIF Classic program.

- Organizational: Identifying key elements of the SIF-funded program and weaving those elements into ongoing practices throughout the subgrantee organization; and
- Systems and Policies: Influencing the policy landscape to ensure that key elements of the SIF-funded program become embedded in existing systems beyond the grantee and subgrantee organizations.

As they considered sustainability, grantees and subgrantees thought about both financial sustainability—securing the financial resources required to continue the work after the SIF—and non-financial sustainability—using what they had learned through the SIF to create long-lasting impact. When discussing sustainability in the nonprofit context, the National Council of Nonprofits refers to financial sustainability as well as to leadership succession planning, adaptability, and strategic planning.² Others have defined financial sustainability as the ability to generate resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future, while describing the non-financial aspects of sustainability as the ability to develop, mature, and cycle out programs to be responsive to constituencies over time.³ Some of the strategies adopted by grantees and subgrantees for achieving financial and non-financial sustainability are presented in the figure to the right.



In terms of financial sustainability, many subgrantees, with the support of their grantees, developed a pipeline of additional grant or donation-based funding. United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) hired a scaling manager who partnered with each of the subgrantees to develop a pipeline of funding. The scaling manager had a combination of business acumen and knowledge of programs and local resources, which enabled her to establish a solid network of funding sources that not only achieved the SIF match but created connections between subgrantees and new funders to provide support beyond the SIF.

"When planning for the future, it's critical that we continually keep the funder pipeline active. It's not something you can get complacent about, and you certainly do not want to depend on a single source. We've always looked a few years out. And particularly to multi-year funders we always ask ourselves, 'when this one ends, what do we have to take its place?' Of course, even if the end of the grant is several years out, the cultivation for those new sources needs to take place years in advance."

—Peter Katz, SIF Classic subgrantee, Genesys Works

² Source: <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/nonprofit-sustainability>
³ "Deconstructing Sustainability," adapted from a chapter in *Nonprofit Sustainability: Making Strategic Decisions for Financial Viability*, by Jeanne Bell, Jan Masaoka, and Steve Zimmerman. Source: <http://blueavocado.org/content/deconstructing-sustainability>

Under the SIF Classic program, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) subgrantee Community Action Duluth used an evaluation and data tracking tool called “Efforts to Outcomes” to communicate the outcomes of its financial coaching program, bolstering its case when reaching out to prospective funders. The tool enabled Community Action Duluth to capture more sophisticated data about how many program participants increased their net worth and by how much. Data from this report informed a return on investment report that Community Action Duluth employed to garner financial support from corporate donors.

In addition, some subgrantees chose to dedicate part of their organizational budget to sustain the work after the SIF funding. Others planned to reduce the financial gap by deploying programming and services more cost effectively. Still others implemented revenue-generating models designed to realize at least partial sustainability by the end of the grant, as described in the box below.

Revenue-Generating Models for Financial Sustainability

- The GreenLight Fund’s subgrantee Genesys Works partnered with companies to place disadvantaged youth in paid internships. The companies were billed at a premium rate, which generated revenue that Genesys Works used for operating expenses, training, and other growth initiatives.
- UWSEM helped subgrantee Leaps and Bounds Family Services and its other SIF subgrantees each develop a book documenting how the program was implemented. These subgrantees could then sell their book to disseminate information about implementing the model, generate revenue for the organization, and serve as a showpiece for potential funders and partners.
- UWSEM subgrantee National Kidney Foundation of Michigan sought to license its program and implement a train-the-trainer model, through which organizations would pay a licensing fee to receive training to implement the program.

In terms of non-financial sustainability, grantees and subgrantees were well aware that their work under the SIF could lead to long-lasting change. Subgrantees improved the ways in which they collected and analyzed data, built evidence, expanded leadership capacity, collaborated with partners, and scaled the work. Many of those interviewed noted that because the benefits of the improvements were obvious and applicable beyond the SIF-funded program, they expected the improved practices would continue.

Grantees also helped subgrantees work toward non-financial aspects of sustainability. For example, LISC supported each of its Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) sites in developing a cross-sector inter-agency team that encompassed housing, health, behavioral health, and substance abuse. These teams became a core element of the FOC organizational structure and were expected to continue to troubleshoot challenges among the high-need populations served by the FOCs beyond SIF funding.

Under the SIF, the GreenLight Fund’s subgrantee Year Up improved the capacity of its leadership and staff to break down silos and identify ways to support the work of others within the organization. For example, as corporate engagement managers recruited partners that would provide jobs or internships requiring specific skills, these managers coordinated with admissions staff to recruit students with those skills. Because the program relied on corporate partners to provide positions and required a consistent stream of students to fill those positions, the capacity of leadership and staff to make these connections proved essential for sustaining the program over the long term.

“...one of the things that strikes me about our work with the SIF project over the past four years is that the lessons we have learned along the way are never going to go away. They’re now embedded in the fabric of how we think about our utilizers and how we think about collaboration on the local level. Those ideas will continue and be sustained even if the actual pilot and staff we’ve hired and the clients we serve might eventually go away. Those kernels of ‘a-ha; this is how we should be doing it better’ will be sustained.”

*–John Merz, SIF Classic subgrantee,
AIDS Connecticut*

Recommendations:

- Identify one or more sustainability approaches to pursue: Continue a program, weave elements of a program into the organization, and/or embed program services in existing external systems.
- Plan for financial sustainability: Develop a pipeline of funding, set aside additional organizational funding, find efficiencies, and/or implement revenue-generating models.
- Plan for non-financial sustainability: Improve data collection, build evidence, expand leadership capacity, collaborate, and scale.

3. Planning for Sustainability Early

Early planning was key to establishing a successful sustainability approach, for both grantees and their subgrantees. SIF Classic grantees began assessing the capacity of potential subgrantees to sustain their models as they evaluated funding applications. The GreenLight Fund, for example, developed a sustainability hypothesis, which set forth pre-award indicators of ability to be sustainable including: the likelihood that applicants would successfully obtain funds from their projected revenue sources, the level of need in the communities where they planned to implement their interventions, and detailed plans to address those community needs during their SIF grants and beyond. Once subgrantees were funded, the Greenlight Fund incorporated those plans into engagement agreements that outlined expectations for growth and sustainability over the course of the grant. The GreenLight Fund monitored subgrantee progress toward sustainability according to these agreements.

SIF grantees supported non-financial sustainability planning by subgrantees throughout the SIF funding. Grantees stepped back from implementation to ask difficult questions that helped their subgrantees think carefully about sustainability goals, milestones, partnerships, and data needs. They also convened peers to discuss best practices and progress toward sustainability goals. Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP), for example, partnered with its subgrantees from the outset to establish milestones, such as hiring a staff member to implement a financial model. These milestones helped subgrantees structure their work over the course of their SIF grant in a way that supported long-term sustainability and allowed VPP to monitor progress and identify any assistance required for achieving the milestones.

In terms of financial sustainability, grantees helped subgrantees position themselves to secure the funding they would need after the SIF by connecting them to local, public, private, and non-profit funders; writing recommendation letters; reviewing applications; identifying funding opportunities; helping them use data to tell their stories to prospective funders; and even contributing direct financial support. This support began early and continued throughout the SIF grants.

Subgrantees often structured their programs with financial sustainability in mind from the outset. United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) subgrantee Leaps and Bounds Family Services, for example, proposed a program only as large as the organization felt it could sustain once SIF funding ended. The program was designed to be implemented with \$75,000 in SIF funding and an equal amount of match funding already in hand. Leaps and Bounds Family Services worked from the beginning of the subgrant to ensure that after the first five years, \$75,000 could be secured through other sources to make up the gap left by the conclusion of the SIF grant. The Leaps and Bounds Family Services approach also included a contingency plan to use organizational reserves as needed if additional funding could not be secured by the end of the SIF grant.

From the beginning of its grant, the GreenLight Fund’s subgrantee Genesys Works sought a more sustainable model for its program, which trains disadvantaged youth in technical and interpersonal skills and places them in paid internships. Genesys Works recognized the importance of securing 60% to 70% of the funding for its San Francisco Bay Area program from employers while simultaneously developing a pipeline of contributed income sources. As Genesys Works endeavored to cover most program costs through revenue, it continuously cultivated its base of corporate, institutional, and individual donors for contributions to cover the remaining 30% to 40%.

Recommendations for Planning for Sustainability Early:

- Establish pre-award indicators of organizational capacity to sustain the work. Revisit these indicators based on subgrantee progress to ensure their accuracy as predictors of sustainability.
- Plan early for sustainability by setting sustainability goals and milestones, sharing best practices, and identifying partnership opportunities and data needs.
- Plan from the outset for long-term funding and build a pipeline of potential funders or other revenue sources.

4. Adapting and Improving Program Delivery

SIF Classic evaluations validated the effectiveness of many subgrantee services. However, some subgrantees recognized that continuing to offer those services in the same way was not financially feasible without SIF funds. Applying what they had learned from the SIF experience, these subgrantees zeroed in on the elements of their SIF programs with the greatest impact, adapting to incorporate and sustain these proven elements as part of their overall program model.

Subgrantees learned from experience to adapt their programs in order to provide better service sustainably. For almost 20 years, the GreenLight Fund’s subgrantee Year Up had offered career training service, including the learning curriculum, classroom space, infrastructure, and instructors. Although Year Up provided services to hundreds of students, the impact on the community and the careers of young people was not as substantial as hoped. The GreenLight Fund and Year Up launched a test case with SIF funding in which Year Up partnered with a local community college to offer the career training, including providing the curriculum, classroom space, and instructors. Students earned between 20 and 24 college credits at little to no cost to themselves because most were Pell Grant eligible, and the college received tuition payments at no cost to Year Up. Thanks to this partnership, Year Up determined that serving 160 students per year would render the career training service financially sustainable, so it set that as its goal. In addition, Year Up observed that employment in the IT industry was shifting toward coding and application development and away from troubleshooting and help desk support. Year Up closely examined its curriculum and adapted the IT training to prepare students properly for employment in the changing industry. These adaptations transformed Year Up’s service delivery and demonstrated the effectiveness of the model. Through this pilot program, Year Up reached its sustainability goal of providing 160 students with relevant career training.

Refocusing Efforts Based on Outcomes and Financial Feasibility

VPP subgrantee Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) explicitly framed its sustainability plans for educating disconnected youth around its evaluation outcomes. LAYC’s SIF model demonstrated the effectiveness of two approaches to sustaining its work—embedding the model within schools and serving youth disengaged from schools in community settings. Although the evaluation produced strong outcomes for both approaches, LAYC had to adapt to refocus on the financially sustainable approach. The school-based approach will continue with support from VPP. Continuation of the community-based approach will depend on LAYC’s ability to secure additional funding.

“If we want to be a truly national program that has national scope, then we need to figure out how we’re going to pay for it, how we’re going to grow it, and how we can be simple in operations to have low overhead and maximize resources.”

–Onuka Ibe, SIF subgrantee, College Summit

Subgrantees also applied evaluation results to improve their organizations, increasing efficiency, for example. Knowing that the SIF grant would end prompted VPP subgrantee College Summit to test new business models that would allow the organization to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of high school student enrollment in

college. College Summit reduced its overhead by closing regional offices and operating from its national office. This permitted greater efficiency and flexibility when implementing the program in new locations because there was less need for local infrastructure. In addition, one staff member could oversee implementation of programs across locations and more easily identify gaps and opportunities and ensure correct allocation of resources. College Summit also shifted to a pricing model that made it easier for schools to reach more students, reformatted its summer workshop to accommodate more students, streamlined its data collection, and digitized much of its curriculum. All these changes were based upon external research and findings from the SIF evaluation. In the first year of the new model, the program served nearly five times as many students as the previous year at one-eighth the cost per student.

Subgrantees also employed what they learned under the SIF to find new ways to sustain their programs and their models. United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) subgrantee National Kidney Foundation of Michigan used its SIF grant to adapt its nutrition education program—Regie’s Rainbow Adventure®—to make it sustainable. In order to sustain the program and ensure services continued to be delivered while also generating revenue, the organization explored opportunities to license its materials for use by other organizations on a fee-for-service basis. In order to disseminate the model and influence policy, National Kidney Foundation of Michigan also developed a train-the-trainer model so the program could be implemented more broadly by early childhood education centers that could include Head Start programs and recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) funding.

Recommendations for Adapting and Improving Program Delivery:

- Analyze outcomes to identify the elements of the program for which there is evidence of effectiveness. Commit to reevaluating whether to sustain elements that lack evidence of positive outcomes.
- Implement programmatic changes—such as realigning services with changing markets and testing new pricing models—to deliver services in a more effective and/or cost-efficient way.
- Implement organizational efficiencies that support effective service delivery at lower cost, by taking actions such as streamlining back-office services or realigning staff.
- Disseminate the model and influence the policy landscape by identifying ways to implement the work more broadly.

5. Embedding the Work in Existing Systems

Some subgrantees sought to ensure that programmatic and organizational elements developed and refined through the SIF Classic would be sustained by embedding them in systems the organization already had in place. The Cara Program, for example, had the core mission of helping its clients—who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless—secure long-term, sustainable employment. Through the Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) model, implemented with a SIF grant from the Local Initiatives

Support Corporation (LISC), the Cara Program provided its clients with financial literacy services, resources, education, and access to credit-building products. The Cara Program saw that when clients developed healthy financial habits, their ability to secure a job, retain it for a year, and eventually reduce their risk of homelessness improved. As a result, the Cara Program placed renewed emphasis on financial literacy, integrated the FOC's work throughout the Cara organization, and began to offer financial literacy services to all its clients.

What began as a stand-alone service offered under the SIF grant will be sustained as an integral element of the Cara program.

The SIF Classic enabled subgrantees to conduct more and better evaluations. As a result of how valuable the evaluations proved to be, some subgrantees chose to embed their newly-acquired evaluation skills into their organizational practices. For example, United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) subgrantee National Kidney Foundation of Michigan noted that although its model may be scaled to include new measures after the SIF ends, the organization plans to continue some of the program evaluation methods conducted under the SIF grant and embed these practices into their future evaluations. National Kidney Foundation of Michigan expanded fidelity modeling to evaluate its training and ensure consistent implementation of the model. The SIF grant also enabled the subgrantee to incorporate qualitative data into its evaluation practices and use it to convey the results of its work more effectively. These evaluation lessons became part of the organization's style of operation, enabling it to demonstrate results that make the case for sustaining its programming.

Subgrantees also applied what they learned through the SIF grant to influence the policy landscape by encouraging other organizations to adopt its successful practices. Corporation for Supportive Housing subgrantee AIDS Connecticut, for example, hired systems coordinators to conduct outreach to hospitals to emphasize the value of a coordinated focus on healthcare and supportive housing, and the implications of releasing homeless clients onto the streets after they have received medical care. AIDS Connecticut also helped the Connecticut Collaboration on Reentry build its capacity to address health, mental health, and substance abuse issues as part of the services it systematically provided to clients re-entering society after prison. Through these efforts, AIDS Connecticut extended its work beyond its own organization and embedded its effective practices in broader systems for providing supportive housing.

Recommendations for Embedding the Work in Existing Systems:

- Identify standalone services proven to be effective and embed them within organization-wide programming to ensure they become integral elements of the organization's activities.
- Embed expertise acquired—such as evaluation skills—into practices within the implementing organization to produce more rigorous results that will make the case for sustaining programming demonstrated to be effective.
- Demonstrate the benefits of proven practices and encourage their implementation at a policy level and by other organizations.

"When I think about sustainability, I think 'Have you redefined how you do your work?' Have you changed something that says, 'We're now going to bring this into our core model, and this is how we go about our mission?' For me that is what sustainability is about. You started off with this program or initiative, you've found value in it, you've shaped and refined it to make it really work, and it's now part of how you define what you do."

*—Michelle Gilliard, SIF Classic Grantee,
Venture Philanthropy Partners*

6. Collaborating to Achieve Sustainability

Subgrantees found that established relationships with a variety of partners were critical for sustaining their work, and grantees drew upon their knowledge, experience, and influence to help subgrantees create these relationships.

Collaborating with partners generated a range of benefits for sustaining programmatic elements.

These benefits included partner organizations that delivered key elements of the programs, partnerships that strengthened the subgrantees' ability to continue to offer services, greater exposure to assistance with fundraising, and best practices that enhanced their ability to deliver sustainable programming.

Collaborate with: Local Service Providers

- To combine units of service to meet individual needs

Collaborate with: National Offices

- To achieve economies of scale (e.g., back office services) and lend credibility

Collaborate with: Subgrantee Peers

- To share best practices, troubleshoot challenges, and identify opportunities

"...one of the things that...has actually helped get us on this growth path, is really being tied into and working side by side, developing relationships with community-based organizations so that we become a viable option for the population that we're looking to serve through other organizations that are touching that same population. Because without that, I believe we won't be sustainable."

–Joe Coyle, SIF Classic subgrantee, Year Up

In thinking about sustaining its work, United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) subgrantee Leaps and Bounds Family Services emphasized ways that collaboration could ensure that target populations continued to be served, regardless of whether the programming continued. Rather than focusing narrowly on whether it could sustain the programming delivered directly under the SIF grant, Leaps and Bounds Family Services identified its specific services with strong evidence of effectiveness. Its staff then worked across the organization and with other local agencies to find ways to deliver these effective services, regardless of which entity provided them. For example, Leaps and Bounds Family Services might provide a home visit, find through the home visit that a child has developmental delays, and connect the family with another program to obtain child development services. This client-centric approach ensured that Leaps and Bounds Family Services could sustain services for its clients effectively and efficiently, regardless of the organization providing those services.

For other subgrantees, collaborations with national offices and "sister" sites helped build credibility, create a buzz, and leverage organizational infrastructure. For example, the GreenLight Fund's subgrantee Genesys Works, located in the San Francisco Bay Area, collaborated with the Genesys Works national office in Houston and other sites in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and the Twin Cities to share resources and augment credibility. Working with the national office enabled the subgrantee to leverage organizational services like accounting, marketing, brand awareness, financial support, and best practices.

Genesys Works also discovered that collaborating with other local stakeholders like school districts, corporations, city offices, and workforce development organizations extended its reach, adoption, and program effectiveness. For example, Genesys Works collaborated with school districts to recruit students, ensure that students earned credits enabling them to work longer in their internships, and keep students on course to graduate. The subgrantee also partnered with corporations, leading to changes in training and management that resulted in more successful internship experiences for both the company and the students.

The status of SIF Classic grantees as nationally-known grant-making entities offered another fruitful area for collaboration, because these grantees helped subgrantees make connections and demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs to new funders interested in sustaining effective programs. UWSEM involved subgrantee Southwest Counseling Solutions—which provided mothers of school children with job-specific English as a Second Language education—in the grantee organization’s National Center for Family Learning network. As a result, Southwest Counseling Solutions and the other subgrantees had the opportunity to present at the National Center for Family Learning Conference. UWSEM built on that public recognition by helping Southwest Counseling Solutions publish in peer-reviewed journals and expand its reach to a broader academic audience, becoming more visible in the field nationally.

Grantees also facilitated in-person and virtual peer-to-peer learning opportunities for their subgrantees, formal portfolio partner convenings, and site visits among their subgrantees. These steps helped subgrantees learn from one another, share best practices to enhance their programming, and direct their conversations toward sustainability. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), for example, periodically convened all of its Financial Opportunity Centers (FOCs)—those funded under the SIF and those that are not—to network and share ideas, and LISC encouraged attention to sustainability at these events. Although FOCs may operate differently, they have found it worthwhile to share ideas with each other about ways to sustain their work.

Working With and Securing Buy-In from the Community

The SIF experience influenced the way that some subgrantees worked with communities to gain buy-in to sustain their work. As community organizers, Corporation for Supportive Housing subgrantee Avalon Housing in Michigan had community involvement wired into its DNA. The subgrantee formed new relationships with key community partners, garnering public commitment and investment from them. Avalon Housing is committed to providing supportive housing services to at-risk populations. By engaging with local public housing, healthcare, and criminal justice partners, the subgrantee:

- Gained a better sense of its allies and developed deeper relationships with community partners;
- Gained community support to work with Medicaid and provide housing vouchers to the population served;
- Established itself as a leader in the integration of supportive housing and healthcare; and
- Made the case for serving a difficult-to-serve population.

Through these activities, Avalon Housing ensured that the network would continue to support interventions documented as successful under the SIF subgrant. The organization attributed its success in community collaboration to constant and meaningful relationship-building, accountability to the mission, knowing whom to trust, identifying community leaders, communicating openly, strategically planning for inclusive meetings, and celebrating success.

Recommendations for Collaborating to Achieve Sustainability:

- Build and leverage relationships with partners, peers, service providers, and the local community to garner buy-in and support for sustaining the work, whether through the subgrantee organization or through a network of collaborating organizations.
- Link demonstrably successful elements of a program to other programs and services within and across organizations as a way to broaden and sustain service provision.
- Leverage the status of grantees as nationally-known grant-making entities to promote the work of subgrantees to national networks and other funding entities that have the resources to provide funding after the SIF grant ends.
- Identify formal and informal opportunities to engage with peers and share best practices to increase the financial, programmatic, and organizational capacity needed to sustain the work.

The Board of Directors: A Team of Allies to Further the Mission

One of the ways that the GreenLight Fund truly partners with its subgrantees to support sustainability is by serving on the boards of directors for each of its SIF subgrantees. Taking a seat on the local subgrantee board gives the GreenLight Fund timely information about progress toward sustainability and provides subgrantees with needed support to meet their sustainability milestones.

Although subgrantees of the GreenLight fund are themselves established organizations, they operate under the SIF grant to replicate their programs in new communities. By serving on their boards, the GreenLight fund calls on their CEOs, other board members, and leadership teams to guide the organizations as they evolve in their communities, influencing their trajectories from the start.

The GreenLight Fund's presence on the local boards provides mutual benefits. Its presence provides key knowledge and resources to subgrantees, including connections to relationships in the philanthropic, public, private, and non-profit sectors; knowledge of local geography; familiarity with people in leadership positions like mayors and school superintendents and knowledge of recent or upcoming leadership transitions; awareness of political shifts; and experience, advice, and expertise about scaling and sustaining programming. Serving on the boards also gives the GreenLight Fund a window into each organization's financial stability, anticipated changes, and likelihood of sustainability.

According to the GreenLight Fund's Casey Johnson, board membership is key to success with sustainability, "because we're not in it for a year. We don't just write a check and say 'good luck we hope it goes well.' We know that if we set up a shop in a community in a different part of the country than where your hub is, it takes a lot of work. It is very relational, and you need more than just a check. These organizations know that we have strong networks, and they know they can task us in our roles as board members."

7. Conclusion

Through the SIF Classic, grantees and their subgrantees identified and implemented programs that work, and partnered to find ways to sustain those programs after the SIF. Their practices helped the programs live on in a variety of ways. Grantees and subgrantees identified and refined their approaches to sustaining their work by incorporating key aspects of financial and non-financial sustainability, began planning for sustainability from day one, adapted and improved their program delivery, embedded their work in existing systems, and collaborated to sustain the work. The SIF, through its sustained 5-year commitment to the programs, gave subgrantees the time and space needed to think about their sustainability goals and objectives, and gave grantees the time and resources needed to support them in their quest for sustainability.

About This Issue Brief

This issue brief was informed by discussions with:

- Sarah Gallagher from Corporation for Supportive Housing (2011 SIF Classic grantee), John Merz and Cecilia (Cee Cee) Woods from subgrantee AIDS Connecticut, and Carole McCabe and Aubrey Patino from subgrantee Avalon Housing
- Casey Johnson from GreenLight Fund (2012 SIF Classic grantee), Peter Katz and Amy Lenz from subgrantee Genesys Works, and Joe Coyle from subgrantee Year Up
- Seung Kim from Local Initiatives Support Corporation (2010 and 2015 SIF Classic

"...the SIF experience allowed us to...get some great insights from other organizations and from research and actually start to put things in place. And we feel like where we've come out on the other end is a program and a financial model that's more stable...and sets us up for the kind of scalability that we've been aspiring to for a long time."

—Onuka Ibe, SIF Classic subgrantee, College Summit

grantee), Angie Miller from subgrantee Community Action Duluth, and Bob White and Lynnette Frazier from subgrantee the Cara Program

- Jennifer Callans and Jeff Miles from United Way for Southeastern Michigan (2011 and 2016 SIF Classic grantee), Denise Dorsz from subgrantee Leaps and Bounds Family Services, and Crystal D’Agostino from subgrantee National Kidney Foundation of Michigan
- Michelle Gilliard from Venture Philanthropy Partners (2010 SIF Classic grantee), Lori Kaplan from subgrantee Latin American Youth Center, and Onuka Ibe from subgrantee College Summit

About the Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) was a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service that received funding from 2010 to 2016. Using public and private resources to find and grow community-based nonprofits with evidence of results, SIF intermediaries received funding to award subgrants that focus on overcoming challenges in economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. Although CNCS made its last SIF intermediary awards in fiscal year 2016, SIF intermediaries will continue to administer their subgrant programs until their federal funding is exhausted.

The SIF was made up of two programs: Classic and Pay for Success (PFS). PFS was a contracting and financing model that leveraged philanthropic and private dollars to fund services up front, with the government, or other entity, paying after they generate results. The Classic program mobilized public and private resources to grow the impact of promising, community-based solutions that have evidence of compelling results in three areas of priority need: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. The operating model of the SIF Classic program, which was the focus of this Issue Brief, was distinguished by the following six elements:

Innovation | Evidence | Scale | Grantmakers | Match | Knowledge Sharing

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