



Optimizing People, Power, and Equity (PPE) in a Pandemic: A Venture Philanthropy Organization Explores Proximity as Expertise Through Participatory Philanthropy

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Optimizing People, Power, and Equity (PPE) in a Pandemic:
A Venture Philanthropy Organization Explores Proximity as Expertise
Through Participatory Philanthropy

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)

Capstone

Submitted by

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To the Harvard Graduate School of Education
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To my ancestors, for ordering my steps to this time and place. I am, because you were. I will always strive to ensure that your struggles were not in vain. I am eternally grateful.

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To C9, because well, we shine!

For Brooklyn!

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Abstract

Historically, philanthropy has been plagued by racial bias and power imbalances that show up in harmful ways (i.e., innovation and philanthropy being done *to* communities rather than *with* communities), even when well-intentioned. Participatory processes have the ability to decenter power from individual decision-makers, while delegating input and decision rights to a broader distribution of people. This is particularly important in philanthropy, as well as other sectors, where long-standing perceptions believe that well-off people know better what is best for communities than the people in those communities—there is an assumption that the individuals who are closest to the problem do not have the means nor the insights to support or lead in driving the solution.

As a social impact funder, New Profit has worked to expand its network of donors, grantee-partners, and convening attendees, to be more reflective of the ethnic, racial and identity characteristics that mirror the communities it supports through its investments. New Profit is a Boston-based venture philanthropy nonprofit, which has invested over \$325 million of unrestricted funding into over 165 organizations throughout its 23-year history. New Profit is considered an intermediary that sits in-between smaller capacity-building organizations and large funders and family foundations. Currently, New Profit is prioritizing being increasingly proximate and representative of its constituents by deepening relationships with grantee-partners, diversifying its investment portfolio, and funding more organizations led by Black, Latinx, and Indigenous leaders who share lived experiences with members of communities in need. Additionally, New Profit aims to center community voice in its practices.

During my doctoral residency, I was tasked with leading the design, strategy, and implementation of a new participatory investment selection process for New Profit, which included the creation of a community council of parent leaders. I was embedded within New Profit's Education Portfolio Team to design an investment selection process that integrated research and practice-based approaches in family and community engagement and systems change, with the organization's current investment practices.

Throughout this Capstone, I will be discussing relational and power dynamics within the philanthropic sector with communities proximate to social issues, while also highlighting promising practices from the field and how they informed my work at New Profit. I will also share my own experiences, challenges and learnings from the past 10 months during my residency. A key question that I will address within this Capstone is: *How do we make philanthropy more socially inclusive with the communities it intends to serve?*

Introduction

“Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice, which make philanthropy necessary.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Situational Context

Upon starting my residency at New Profit, the world was a very different place—an unfamiliar place. Humanity was six months into a global pandemic, the likes of which had not been experienced since 1918. A virulent novel coronavirus strain discovered in December 2019, and subsequently named COVID-19 by the public health community, swiftly forced economies to grind to a crawl as governments were forced to enact travel bans, restrict the movement of its citizens, and mandate mask wearing as a preventative measure to reduce virus transmission. Global tensions were high, as well as local tensions. In the United States, unemployment rates ballooned to record levels, while the stock market remained strong and a preponderance of emerging data was showing treatment and health disparities for people of color and low-income communities. By May 2020, the U.S. death toll was at 100,000 and would swell to 553,000 by the conclusion of this Capstone.

Against this backdrop, America witnessed an increase in global support of the *Movement for Black Lives* (m4bl.org), following the release of an 8 minute and 46 second cellphone video capturing the murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man at the hands of Derek Chauvin, a White Minneapolis police officer. The public outcry from this murder resulted in months of protests across the country and the world, in solidarity with or in opposition to the plight of Black Americans. Americans experienced a once-in-a-century global pandemic amidst a once-in-two century insurrection at the nation’s Capitol by White nationalists. The converging pandemics of the health, economic, and racial inequity were at a fever pitch as they ravaged our communities.

Now more than ever, individuals and families would need social support. In what was being termed “the new normal” by journalists and mainstream media outlets, people appeared to grow in their awareness of our interdependence as a society. There was a mounting voice for advocacy and accountability by the leaders and managers of social systems and policies to move and act in a way that

represented the voices of peoples that were central but not centered. There was growing advocacy from organizers, educators, families and grassroots organizations to not return to *the normal* ways of functioning within inequitable systems. This was an attempt by individuals to hold institutions of power to account. While education and social service providers faced challenges in implementing program and service models, I saw this as an opportunity for funders to question their practice, their power, and the needs of the communities they aimed to serve. Joining New Profit for 10 months allowed me the opportunity to explore answers to these questions during a time of great need.

Organizational Context

In 1998, Vanessa Kirsch created New Profit with a vision of engaging the philanthropic sector in a way that allowed smaller, underinvested, social-impact ventures to access capital and resources traditionally unavailable to them from larger philanthropic organizations. Acknowledging the social and institutional barriers that many social entrepreneurs faced in accessing advisors and scaling their innovations, New Profit stepped into that void.

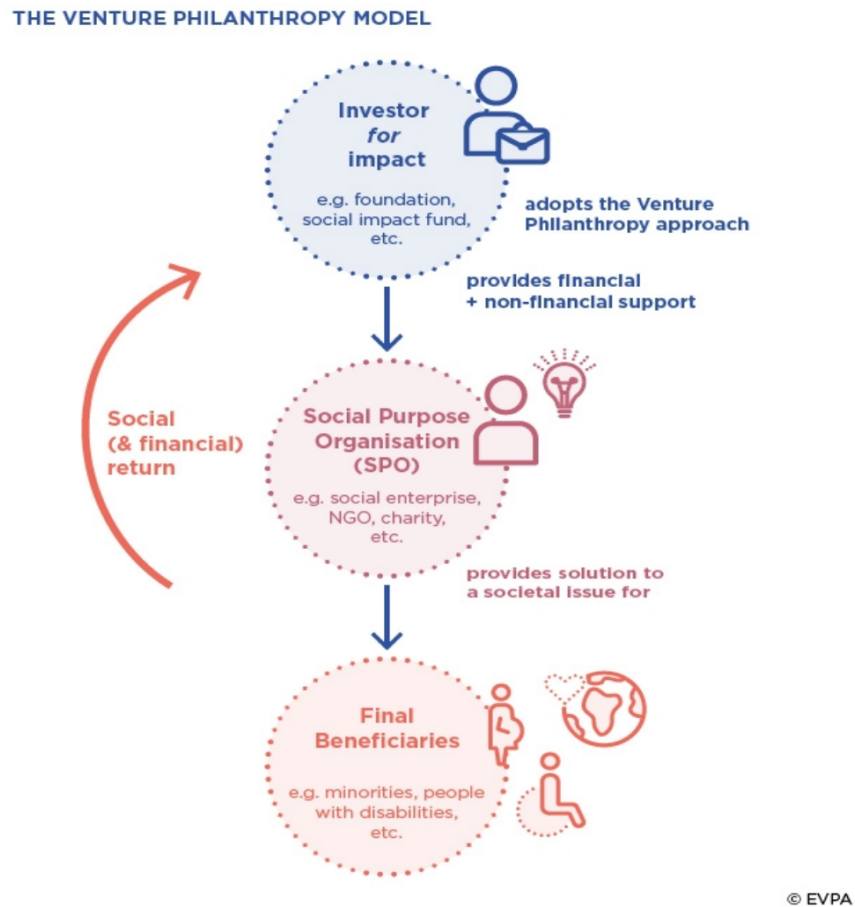
As a Boston-based philanthropy nonprofit, New Profit has invested over \$325 million of unrestricted funding into over 165 organizations throughout its 23-year history. New Profit is considered a “venture philanthropy” organization, since their approach includes generally accepted practices from practitioners in the venture philanthropic sector (see Figure 1) such as:

- ❖ finding and selecting organizations to fund;
- ❖ funding, coaching and providing strategic support by taking a seat on each grantees board;
- ❖ building a community across their portfolio organizations;
- ❖ advocating for policy change (in their Washington, D.C. office); and
- ❖ influencing the philanthropic sector through strategic communications and convenings.

Venture philanthropy applies most of the same principles of venture capital funding to invest in start-up, growth or risk-taking social ventures. It is not explicitly interested in profit but rather in making investments which promote some sort of social good. It is an

umbrella term that can be used to refer shorthand to many different kinds of philanthropic investing (Kenton, 2020, para. 2).

Figure 1: Venture Philanthropy Framework



Source: (European Venture Philanthropy Association [EVPA], n.d.)

Today, New Profit implements a support model (see Appendix A) to engage social entrepreneurs and visionary leaders of organizations doing the work of systems change regionally/nationally, to apply for unrestricted, multi-year funding and capacity-building support. As a social impact funder, New Profit categorizes its investment strategy with social entrepreneurs into two categories: portfolio investing and ecosystem building. They fund organizations led by social entrepreneurs that are leading systemic and scalable change across communities, while also supporting and advocating for policy change across the broader education and social welfare ecosystems, as a means of addressing systemic inequities through

institutions and policies. As an organization, New Profit's strategic funding and capacity-building priorities are in education, early learning, workforce development, and public health. New Profit's grantees (aka "investments") must be mission-aligned with one or more of the aforementioned priority areas in order to be eligible for funding. They fund early stage (not seed or pre-seed) and mid-stage ventures that offer a strong proof of concept and ambitions to scale. Investments tend to fit into one of the following portfolios: **Catalyze** (investments of \$50-100 thousand/1 year) and **Build** (investments of at least \$1 million/4 years). Since its founding, New Profit has had a strategic partnership with Deloitte Consulting. In this partnership, Deloitte provides one-time pro bono support to New Profit's grantees in an identified area of need during the investment period. This partnership remains a prominent part of New Profit's service offerings and a selling point for grantees seeking funding.

Since 2007, New Profit has touched the lives of over 31 million people through its portfolio organizations and has unlocked over \$1.7 billion in public funding for social innovation through *America Forward*, its policy arm. Though New Profit has a solid financial position, they are still a nonprofit and also subject to the inherent flaws within the nonprofit sector, such as being beholden to the politics of prospective funders. Though engaging with funders is an important part of venture philanthropy for nonprofit leaders, the need to fundraise while executing the core mission of the organization is a delicate balancing act and one that often drains resources of time and personnel from the organization's core work.

Currently, New Profit is prioritizing the deepening of diversity in their portfolio organizations, to be more reflective of the communities that they serve by funding more organizations led by leaders of color who have lived experiences of their constituents. This relationship between experience and exposure is what is generally termed as being "proximate." Bryan Stevenson, best known for his leadership at the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and his seminal biography *Just Mercy*, speaks at length about the power of proximity in distributing power, building relational respect, and addressing society's most entrenched problems alongside individuals with lived experience (Stevenson, 2015). Stevenson has had a long-standing relationship with New Profit. New Profit hosted Bryan during its *2013 Gathering of Leaders* panel called "America: Place, Race, and the Chase for Opportunity." Stevenson also presented on

The Power of Storytelling for Inclusive Impact in February 2020, during New Profit’s annual Inclusive Impact Summit, alongside other social justice leaders and organizers.

New Profit has adopted Stevenson’s language and applied it to the organization’s ways of working. For years, New Profit has prioritized the value of proximity in their investments to the social issues that they address. The work at New Profit is deeply relational as the organization relies on trust, communication, and inclusion as key ingredients for cultivating long-term relationships with social entrepreneurs and their boards and staff, while advancing policy goals on Capitol Hill. The ecosystem that New Profit functions in offers many opportunities, but also constraints, as the organization itself is both a grantor and grantee. New Profit is considered an intermediary that sits in-between smaller capacity-building organizations and large funders and family foundations. As a grantmaking organization, New Profit has considerable power to determine its funding priorities, as well as how it evaluates program models and defines impact when evaluating potential organizations to invest in. As a grantee and nonprofit, New Profit relies on philanthropic donations and fundraising to manage its operational costs, as well as to provide disbursements to organizations. As such, New Profit is beholden to similar levels of scrutiny from their own funders, which they in turn direct toward their grantees. New Profit’s configuration, approach, and service model are designed in a manner that is appealing to grantmaking institutions.

Over the years, New Profit has worked to expand its network of funders and convening attendees to be more reflective of the ethnic, racial and identity characteristics that mirror the communities it supports through its investments. New Profit has recently started working to reduce bias in its grantee selection process and to craft a process that is more inclusive—particularly focused on increasing stakeholder input (e.g., parent and young person) to ensure grantees are delivering impact most aligned with the needs of the communities they purport to serve.

I joined New Profit at an opportune time, as they were just wrapping up an 18-month long diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) assessment and capacity building engagement with Promise54 (P54), a human capital consultancy that provides talent advising, learning communities, and coaching,

among other services. Beginning in 2018, New Profit embarked on an equity journey, where staff engaged in monthly training with P54. That same year, New Profit launched its DEI-related work for its Learn to Earn Fund (LTE)¹. Over the next year, New Profit would go on to launch its Civic Lab and Inclusive Impact Strategy, along with internal affinity groups for staff. The organization was taking measured and intentional steps to center equity in its practice and core operations. This intentionality extended beyond its internal business practices into its client relationship practices. In thinking deeply about its end-users, the buck does not stop with the social entrepreneur or their social venture, but rather, it ends with the community and how they are experiencing programs and services. As an Education Team, we wanted to go beyond the social entrepreneur to draw insights from users who were closest to the issues and whose insights could guide us towards better investment solutions.

The major focus of my strategic project was to develop an approach for community members, in this case parent leaders from one of its grantee-partner organizations, to be included in New Profit's long-standing investment selection process. New Profit has had an interest in working closely with communities for many years. Over time, there have been several starts and stops to various forms of engagement, ranging from convenings with sector and organizational leaders, to convening young people for youth activation and advocacy workshops. The process of parent-voice integration into investment selection was different; and something the organization had never done before in its history. As a venture philanthropy organization, the approach and process of investment selection is a cornerstone of what allows the organization to thrive. In recent years, there has been increased coverage of racial, social and economic disparities. As calls for accountability from institutions and individuals are amplified, so too, is the need and desire from philanthropic entities to exemplify how they are taking community voice and need into account. By allowing third party stakeholders to influence this process, New Profit was expressing a willingness to change a core part of its business, a move that provides inherent and profound risks for even the most stable organizations. The world of philanthropy is highly relational. Grantors and

¹ Learn to Earn (LTE) was New Profits postsecondary and career strategy. In July 2020, the LTE Team began integrating into New Profit's core operations from its previous position as a separate strategy.

grantees spend a substantial amount of time meeting and talking with peers and grantees to sniff out opportunities for partnership, as well as the industry standard of passing “the airport test.”² I was motivated by New Profit’s willingness to try a new investment approach with an understanding of what was at stake (i.e., reputation, impact, relationships). An awareness of these stakes made me acutely aware of the pressures and expectations, real or imagined, of my own role in successfully bringing this work to fruition.

I spent the subsequent 10 months working closely with the Education Portfolio’s core team and support staff (see Appendix B), as well as staff from other key parts of the organization, like Portfolio Performance and Support (PPS), to understand and design a process that integrated current business practices with research and practice-based approaches to engaging communities and sharing power with parents as well as broader community constituents (i.e., young people).

My strategic project was an opportunity for New Profit to take a learning stance to de-center itself as a definitive source of formal power while reevaluating its decision-making processes in its investment cycle. I relied on organizing principles from my prior experience in family and community engagement and advocacy, as well as organization learning models and adaptive frameworks to bridge the power divide between grantees, communities and funders. To succeed in my charge, I worked with the guidance of my team at the intersection of organizational policy, structure and impact.

² The “airport test” is a colloquial term that denotes the hypothetical question, “Could you endure being stuck together with another person while waiting for a plane for an unknown amount of time.”

Review of Knowledge for Action

“Every system is exquisitely designed to create the results it produces.”

—*W. Edwards Demming*

For the purposes of this paper, it is worth operationalizing a common language around the term philanthropy. I found the most succinct and applicable definition for philanthropy to come from Dr. Lester Salamon, of Johns Hopkins University, who describes philanthropy as the “the private giving of time or valuables (money, security, property) for public purposes” (Evans, 2015, p. 4).

Throughout this Capstone, I will be discussing relational and power dynamics within the philanthropic sector with communities proximate to social issues, while also highlighting promising practices from the field. I will also share my own experiences, challenges and learnings from the past 10 months during my residency at a Boston-based venture philanthropy organization. Though there are distinctions between venture philanthropy and “institutional philanthropy,” the differences are minimal in how they affect the main thesis of this paper. A key question that I will address within this Capstone is: *How do we make philanthropy more socially inclusive with the communities it intends to serve?*

Philanthropy: A Retrospective

Historical injustices—perpetrated by racial and cultural conflicts, and exacerbated by a lack of empathy—are at the heart of America’s growing economic, social, and political inequalities. Nowhere is this gap of authentic empathy and justice more pronounced than in the American philanthropic sector, where often well-intentioned people make decisions for communities they do not come from, may not understand, rarely interact with, and almost never step foot into. (Burton & Barnes, 2017, para 1)

Historically, philanthropy has been plagued by racial bias and power imbalances that show up in communities in harmful ways (i.e., innovation and philanthropy being done *to* rather than *with* communities) even when the intentions are good. In 2019, Law and Society Review published a paper by Dr. Megan Ming Francis on this subject matter entitled, *The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding and Movement Capture* where she postulated “that funders engaged in a process of ‘movement

capture' whereby they used their financial leverage to redirect the NAACP's agenda away from the issue of racial violence to a focus on education at a critical juncture in the civil rights movement" (Francis, 2019, p. 275). It is not presumed that funders engage in movement capture with nefarious intent, but rather, movement capture is what occurs when funders are imbued with inordinate power and their interests are not aligned with that of the capacity-building organization. Movement capture acknowledges the power imbalance between institutional / influential funders and grantees. It provides a cautionary lens for capacity-building organizations and social institutions to scrutinize prospective funding partnerships.

This Capstone investigates ways in which philanthropists can and have disseminated power to the communities that they often seek to serve. To aid in my inquiry, I explored several frameworks and bodies of literature that span the topics of (a) systems change, (b) democracy, (c) participatory philanthropy, and (d) community engagement, in order to operationalize an approach to my problem of practice and better understand how to make venture philanthropy more socially inclusive with the communities it intends to serve. In 2017, the Lumina Foundation and Newschools Venture Fund commissioned a report with Grantmakers for Education, which found that "research shows that diversity matters, and a sustainable education reform movement requires a community to participate in its own liberation to achieve the practice of freedom." As the United Negro College Fund's (UNCF) *Done to Us, Not With Us* project reported, "The history of social change, like the civil rights struggle, teaches us that no such movement can succeed without the support and active engagement of its intended beneficiaries" (Russell & Jenkins, 2017).

Philanthropy Today

The United States is one of the most generous nations in terms of how it subsidizes charitable activity, with private foundations enjoying tax-exempt status and 501(c)3 organizations being eligible for tax deductions based on cash or property contributions. These incentives are some of the most popular incentives for charitable giving. Most nonprofits are exempt from paying taxes at state and local levels.

Though private foundations are large contributors to annual philanthropic giving, there is an even larger number of individual funders.

Foundation assets in the United States have grown to over \$1 trillion. As a result, there has been an explosion in private charitable foundations and innovative donor initiatives. For the most part, philanthropy is celebrated: Individuals give away their wealth to worthy causes and help to steward significant social change. But this grandiose narrative belies a much more complicated story. What happens when the interests of funders and grantees clash? (Francis, 2020)

When it comes to individual funders, one's mind often goes to individuals like Bill Gates or Michael Bloomberg. Indeed, these individuals are examples of people outfunding their peers several times over. These individuals and peers of similar ilk are what economists Matthew Bishop and Michael Green refers to as "philanthrocapitalists." In their book, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World*, Bishop and Green describe multi-billionaire philanthropists as "individuals who can do what it would otherwise take a social movement to do" (Bishop & Green, 2008, p. 48).

Political scientist Robert Reich writes that the policy instruments in the United States designed to structure giving are, as we will see, powerfully inegalitarian, amplifying the voice and preferences of the wealthy over and above their already louder voice in virtue of the size of their fortunes. Indeed, American policy does not merely respect the liberty of individuals to make philanthropic gifts, but subsidizes the exercise of that liberty (Reich, 2018, p. 69).

Philanthrocapitalism, a term that came into common parlance in 2006 to describe the need for philanthropy to become more like for-profit markets with "investors" and "social returns," is becoming a social sector wedge issue. The reason? The increasingly uneasy relationship between markets, democracy, and economic inequality (Ramdas et al., 2011, para. 1). Critics of philanthrocapitalism, like Open Society Foundation's Director of Women's Rights Programs, Kavita Ramdas, cautions against adapting the social sector to mirror the for-profit sector, which is responsible for the gross wealth inequality. The growing wealth inequality undergirds much of the scrutiny around the "good" of philanthrocapitalism and the

power of the market to serve as an indicator for social improvement. In our current context, we need to look no further than our own capital markets to see that as the United States stock market reported record highs last summer, the country and much of the world were still roiled by the COVID-19 pandemic and record unemployment. Philanthrocapitalism is, in part, the consequence of a decades-long growth in extreme wealth inequality. In truth, while the outsized influence of institutional philanthropy and the rich has skyrocketed alongside an explosion in concentrated wealth—concurrent with the decline of our public sector—we have routinely turned to the wealthy and powerful to solve big problems. “At best, this approach to philanthropy leaves underlying systemic and structural causes to societal ills unaddressed, and at worst exacerbates them” (Foxworthy, 2018, para. 6). The public sector’s reliance on philanthropic dollars to plug budgetary gaps makes them increasingly dependent on and susceptible to the preferences of influential funders in order to sustain programs and services.

The most intractable obstacle to the proposition that modern, organized philanthropy can become a lively actor in a vibrant democracy is the culture-laden belief, often unconscious but seldom questioned, that possession of greater material wealth or professional expertise is necessarily accompanied by superior skills to make things better no matter what the circumstance. It’s simply assumed that people with these assets know more. This top-down cultural presumption extends to narrow beliefs about the identification, measurement, and evaluation of effective philanthropic practice. (Pennekamp & Focke, 2013, p .6)

Participatory Philanthropy as the Future of Philanthropy

In order to appreciate the value of proximity as expertise, it is important to understand the connections between philanthropy and communities, or more specifically, power, money and communities. In the philanthropic sector, most of its actors still behave as charities, giving financial aid to organizations and/or individuals actively working to address some of society’s most intractable social problems. As a vehicle for good, philanthropy has lifted millions of people worldwide out of poverty, protected people from terrible diseases, provided them with social and economic opportunity, and given

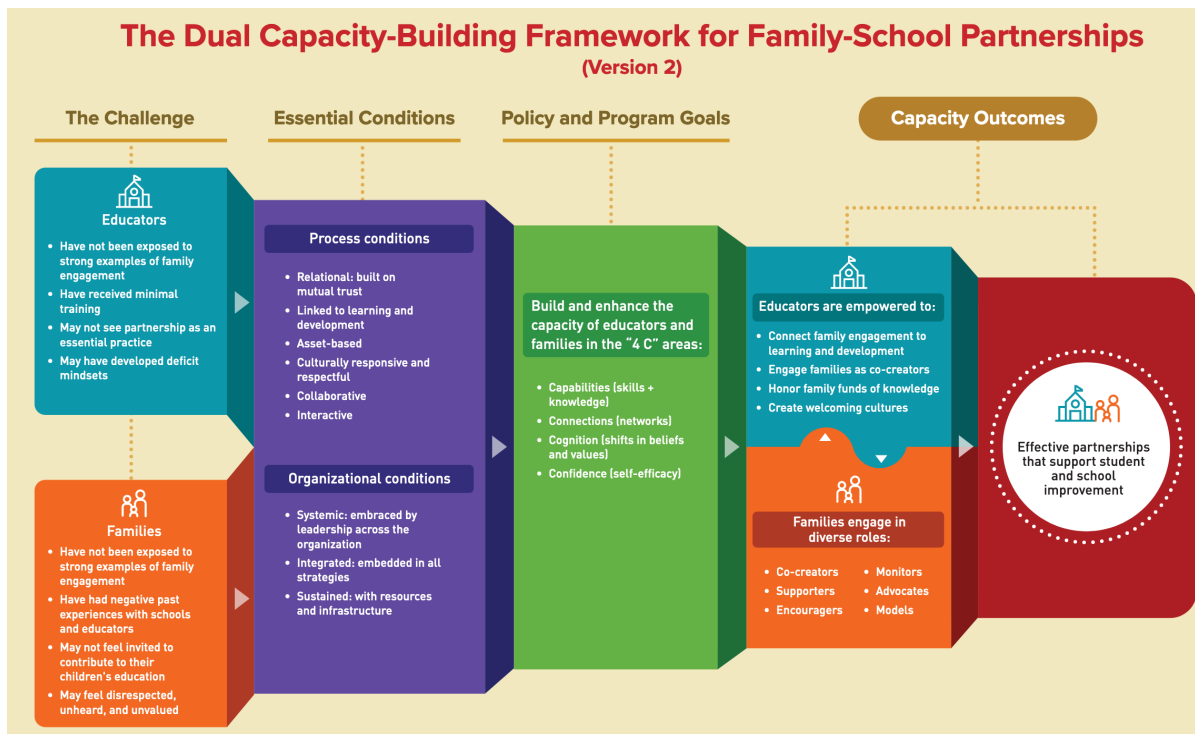
access to new tools and resources with which to improve their lives (Walker, 2019). In his 2019 book, *From Generosity to Justice*, Darren Walker, the head of the Ford Foundation, shares his vision for justice-oriented philanthropy that moves past traditional paradigms of charity by advocating for a series of solutions that address the systems that propagate inequality. He goes on to name acts such as “investing your money, time, resources, knowledge, and networks to change the root causes that create the need for charity in the first place as necessary to move from a charity to justice paradigm” (Walker, 2019). Justice-oriented philanthropy looks toward the margins to discern what is next regarding social movements, power and equity. It then invests in the people and solutions that it finds until the margins are not there.

I considered analytical frameworks that would be optimal for building a knowledge base for my team, the organization, and the sector. I found myself thinking about Margaret Wheatley’s body of research, which proposes the notion that the strength of a community/system is only as strong as the interpersonal relationships therein. As a systems thinker, Wheatley believes “that the world doesn’t change one person at a time. It changes as networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what’s possible” (Wheatley & Frieze, 2006, para. 1).

Regarding my strategic project, family and community engagement (FACE) was a central tenet. Dr. Karen Mapp’s Dual Capacity Framework and her scholarship in the field of family and community engagement is renowned. Much of her writing positions parents as leaders and advocates for their children in a way that values relational power and collective action.³ In order to build trust, there must be acknowledgement and accountability when harm is done. The framework allows organizations to acknowledge and be accountable for institutional harm. Based on existing research and best practices, the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (see Figure 2) is designed to support the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs.

³ Much of Dr. Mapp’s work served as the blueprint for my FACE work in Oakland. Her writings are very effective, contextual and culturally responsive.

Figure 2: Dual Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Ver. 2)



Source: (Mapp & Bergman, 2019)

The framework outlines best practices and key process and organizational conditions that promote organizational learning and family empowerment. The framework predominantly assesses the relationship between families, communities, and schools. As a tool, it is intended to provide practitioners with best practices for creating meaningful long-term partnerships with families and schools. It accomplishes this by offering a series of organizational and process conditions that are integral to establishing trusting and sustainable practices. It is not a blueprint for engagement initiatives that must be designed to fit the particular contexts in which they are carried out. Instead, the Framework should be seen as a compass, laying out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path toward effective family engagement efforts that are linked to student achievement and school improvement (Mapp & Bergman, 2019). With New Profit operating as a community-based education practitioner, Dr. Mapp's framework had direct applications in supporting the Education Portfolio Team's desired goals and outcomes.

Many educators have not been exposed to excellent practice and that is often because they simply have not received any training in this area. Many families have also not been exposed to excellent practice either and many have had negative experiences in school, both as children and as adults. (Mapp, 2019, 1:25–1:55)

The Dual Capacity Framework was useful as a “container” to situate the organizational and situational context of my strategic project as New Profit, though not a school, would be endeavoring toward a family and community engagement (FACE) strategy. Another huge value of the Dual Capacity Framework is its accessibility. As New Profit began its journey, it was important for me to have an accessible framework at my disposal that specifically positioned organizations as learners and families as asset-based (i.e., co-creators/advocates, etc.). Alternatively, in the “Analysis” section of this Capstone, I have applied the Six Conditions of Systems Change framework by Kania et al. (2018) as a useful tool for understanding the simple interactions at play within a complex system. “We will never achieve the scale of change we want in education philanthropy unless we are willing to take on systems change, which requires changing mindsets, relationships and power to, in turn, change policies, practices and resource flows in education” (Cortez, 2020). I right-sized the framework to assess dynamics within my strategic project. To use a medical analogy, if the Six Conditions of Systems Change were operating tools, the Dual Capacity Framework would be the operating table that supports and upholds the operating procedure. I then analyzed the strategic project through a systems-thinking lens.

A central tenet to both Kania and Mapps’ respective frameworks is that they focus on power and how it is distributed within a system. The systems in this instance being the relationship between New Profit staff, my role as a doctoral resident, and the community of parent leaders. These frameworks allowed me to identify who and what informed decisions within the system, how decision rights were assigned, how politics weighed into decisions, and the expectations and roles for actors within the system (New Profit staff and Parent Advisory Council). In the subsequent section of the Capstone, I describe the planning and execution of my strategic project in greater detail.

Participatory Philanthropy

Disability rights activist James Charlton first heard the expression “Nothing About Us Without Us” in South Africa in 1993.

Michael Masutha and William Rowland, two leaders of Disabled People South Africa, separately invoked the slogan, which they had heard used by someone from Eastern Europe at an international disability rights conference. The slogan’s power derives from its location of the source of many types of (disability) oppression and its simultaneous opposition to such oppression in the context of control and voice. (Charlton, 1998, p. 3)

“Nothing about us without us” is a widely-held proclamation within the organizing and activists community. It is the embodiment of the belief that no policy or practice regarding a group of people should be put into place without the direct participation of individuals impacted by said policy or practice. “Participatory practice in philanthropy is a way of actively engaging communities in decision making, of valuing people on the ground, as subject matter experts, as practitioners of the funded work, and as the beneficiaries of services” (Evans, 2015, p. 5).

The introduction to this Capstone discusses, at length, the power imbalance that exists between philanthropy and systems of governance and the harms and mistrust that it has borne over time between underrepresented and marginalized communities. I surmised that a participatory process would be the only way to decenter the organization from entrenched power and implicit biases long-rooted in White supremacy norms. Organizer Aysa Gray reported in a 2019 *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (SSIR) article that these biases often show up in what the workplace regards as “professionalism.” She asserts that “professionalism has become coded language for white favoritism in workplace practices that more often than not privilege the values of white and Western employees and leave behind people of color” (Gray, 2019, para. 1). While Gray is not specifically calling out the philanthropic sector in her work, she is speaking to the prevailing practices that define professionalism, which are derived from predominantly White social spaces. Philanthropic practices, including venture philanthropy, are derived from the private

and financial sectors rooted in Western/White traditions and norms, which inform their approach in defining social norms, industry standards, and methodologies.

The standards of professionalism, according to American grassroots organizer-scholars Tema Okun and Keith Jones, are heavily defined by white supremacy culture—or the systemic, institutionalized centering of whiteness. In the workplace, white supremacy culture explicitly and implicitly privileges whiteness and discriminates against non-Western and non-white professionalism standards related to dress code, speech, work style, and timeliness. (Gray, 2019, para. 1)

There are overt and subtle power dynamics at work within the philanthropic sector, many of which are grounded in White supremacy norms. When we think about White supremacy norms, there is likely a preference to envision images of outwardly oppressive villains wringing their hands as they devise dastardly ways to further suppress the oppressed. In reality, this is not how these norms tend to show up. My lived experiences moving through personal and professional spaces as a Black man has led to my belief that White supremacy norms tend to show themselves through the policies and social contracts that we are all participating in our lives on any given day. They are beliefs that often undergird long-standing policies and practices that have become so normal to us, that they can be easy to overlook (i.e., people of color code-switching in professional settings). The impacts of these norms within the workplace may manifest for individuals belonging to a less dominant social group whose behaviors or ways of being are outside of the expectations for how the dominant group expects them to show up and behave in that space. In philanthropy, White supremacy norms may show up in the judgment of a grantee who may appear “less polished” because they do not speak “proper” English, deferring to speak in their native cadence and/or mother tongue. A refrain that I have heard throughout my career at different funder tables is the “great difficulty” that funders have in trying to find organizations to fund that are led by “competent” and proximate leaders of color who are “worth the risk.” In order to appear “less risky” entrepreneurs and leaders of color often engage in code-switching, which involves “adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in

exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities” (McCluney et al., 2019, para. 3). Workplace research from McCluney et al. outlined the upside and downside to code-switching for Black people and other racial minorities. The researchers found that “Black people and other racial minorities, downplaying membership in a stigmatized racial group helped increase perceptions of professionalism and the likelihood of being hired while also increasing the likelihood of them being seen as leaders” (McCluney et al., 2019, para. 4). As one might assume, the downside here is an immense psychological and emotional tax that comes with code-switching as a denial of fully being one’s self. In our current context “the behavior is necessary for advancement—but it takes a great psychological toll” (McCluney et al., 2019, para. 1). When individuals code-switch or are in environments that reward such behaviors, we all end up operating in an inauthentic manner while creating relationships that are not built on trust.

According to Keith Jones and Tema Okun, White supremacy culture at an organizational level is apparent in: the belief that traditional standards and values are objective and unbiased; the emphasis on a sense of urgency and quantity over quality; perfectionism that leaves little room for mistakes; and binary thinking. These values, established over time as history and fact, have been used to create the narrative of White supremacy that underpins professionalism today, playing out in the hiring, firing, and day-to-day management of workplaces around the world. The story unfolds many ways: in White and Western standards of dress and hairstyle (straightened hair, suits but not saris, and burqa and beard bans in some countries); in speech, accent, word choice, and communication (never show emotion, must sound “American,” and must speak White standard English); in scrutiny (Black employees are monitored more closely and face more penalties as a result); and in attitudes toward timeliness and work style (Gray, 2019, para. 3).

In his *New York Times* bestseller, *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World*, journalist Anand Giridharadas (2018), makes an exhaustive argument for the myriad ways in which

wealthy elites have perpetrated harm (i.e., environmental, economic, etc.) against poor communities, while concurrently offering help through philanthropic means on a much smaller scale, relative to said harm. He asserts that this is done as a means of preserving public influence and good standing while tempering upheaval and silencing voices of dissent and calls for justice from impacted communities (Giridharadas, 2018). Much of his argument is rooted in the competing business interests and imbalances of power that wealthy elites wield with respect to poor communities in this country.

We have outsourced the betterment of our world to people with a vested interest in making sure we don't make it too, too much better. I'm going to give an example that may sound extreme to some people: what we often do today would be analogous to if we had gone around to plantation owners in Alabama in the 1800s and asked them to lead organizations advancing racial justice. It's impossible. They can't be the ones to do it...[.]. I don't think we should count on the richest and most powerful people in the world—most of whom are white—to play any kind of leadership role in dismantling white supremacy. To the extent that people and organizations put philanthropic dollars to work on issues of racial justice, we need to set a new norm: money should not buy any decision-making power, especially when it comes to racial justice work. (Petrella, 2019)

Much of what allows White supremacy norms to thrive in philanthropy and in America more broadly is segregation, whether de facto or de jure. The separation of people based on identity characteristics allows individuals and groups to draw conclusions, set expectations, and preserve assumptions about members of outside groups, due to their absence and ability to control the narrative. The effect of this is that the dominant group ends up controlling the prevailing narrative. In order to address common misperceptions of each other, we must be in relationship with each other. As it relates to philanthropy, the issue here is that the general practice is for funders to get proximate to community organizations and/or their leadership, without the requisite requirement of getting proximate and/or knowledgeable to the actual social issue. This second degree relationship prioritizes the relationship

between funders and grantees, while placing grantees in the role of educating funders on issues, which is concurrently important and taxing.

In his 2018 plenary to executives at the Fortune CEO Initiative annual meeting in San Francisco, Bryan Stevenson shared a passionate value proposition to the group about the power of proximity.

When we isolate ourselves, when we allow ourselves to be shielded and disconnected from those who are vulnerable and disfavored, we sustain and contribute to these problems. I am persuaded that in proximity, there is something that we can learn about how we change the world, how we change the environment, how we create healthier communities. I am actually persuaded that there is power in proximity and that too often we wait until we have all of the answers until we get closer to those who have been marginalised. I am actually persuaded that we have got to find ways to get closer to the disfavored, the marginalized, the excluded, the poor, the disabled even if we don't have all the answers for what we are gonna do once we get there. The power is in proximity. (Stevenson, 2018, 6:00–7:19)

He goes on to make the argument that businesses and funders must find ways to engage, invest, and position themselves in the places where there is despair. A theme of both Giridharadas (2018) and Stevenson's (2018) work is the power of intention and language in how groups interact with, perceive and speak about one another. The way that in-groups and outgroups interact with and discuss each other has powerful implications for how they collaborate and interact with one another. A *Stanford News* publication reporter Alex Shashkevich (2019) summarized a study assessing the relation between language and power where "a relatively harmless sentence, such as 'girls are as good as boys at math,' can subtly perpetuate sexist stereotypes. Because of the statement's grammatical structure, it implies that being good at math is more common or natural for boys than girls," the researchers said. It goes on to state that "we live in a very polarized time,[...]. Understanding what different groups of people say and why is the first step in determining how we can help bring people together" (Shashkevich, 2019). Language plays a large role in how we and others perceive the world.

The term “risk” is often a veiled term in philanthropy, which can cover anything from potential investment loss, to an assessment of low confidence in an organization’s leadership ability. It is often in the term “risk” where White supremacy norms can comfortably and quietly embed itself. In this way, New Profit is no different, but they have improved over time. For example, during the earlier years of the organization, New Profit funded 100% White-led organizations, as these were the organizations that fit the industry-standards of worthwhile grantees along various dimensions (i.e., organizational maturity, readiness to scale, and sustainability) that funders are drawn to. During my time at New Profit, I had the opportunity to observe them address this “risk” terminology and the inherent racial and socioeconomic bias therein, as it was in relation to a founder of color. Through honest discourse, New Profit acknowledged its adoption of norming this language and decided to remove “assessment of risk” from its assessment measures, replacing it with the asset-based language, “areas of opportunity,” which translates as areas where New Profit could best support the organization in meeting a capacity-need.

What we know from the literature is that Black, Latinx and Indigenous entrepreneurs and women, have greater difficulty gaining access to high network individuals, mentorship and financial resources due to the perceived “risk” of their ventures, or their “lack of expertise” in running a business. In his 2015 research report for The Brookings Institute titled *Minority and Women Entrepreneurs: Building Capital, Networks and Skills*, Michael Barr notes that “Women and minority-owned businesses often cannot effectively access business networks even though they might benefit the most from them” (Barr, 2015, p. 6). These biased and discriminatory barriers still persist. However, in acknowledging its complicity in upholding certain norms within White supremacy culture and philanthropy at large, New Profit is hoping to decolonize wealth through its engagement with social entrepreneurs who are from the communities they serve.

Evaluating grantees on how “polished” they appear, how well they speak, and their potential to network/attract funding from wealthy funders, are a few of the subtle ways in which White supremacy norms and assessments of risk are often ascertained by funders, because they force an expectation upon individuals that there is only one way in which one must speak and conduct themselves—mannerisms that

are often aligned with the White dominant culture of the United States. By working closely with the community, in this case parents, we would be adopting behaviors that bring community perspectives that would promote more robust conversations among a greater diversity of stakeholders.

Promising Models

In this section, I provide examples of how organizations like the North Star Fund in New York and the Three Rivers Foundation in Indiana utilize participatory approaches in their governance models. Participatory processes have the ability to decenter power from individual decision-makers, while delegating input and decision rights to a broader distribution of people. This is particularly important in philanthropy, as well as other sectors, where long-standing assumptions have held the notion that well-off people know better what is best for communities than people in those communities—there is an assumption that individuals that are closest to the problem do not have the means or insights to support or lead in driving the solution. In the subsequent sections, I will explore promising participatory practices from the field, while diving deeper into some of the successes and challenges that I encountered in my own work, as I attempted to draw upon several of these approaches throughout my strategic project. This is not an exhaustive list, but a series of approaches that challenged, affirmed and informed how I approached the work. I thought of the various systems and levels that New Profit’s social impact work spanned, along with the various organization and community stakeholders involved in my strategic project.

Community-based organizations play a critical role in cultivating community capacity to participate in and lead decision-making processes that meet community needs and maximize community strengths. (Gonzalez, 2019, p.4) The **Representative Participation Model** involves bringing in practitioners, sector experts and individuals with lived experience, to add depth and knowledge to discussions and decisions. The representative idea emerges in many forms—from single participant to entire boards composed of subject experts. “This model can add huge amounts of value, but if poorly managed, can be disempowering for the representative(s), especially if they are from a marginalised

group” (Evans, 2015, p. 8). Prominent organizations that use some variation of the representative participation model are The North Star Fund and the Three Rivers Foundation’s Teens for Change Advisory Board.

North Star Fund

North Star Fund is a social justice fund that supports grassroots organizing led by communities of color building power in New York City and the Hudson Valley. North Star Fund’s grantmaking process is designed to shift decision making from the organization to the communities it serves. These communities are actively addressing social justice issues.

Grant allocation decisions are made by a board of community activists and practitioners, with an additional ‘bench’ of extras. These ‘extras’ represent subject matter expertise and can step in if applications pertain to their knowledge base or if North Star’s board members are unable to attend a meeting. This system allows the fund to ensure decisions always include specific expert opinion and they always meet quorum. (Evans, 2015, p. 9)

The North Star Fund’s Community Funding Board has existed throughout the organization’s 40-year history and is a testament to the organization’s valuation of community voice in its work as a social justice fund.

As a fund that supports community organizing, it makes sense that strategically, North Star prioritizes diversity of voice and perspective in their grantmaking, but tactically, it also allows them to remain abreast of issues coming up from the community and then rapidly respond to stakeholder needs. As a result of North Star’s ability to listen and swiftly react to the needs of its community stakeholders, they have successfully brokered thriving relationships and trust with respective power brokers in communities, allowing them to create rapid response funds, such as the Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund to respond to the 2012 natural disaster in New Jersey, or the ongoing Let Us Breathe Fund, which funds Black-led organizing efforts to affect police reform, economic justice and community safety, in response to the police killing of Eric Garner.

Three Rivers Foundation

The Three Rivers Foundation's Teens for Change Fund is focused on funding youth-led projects aimed at addressing root causes of social injustice. This fund's advisory board is composed solely of young people between the ages of 13 and 18. Although a facilitator from the foundation provides technical support and institutional knowledge to the advisory group, the young people make all of the funding decisions using consensus-based decision making. The transition to this model took time to implement with fidelity. As Evans (2015, p. 10) reported:

The first year everyone wants to fund everything. The second year you want to fund no one. And finally, in the third year, you're like, 'Alright these are fundable places, these are the individuals that we would like to fund.' So yeah, it takes practice.

Another promising participatory model is the **Rolling Collective Model**. "The rolling collective model of participation engages all grant recipients in the process of both giving and receiving funding. It offers grant recipients the opportunity to become allocation committee members either during or after their time as grantees" (Evans, 2015, p. 11). I find this approach has broad applications within New Profit in its role as a funder and convener. It also has direct applications to the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) process and the engagement with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE), a grantee-partner. New Profit is on track to fund a record high of 13 investments in a single year. New Profit also has a bench of 70+ active and alumni organizations that participate in its America Forward policy initiative. Many of these organizations have social missions that align with New Profit's values around community empowerment. I see an opportunity for New Profit's Education Portfolio to activate its current and former social entrepreneur partners to support investment selection through this rolling leadership model, where social entrepreneurs can operate in small cohorts with fellow grantees for short durations (i.e., 6 months) to support investment selection decision-making.

When I set out to begin my strategic project, my intention was to shift mindsets and policy. I identified the Six Conditions of Systems Change as a primary framework for use, because it allowed me to make sense of the interplay of various dynamics within the organizational and sector context to which I

would have to influence and enact change. I was determined to identify ways to make New Profit and the venture philanthropy model more socially inclusive with the communities it intends to serve. This research question informed my theory of change.

Theory of Change

If I design a process for constituent (i.e., parent) engagement in investment selection by...

- recruiting and activating a community of parent leaders and funders;
- pressure testing a process by training and providing technical supports to parent leaders and funders to pressure test the process; and
- creating affinity and cross-functional spaces to cultivate trust amongst stakeholders;

Then I would have increased New Profit's capacity and desire to...

- actively reduce some of the influences of institutional bias in its investment selection processes by allowing a broader diversity of perspectives from communities into its decision-making processes;
- understand how to design and scale participatory engagement processes across all of its portfolio teams;
- commit assets to sustain this kind of work;
- better position itself as a sector leader on issues of equity and participatory philanthropy;

Which in turn will...

- empower communities to have active discourse about funding decisions leading to additional community impact regarding investments;
- create conditions for easier adoption of practices by industry peers to adopt/adapt additional approaches and habits of mind that values shifting power and decision rights to proximate communities (families, youth, educators);
- allow a broader range of social entrepreneurs addressing societal issues to gain exposure and access to tangible and intangible philanthropic assets; and
- ultimately shift and redistribute historically entrenched power from philanthropic institutions to proximate communities of color.

Project Description

*“Becoming is better than being.”
—Carol Dweck*

Planning Phase

In June 2020, I began working with the New Profit Education Portfolio⁴ and Portfolio Performance and Support (PPS)⁵ teams to create a parallel work plan for integrating a third-party community of parents into the current “investment selection process” (the organization’s term for grantee selection), while also helping the investment selection team revamp their Letter of Inquiry (LOI) application to more closely reflect the social and racial equity goals of the organization. New Profit’s call for LOIs is typically a semi-closed process, where a pool of organizations that had been courted for a period of time would be invited to apply as a grantee-partner during a call for applications/proposals. The LOI informs New Profit’s investment selection process. The previous version of the LOI application had not been substantively revised in many years. In 2019, they began making revisions, so there was much content for the team to co-create and improve upon during this major overhaul in 2020. This time around, the RFP process was different, in that the call for proposals was open to the public rather than a select group. While this was not the first time that the organization held an open call for applications, it was not their standard approach. This open approach created an opportunity for New Profit to gain broader exposure to organizations that would otherwise be outside of their field of view.

As managing partner of New Profit’s Education Portfolio, Shruti Sehra recommends all potential education investments to the internal New Profit Investment Committee for funding consideration. This is a powerful position. In thinking about this role, I also considered the roles of other stakeholders within the decision-making pipeline. On my first day of residency, I’d shared my entry plan with Shruti. The plan included the names of individuals throughout New Profit, whose roles, skills or interests aligned to the needs of my project. I’d researched the organization and used information gleaned from staff profiles to

⁴ The Ed Portfolio Team invests in (a) efforts to create high quality learning experiences and (b) efforts to inform and organize stakeholder communities (parents, educators, young people) to exercise innate power and advocacy.

⁵ The PPS team manages and directs portfolio strategy, including investment selection, deal support and portfolio measurement.

make assumptions about who I would want to chat with. Shruti introduced me to her support staff person, Darla Peters, who went above and beyond in coordinating 35 one-on-one interviews for me—and nearly doubled my requested amount.

As I learned with and from staff through coffee chats, Shruti and I approached my problem of practice on two fronts: Shruti, along with Education Portfolio Manager Kim Jackson-Nielsen, and I co-designed the overall investment process, while I led and designed the constituent engagement process for our parents. My time and energies were split between supporting the overall investment selection process, and designing and implementing the parent engagement process. I sought Shruti and Kim's feedback on the design as I found my footing.

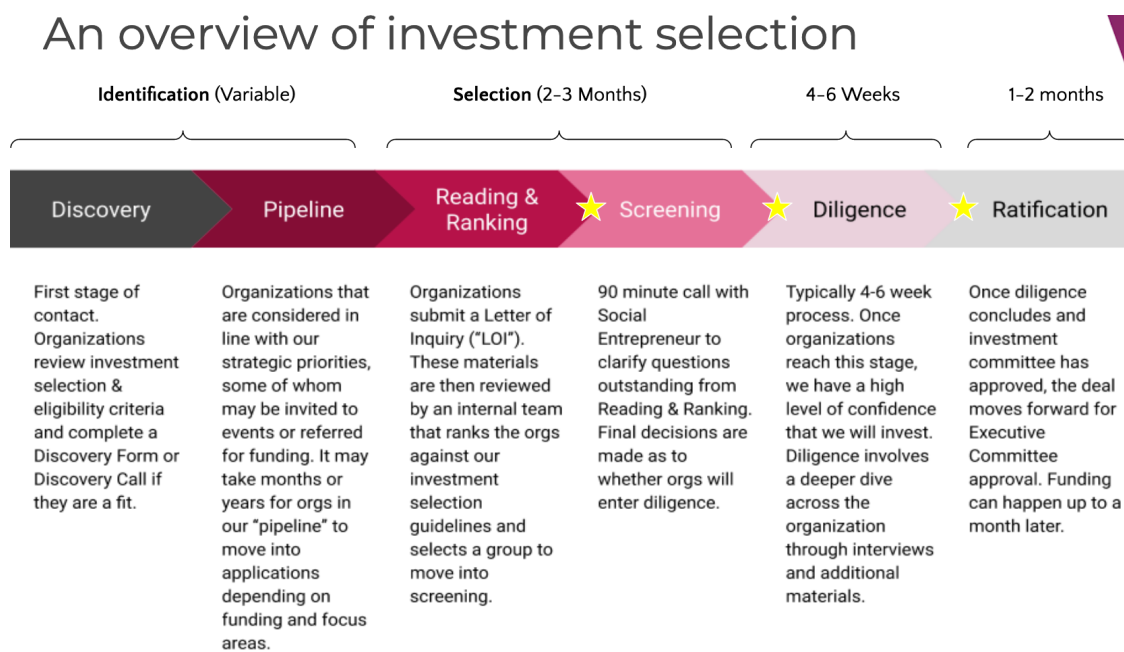
Working closely with Shruti, I gained a deeper appreciation of New Profit's evolution and its business approach. I needed to understand this context in order to discern where there might be opportunities to influence the broader system. We had a limited amount of time (one month), to get things off the ground. The next investment cycle was scheduled to launch the following month in July. During this time, I would have to learn the organization's norms and processes, while seeking to understand its strategy and approach to investment selection, on my way to designing a new investment selection process for the portfolio team. Time was one of the greatest constraints throughout the design process. I dedicated most of my time to understanding the norms of New Profit at three levels: organizational, Education Portfolio Team and Portfolio Performance and Support (PPS).

I leaned into my disposition for fairness and equity as part of this process by being vocal about discussing power, core values, community engagement, racial justice and proximity. Discussions with our six-member Wellbeing in Education Investment Selection team were productive, given shared mindsets. The team was composed of three members from the Education Portfolio team: Shruti Sehra (managing partner), Kim Jackson-Nielsen (manager), and myself (doctoral resident), along with two members of the PPS team: Amina Fahmy (partner) and Anja Young (senior associate), and one short-term contractor, Nithyaa Venkatramani, a former New Profit staff person who provided project management support. The

PPS team was mainly present for quality assurance and to provide guidance, given their purview into New Profit’s broader system of operations. Collectively, we would work together to innovate and integrate our learnings and practices.

The first step to designing a constituent integration process for investment selection was to first understand the current investment selection process. I had a handful of weeks to be a quick study in New Profit’s Investment Selection Process. Below, I have shared New Profit’s selection process (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Traditional Investment Selection Process



From June through July, I worked especially closely with the PPS team and its leadership to understand their process. I frequently referenced the design principles from the literature, paying particular attention to the content around participatory philanthropy, community engagement, and Kania and Mapp’s respective research and frameworks. As I was learning, I was also seeking to identify specific points within the process where power was concentrated. Dissecting the process allowed me to identify the key players, expected actions and decision points within the pipeline, thereby highlighting points where power was concentrated. Understanding how power coursed through the system would be integral

to our collective ability in managing how we would work internally and externally with the community of parents.

I worked closely on several cross-functional teams to ensure that key members across the organization were aligned and abreast of what I'd be working on with Shruti. I participated in weekly meetings with the PPS team to understand their process (see Appendix C), monthly meetings with the Education Portfolio Team, and weekly meetings with the Wellbeing Investment Selection team. Shruti and I held weekly one-on-one meetings, where we defined and refined our working relationship, got to know each other and brainstormed what the process, and the narrative, behind the purpose of the process would be. This was important. Though there was an appetite for including parent voice into decisions and processes within New Profit, what we were seeking to do was something that could bristle the institution of philanthropy. We would be advocating for and piloting an approach that would decenter the institution of philanthropy as the "source" of knowledge and power through an inclusive process, informed by individuals from outside of the sector and proximate to the issues. By elevating the voices of a parent community and bringing them into the philanthropic space, we were attempting to tear down the wall between philanthropy and communities by expanding the number of seats at the proverbial table.

I wanted to include parent-voice from the outset of this initiative, not simply in its execution. I had not yet identified our formal parent partners or even finished designing the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) structure, but it was important to me that parents had an opportunity to weigh in on what I and the team were thinking. So, I utilized my personal network of coworkers, friends and family from Oakland to London, who could use their perspective as parents and people of color to share feedback on our draft application. Their input helped our team iterate and refine our drafts. I thanked them greatly and offered them each compensation for their time.

In the years leading up to my residency, Managing Partner Alex Cortez had been working to build a platform to bring voice to the issues affecting educational equity through parent empowerment. Alex's work with parents culminated in a think piece entitled "*Systems Change and Parent Power*" (Cortez,

2020). His work highlighted best practices in parent organizing and additional lessons learned from advocates in the field. Several of the parent advocacy organizations' grantee partners served as resources by way of focus groups and thought partners. Alex focused on supporting communities of practice and organizations composed of parent leaders and advocates. Alex was listening and learning from these organizations and their parent leaders and amplifying their voices through New Profit's media platform. Given the close alignment of values and strategic priorities, I collaborated with Alex to assess the fit of any of the organizations he'd been working with to the initiative that I was hoping to launch.

By July, both Alex and Shruti were in agreement that going deeper in a relationship with one of these standing partnerships was the best approach. We would end up reaching out to Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE), a parent-advocacy organization in Washington, D.C., to assess interest, fit, and thought partnership. From 2018–2019, PAVE was a grantee partner of New Profit's Catalyze Investment portfolio and part of its eight-member "Proximity Accelerator Cohort." In order to get the blessing from the organization, I knew the intention and proposal for what I was trying to accomplish would have to be airtight, and so began the process of designing outreach materials and communications for collaboration. This required going deeper into needs of New Profit, as well as projecting the needs of parent leaders. The COVID-19 pandemic was at a fever pitch and I knew communities and families had competing priorities. I was not anticipating this initiative ranking high on their list of priorities, as the country was grappling with how to address the pandemic. Because we were all socially distanced, I thought deeply about how to build a process that was flexible enough for parents to address their needs, while addressing the needs of New Profit (i.e., organization timelines), as well as the timelines and bandwidth that I would need for completion of this Capstone. My goal was for this parent constituent group to be a community and not a workgroup, as I felt that sort of engagement could easily devolve into one with a transactional nature. I was attempting to right-size the programmatic dosage for building trust and gaining insights to inform the overall strategy and implementation. Rather than relying on luck, I

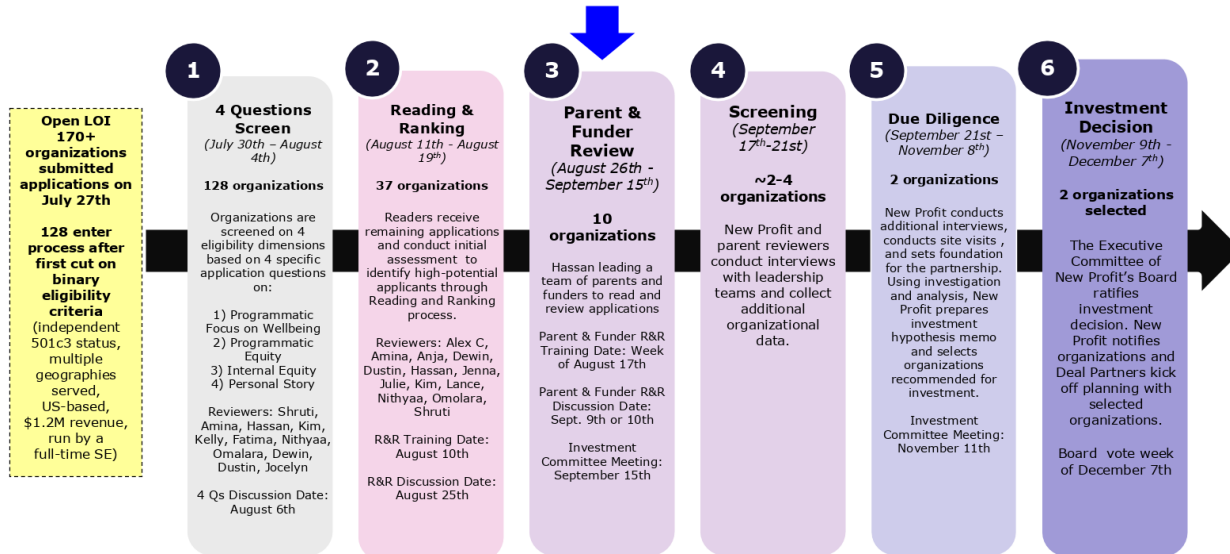
designed a process for parent engagement that would be heavily reliant on relationships and trust. To this end, I decided it was best to start slow, in order to go fast.

I had worked closely with Shruti to share my thinking around the “what” and “why” of the parent engagement. Our desired outcome was that our parent partners would participate in the entire investment selection experience (approximately 6 months). In working with parent leaders, New Profit was seeking to accomplish two goals: (a) identify equity opportunities in its investment selection process, and (b) increase representation and perspectives in investment selection, by specifically elevating experiences of individuals most proximate to the issues. Shruti and I continued working together on the overall engagement process. As I turned to the “how” (execution) of the work, I had to account for the role that the PAC would play within the space. Compensating the PAC was crucial to me for myriad reasons, two of which were: (a) it showed a deep appreciation for the relationship between New Profit and the PAC, (b) it required a tangible commitment from the organization to put a stake in the ground and say, “This is important to us and we are backing it with our own resources.” Shruti and I were firmly aligned in this stance. I did some “back of the napkin” calculations and market research in order to identify a compensation level that was not so low as to be insulting, or too high as to influence the PAC’s decisions as they engaged with us.

With our target date of completion being early-mid December, the Wellbeing Investment Selection team mapped out six key phases throughout investment selection for this cycle (see Figure 4) along with key dates, roles, deliverables that our internal team followed.

Figure 4: Wellbeing in Education Process Overview

Wellbeing in Education Process Overview



Once I had an understanding of the standard investment process and timeline, I designed a parallel process for community stakeholders to be a part of. As an organization, New Profit was taking a learning stance, but this would not be enough. In addition to learning from proximate communities, Shruti and I were actively working to also activate the broader philanthropic sector on the value of proximity as expertise—bringing the experiences of the community into the design and decision process. We did not want to be the only player with institutional power going along on this journey. As we worked through the design details, we decided that it would have been beneficial to bring funders into the experience. We were hoping that the funder partners would have been willing to take a learning stance with us, as active observers of the process. We also welcomed them to build a community with the prospective parent community that we would soon be recruiting. Shruti and I set a goal to recruit six-to-eight parent leaders and three or four funders to participate in this strategic initiative. In the end, we successfully recruited seven parent leaders and zero funders to participate in the multiphase strategy. All seven parent leaders that I interviewed agreed to participate, with some needing a few days to consider, while others were

immediately happy to jump onboard. While I did not manage the funder engagement strategy, Shruti diligently engaged funders, making the business case for what she and I were hoping to accomplish.

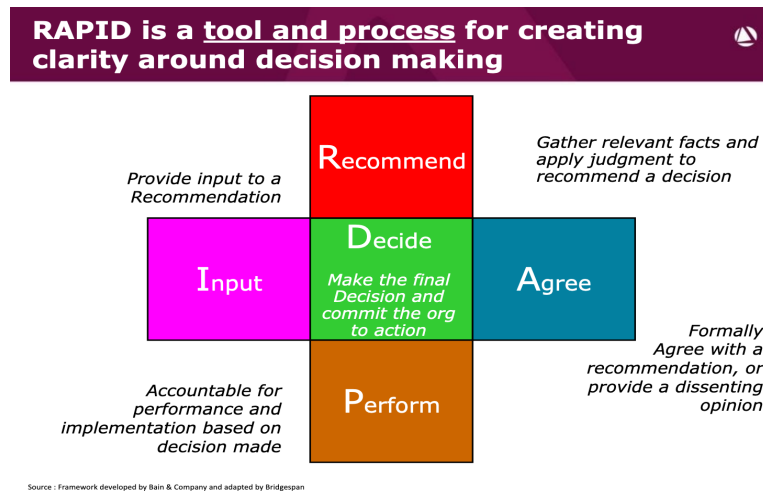
Shruti managed the funder engagement as they were all preexisting partners and colleagues. While the handful of funders that she courted voiced their support for our work, none of them formally came on board to collaborate with our parent community. Though this was not our desired outcome, we did not allow it to derail the strategy that we had been set forth.

We were hopeful that funders would have participated in this opportunity to work alongside the parent leaders to understand how they were assessing fit of investments through the lens of their expertise through lived experience. Though the lack of funder engagement was unfortunate to the overall initiative, it was not a setback. New Profit still had much to innovate and learn on its own.

My goal was to elevate proximate leadership, even if informally, amongst the parent leaders, in a space where Shruti held positional authority. I talked to her and the Education Portfolio team at length about this. Collectively, we debated with the power dynamics and optimal approaches to taking on the issue around who had decision-rights and how those rights would be enforced throughout the process. Internally, New Profit uses a decision-rights framework called RAPID⁶ created by Bain & Co. and later adapted by the Bridgespan Group (Bain, 2020). It serves as both a tool and process for creating clarity around decision making. Within the RAPID framework, stakeholders work together to designate roles to inform how the collective will operate. With a full acknowledgment that the mere act of deciding on roles is an example of power, doing so as a collective helps to distribute this decision-making power across the collective. In this paradigm, I served as a proxy for the PAC while concurrently holding my position as a member of the Wellbeing in Education Investment Selection Team (Figure 5 and Figure 6 are from slide decks outlining the RAPID Framework and its implementation during investment selection).

⁶ The RAPID framework was created by Bain & Company and later adapted by The Bridgespan Group.

Figure 5: RAPID Framework for Decision Making

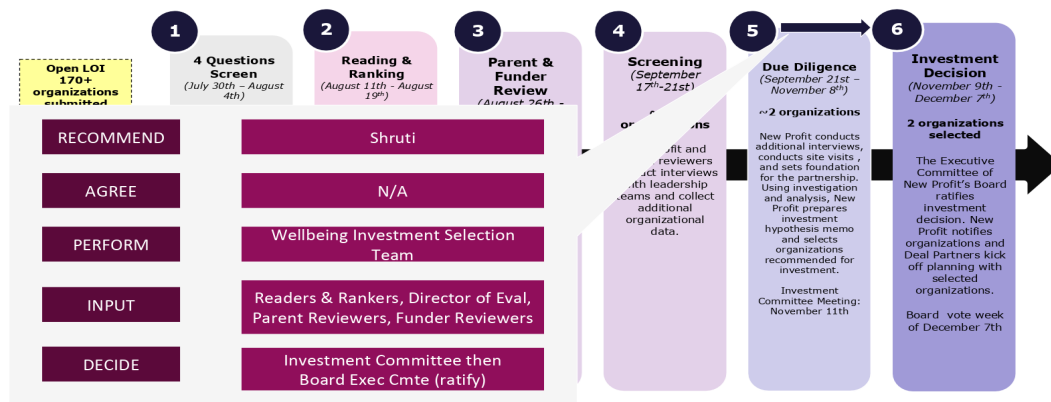


Source: (Bain, 2020)

RAPID untangles the decision-making process—existing or upcoming—by identifying all of the various activities that must occur for a decision to be made well. The name is an acronym, with each letter standing for an activity associated with decision making. At the outset, for example, someone must recommend that a decision be made. Input will likely be required to inform the decision. Often, more than one person must approve the final call, but ultimately someone must have the authority to decide. Then, after a decision is made, it must be carried out, or performed. (Huggett & Moran, 2007, para. 7)

Figure 6: RAPID Framework Implemented in New Profit Investment Selection

Wellbeing in Education Process Overview



Source: (Bain, 2020)

PAC Phase 1

As July drew to a close, the pace of work continued to ramp up. To be successful, I knew that I needed to develop process conditions that met the needs of parents. My formula for this has always been by building trust. While I relied on institutional knowledge and research to inform some of my thinking, I also designed the process based on my own lived experiences leading organizing efforts as an organizer and advocate. My approach was an intersection of “book smarts” and “street smarts.” To authentically connect with the parent community, I acknowledged the validated mistrust between large institutions, like philanthropy and historically-marginalized communities. I would also need to provide opportunity and space for parents to feel valued, heard and respected. Because of New Profit’s position as a philanthropic institution, I was increasingly intentional in thinking about how I approached the relationship-building components of the strategy, being mindful to balance humility with overzealousness. As I developed the launch plan, I backwards-designed events, deliverables and outcomes for our community stakeholders to participate. Below, I have shared the launch plan that I created for the Parent Advisory Council (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Parent Advisory Council 2020 Launch Plan

Date	Activity	Process	Person	Decision	Time/Compensati	
Week of 7/13	Parent JD Feedback	Finalized Draft [Internal]	Hassan	n/a	n/a	
Week of 7/20-7/24	Maya Feedback	Maya Feedback	Hassan/Alex?	n/a	n/a	
7/25/2020...ext. 7/27	Finalized Parent JD	Incorporate pertinent Maya feedback	Hassan	n/a	n/a	
7/27- 8/6	Parent 1:1's (Interest Interview)	Introductions/ Discuss JD/ Field Questions 30 min calls	Hassan	n/a	n/a	
		Finalize parents and availability latest: 8/6				
Week of August 3rd	Send Welcome Letter	n/a	Hassan	n/a	n/a	
Phase 1						
Week of Aug 10th	Kickoff (1.5 hrs)	Parent community building	Hassan	n/a	10-12 hours total; \$500/pp	
		Funder Community building	Shruti	n/a		
Week of Aug 17th	Training (2 hrs)	Application Review Workshop	Shruti/Hassan	n/a		
Aug 25th	Read/Rank [Internal]	n/a	NP Staff	final list of final		
Aug 26-Sept 7	Parent/Funder Read (4 hrs)	Partners hold 4 hours for independent review per application (like, wonder, concerns) *please spend no more than 30 minutes	Parents/Funders	n/a		
Sept 8 or 9	Synthesis	feedback from funders/parents and prepares	NP Staff	n/a		
Sept 9 or 10	Joint Partner Meeting (2.5 hr)	2.5 hr Meeting with Parents/Funders: any orgs that you'd (parent and/or funder?) during this session in the event that parents	SS/HB/Parents/Funders	NP decides, parents have strong "input" role		
Sept 14	Synthesis II	Wellbeing LOI Team [Internal]				
Sept 15	Investment Comte. Mtg.	Present deals to move into screening	Wellbeing Team	Yes- NP		
Phase 2						
Sept 14-17	Screening Prep w/ Parents	determine 2 questions from their perspective participate on call (i.e. vision, values, etc.)	Hassan	Yes- Parents	3-4 hours total; \$150 pp	
Sept 17-21 (8am-6pm weekdays)	Screening Calls	Screening Call: 90 mins Parent Debrief: 30 mins go forward opt in to join call based on SE availability.	SS/AF/HB/Parent (notetaker?) SS/HB/Parent n/a	n/a		
Phase 3						
Sept 14- Nov 8th	Diligence (include memo drafting)	guides Parents conduct up to 2 constituent interviews Session (as needed) October- Parent Recommendation Final Draft involved in constituent interviews	Hassan DP/Hassan/Parents Hassan/Parents Parents Parents	n/a n/a n/a n/a		6-7 hours total, \$300 pp
Dec 7	Board Vote [Internal]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Week of Dec 7th	Parent Letter/Survey	Update parents on voting outcome Thank all parents for participating Solicit brief feedback via series of calls future rounds	Hassan	n/a n/a n/a n/a	no no no no	

With a plan in hand, it was time to recruit parents. I created outreach materials and shared them with Alex Cortez and Maya Martin for their feedback before introducing them to the parent community. I trusted them both to provide expertise in communications and language as representatives of the New Profit and PAVE constituents, respectively. Alex and Maya are both experts in their situational context. They were my “Rosetta Stone” in bridging the lines of communication between the funder and the community. The PAC Outreach and Recruitment Letter (see Appendix D) outlined the who, what and how regarding New Profit and my strategic project in a way that was accessible. To ensure that the parents had the information necessary to make a well-informed decision, I ensured that the document included a clear breakdown of expectations, deadlines/dates, and compensation. An abridged version of the table from my PAC Recruitment Letter can be found in Figure 8 below. The letter concluded with an invitation to have a one-on-one conversation with me to learn more about participating in the Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

Figure 8: Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Engagement Activities

3 PHASE PROCESS AUGUST-OCTOBER		
Phase 1: Application Review	Phase 2: Screening Interviews (Optional/Opt-in)	Phase 3: Diligence Review (Optional/Opt-in)
<p>Parent Community Kickoff Event Let's connect and build our community! (Week of Aug 10th; 1.5 hours)</p> <p>Application Review Training Event Learn how to evaluate organization applications (Week of Aug 17th; 2 hours)</p> <p>Read Applications/Share Feedback Independently read and provide feedback on 3-4 organization applications. (Aug 26- Sept 7; hold 4 hours for independent work)</p> <p>Parents and Funder Convening Determine the final 2-4 organizations for Screening (Sept 9th or 10th; 2.5 hours)</p>	<p>Screening Call Training/Prep Session Learn about screening process and create interview questions for social entrepreneurs (Week of Sept 14-17; 1 hour)</p> <p>Screening Calls w/ Social Entrepreneurs Co-lead screening interviews with New Profit Leadership Team (Sept 17-21; Up to 2 90-minute calls and a 30-minute parent debrief call)</p>	<p>Conduct Constituent Interviews Parents lead interviews with community stakeholders. New Profit Team provides support (Sept –October; conduct 2 45-minute interviews)</p> <p>Provide Parent Recommendation Provide a formal written recommendation of consent/dissent to New Profit Investment Committee (Early-mid October)</p>
<p>We anticipate 10-12 hours total time commitment. You will receive a \$500 stipend for your participation at the end of this phase. (Early Aug-Early Sept)</p>	<p>We anticipate 3-4 hours total time commitment. You will receive a \$150 stipend for your participation at the end of this phase. (Early Sept- mid Sept.)</p>	<p>We anticipate 6-7 hours total time commitment. You will receive a \$300 stipend for your participation at the end of this phase. (Early Sept – mid Oct.)</p>
<p>We would work with parent leaders in the PAC to - as much as possible - organize any calls around your schedule of other commitments.</p>		

Maya and Alex were excellent thought partners in helping me design with the community in mind. Maya offered me a list of 10 parents from her organization that she felt might be good candidates

based on their capacity and interest to participate in the activities that were planned for the PAC. Maya introduced me to the parents through email, to which I then followed up.

Of the 10 parents, eight responded. One of the eight parents responded as the PAC was approaching Phase 2, which was too late in the process to include them; however, Alex and I agreed to keep them in mind for any future iterations of this work. With seven parents expressing interest, I conducted a 30-minute informational call with each of them prior to them joining. The goal of these calls was to learn more about each other through personal narrative, and to field any questions regarding PAC membership. Though we had set a team target for 8–10 parents, we were not inclined to turn away any parents that expressed interest within the prescribed Phase 1 deadlines. If more than 10 parents expressed interest, then my plan was to modify Phases 2 and 3 to bring in additional perspectives on a rotating basis. Being mindful of the daily conditions set in motion by the COVID-19 pandemic, I assumed a target of 10 willing participants was ambitious.

I successfully created New Profit’s inaugural Parent Advisory Council (PAC), whose role was to advise and inform the decisions of our internal team and co-lead in our grantmaking (see Appendix E). The PAC was a collective of native Washingtonians and immigrants who had all been working with PAVE as parent leaders in some formal or informal capacity. All of the PAC members were Black and identified as either African American or Afro-Latino and they brought a diverse range of lived experiences. There was a wealth of intersecting identities represented within the PAC, as its members were military veterans, social workers, school board members, undergraduate students, life-long family advocates, chief executives, and teachers. Each member had at least one child attending traditional or public charter schools in Washington, D.C. The council was reflective of the communities that our grantees serve and represent a diversity of lived experiences, mindsets and other identity characteristics. The PAC is a six-member⁷ body of parents who reflect the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic demographics of communities that New Profit serves through its funding of social entrepreneurs. The group ended up

⁷ The PAC was initially composed of seven members. The group lost one member during Phase 1 due to a positive life event.

being composed of four women and two men, simply based on individuals that expressed interest in being a part of this pilot. Because we were working virtually as a team, I communicated early and often with the PAC via email, phone and text messages. The whole would only be as strong as the sum of its parts and since I didn't have a prior relationship with any of them, I wanted to work twice as hard to keep them engaged.

It was early August. By now, the Wellbeing in Education Team had launched and closed the LOI process for prospective grantees. A record high of 174 organizations applied—nearly double the next highest open process for Build investments (likely stemming from resource needs in light of the COVID-19 pandemic)! Shruti cobbled together a group of 12–15 volunteers within New Profit to help the Wellbeing in Education Team meet the volume of applications requiring review. This group of volunteers helped whittle down the 174 applications to 10 finalists, through a prescribed process that Kim and Nithyaa were surgical in helping design. A welcome outcome of this exercise was that all 10 of the final organizations were led by a person of color and/or a woman. New Profit was actively and aggressively addressing its equity goals. Each volunteer allocated approximately 10–15 hours outside of their work schedule to participate in training, application review, and scoring. This was a decidedly heavy lift, which we did not want to foist upon our parent community, with whom we were still cultivating a relationship. We decided that we would bring in the PAC to assess the applicants that passed this screening stage.

There was a lot going on at this time. Administratively, I was creating the evaluation materials and coordinating with Kim to determine how we would distribute the packets of materials (applications and evaluative forms) to the PAC. I was leading a parallel process of recruitment, engagement and community-building with the PAC, while concurrently supporting the internal volunteer reading and ranking processes so that by the time the internal team had reduced the applicant pool from 174 to just 10 applicants, the PAC would be functioning as a deliberative body.

During my time at Harvard, I took a workshop on public narrative taught by well-known organizer, Marshall Ganz. A key tenet of the course was in communicating the importance of storytelling when connecting with people. Through my time at Harvard and as an organizer myself, I knew this to be

true. I'd learned the power of moving people to action by using the "self, us, now" framing for communication. This communication frame serves to humanize and identify the motivations of the speaker (the self); the speaker then connects to the audience by expounding upon their motivations and naming its relevance to the broader group (the us); and finally, the speaker closes by creating a sense of urgency while acknowledging the collective power of the group as a call to action (the now) (Working Narratives, 2013).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first meeting of the PAC was a 90-minute virtual kickoff event, where I utilized public narrative to build community with the parent leaders. The parents were all joining after a full day of work. With this in mind, I designed an agenda (see Appendix F) with an aim to balance levity with the gravity of the current social context (i.e., the global pandemic, social activism, the movement for Black lives, and the social and emotional wellbeing needs of education practitioners and children). This was a tall order. By offering a mix of small group activities, visual multimedia, tactical exercises and finally, an informational and question-and-answer section, my goal was that the PAC would walk away feeling committed, informed and most of all, excited.

One week after our kickoff, the PAC members participated in a 2-hour training (see Appendix G) with Shruti and I, where we introduced them to the form and structure of the LOI. We also showed them how to interpret the information in the LOI application and modeled for them what an application review might look like via an annotated exemplar LOI. As the training concluded, members were told to expect their evaluation packets within a matter of days.

Following the kickoff and training, the evaluation packets were electronically distributed to the PAC, along with communications for their expressed agreement to confidentiality during the review and screening process. Over the subsequent 12 days, the PAC was instructed to work independently, evaluating four applications each, with an estimated total time commitment of four hours. After the 12 days, the PAC reconvened for 2½ hours to deliberate as a group and identify the final organizations that our team would advance into screening. Shruti and Anja joined us to support with documentation and facilitation. As we went through each of the 10 organizations, each PAC member shared what they liked

or disliked about each organization, as well as any questions they had. Each PAC member scored the organizations based on preference and the six organizations with the highest overall scoring average were moved into consideration for Phase 2—the screening interviews with the social entrepreneurs. At the conclusion of Phase 1, I created and administered an experiential survey (see Appendix H) to the PAC as a means of building a knowledge base for the team.

New Profit has an investment committee which is composed of senior leaders from across the organization. The purpose of this body is to approve which organizations are presented to the board for final investment approval. The Wellbeing in Education Team informed New Profit’s Investment Selection Committee on its top finalists coming out of the reading and ranking process. The Committee was also updated on the progress of the PAC, who by this time had reviewed, scored, and provided written feedback on the final applications for screening. The Investment Committee expressed its approval of the six organizations that the PAC and Wellbeing Team had considered for screening. With their expressed support, the investment cycle was advanced into Phase 2.

Phase 2

It was late September as Phase 2 kicked off, and the PAC was fired up and ready to go. Phase 2 was a fairly brief process. Over the course of a week, we met as a group for a screening call training to prepare for the screening calls with social entrepreneurs (SEs). We were jovial, making wise-cracks and seemed generally comfortable in each other’s company. I attribute some of this to the fact that some of them knew each other through their work at PAVE as parent leaders, but also to the fact that in the two-week lead up to Phase 2, I’d made myself available to them for three one-hour blocks of time to field any process questions that were coming up as they evaluated their applications. These “office hours” were an optional time set aside for them to drop-in and connect with me for support. In addition to providing support, this time was well spent reconnecting and building deeper relationships together.

The expectation was that the PAC would interview SEs about anything of interest to them as it related to the social entrepreneur and/or their capacity-building organization, ranging from program and

service model, to the impact and outcomes of the SEs organization, as well as any other areas of interest. I provided no constraints or parameters for PAC members—I simply told them that if they had a question, to ask. Given their disposition as activists in their work with PAVE, the PAC required little guidance in this arena. I facilitated two evening prep-sessions to orient the PAC on the structure and format of the screening interviews and helped guide them in their questioning and advocacy when needed.

Shruti and Amina (from PPS) facilitated the screening interviews for each SE semifinalist, as was the standard protocol for investment selection. They were joined by one-to-two PAC members. Each PAC member self-selected into an interview slot based on their availability and interest in the four semi-finalist organizations. Each screening call was approximately 2 hours long, with the PAC parent(s) having approximately 30 minutes to address the social entrepreneur with their questions. In planning for this meeting, Shruti and I were intentional to not bloat the screening interviews with nonessential participants. We decided that rather than me joining the screening calls, I would instead follow-up and debrief with each parent about their experience on the call. The last thing that we wanted to do was intimidate a social entrepreneur by bringing an army to a “getting-to-know-you” video call. We provided SEs the courtesy of being informed beforehand that one or two parents would be joining the call.

With screening calls completed and the PAC members’ feedback and ratings for each screening call and application in our possession, the Wellbeing in Education team now needed to deliberate to determine which two of the four organizations would move into the final diligence phase. Due to the strong pool, six organizations were moved to screening. We relied almost solely on the PAC feedback in our decision making. After rich debate and discussion well into the night, we landed on the final two organizations that would advance. The news of our decision was well-received by the PAC when I shared it with them the following day. With this news, the PAC members self-selected into a three-member diligence team for one of the two final organizations. Each group was composed of three parents.

Phase 3

From late September through October, the Wellbeing in Education Team conducted diligence on the two respective organizations. The two organizations for diligence were Clairvoyant and Ares⁸. My duties were split between leading the PAC with their Phase 3 diligence responsibilities of interview facilitation and recommendation writing, and supporting Shruti on diligence for Clairvoyant as a “Due Diligence Second.” As a Deal Second, my responsibilities were to evaluate the program model, financial health, impact, and all-around strengths and opportunities for Clairvoyant, while drafting these findings into an investment memo. Kim served as the Due Diligence Second for Ares. I also supported Shruti with staff and board member interviews. Internal diligence activities were performed in the morning and occasionally, evenings, while PAC diligence activities were performed during afternoons and evenings as my schedule was dependent on the availability of the parents.

In this final phase, the PAC conducted constituent interviews. The approach to consistent interviews closely mirrored that of the screening interviews, with the exception that rather than interviewing the social entrepreneur, the parents would now be interviewing the SEs constituents (i.e. employees, students, and parents). Each organization provided three constituents for the PAC and I to interview, for a total of six interviews. Each interview lasted 45 minutes and included myself, one PAC member, and one constituent. The PAC members led each interview asking questions of constituents around their experience with the respective organizations, as well as discerning what practices they would have liked to see continue, change, or end.

As my work with the PAC moved smoothly through its phases, we hit a snag that stalled the work for about a month. As previously mentioned, the diligence team moved through the various phases of investment selection, whittling down 174 applications to 10 applications, with the PAC providing input and insights that informed the selection of the final two organizations for diligence. With two organizations and six PAC members, I’d broken up the PAC into two groups of three. Members opted into

⁸ Names of organizations have been changed to maintain privacy.

the organization to which they wanted to be matched with. The PAC now operated as two teams that were each conducting diligence on a single organization. This was all planned. Though the organizations were different, the process and experience for each team was expected to be the same. In the end, it was not.

The diligence process for Clairvoyant and Ares progressed at dramatically different paces. This was unexpected. The almost one-month difference in process between the organizations meant that diligence on Clairvoyant was complete in November, while diligence on Ares would conclude in the new year (January). Our team was adaptive to the needs of our grantees, in typical New Profit fashion. Lines of communication maintained open and relationship management remained a priority, as both Ares and Clairvoyant addressed the needs of their students and communities, while balancing its operational needs—which in this case was to secure funding.

In debriefing with the PAC, they were spirited and deeply interested in how constituents had perceived their race, culture and ethnicities being affirmed by each respective service provider. The PAC asked powerful and targeted questions and were intentional about setting a tone for each constituent meeting that was conversational and easy. At a later time, I reconvened the PAC and supported them in crafting a final investment recommendation, which would end up being incorporated into the investment memos for each organization.

Both Clairvoyant and Ares eventually advanced to a vote for funding and partnership. Typically, New Profit Investment Committee Meetings are closed-door, invite-only engagements. However, for the first time in its 20-year history, community members, through the PAC, were welcomed into the room to not only attend, but to present to the group. In November 2020 and January 2021, PAC members, Brittany Wade and Russchelle Moore, respectively, brought their lived experiences and the voices of fellow PAC colleagues into the room, literally taking a seat at the proverbial table. At each of their respective meetings, they presented the strengths and concerns held by themselves and their PAC colleagues that had been determined through the activities of the previous months. Each parent co-presented with the respective diligence teams to the New Profit Investment Committee—a governing body of managing

partners and support staff from within the organization. The PAC's feedback was well received and documented. The Investment Committee set a warm and welcoming atmosphere, allowing space for us all to speak our truths. Both Brittany and Russchelle were candid and balanced in their assessments of the two organizations. After the presentation of findings, each diligence team was asked to leave the virtual conference, while the committee deliberated and voted on each investment prospect. By the end, both organizations would be voted in the affirmative to become grantee-partners. As this was occurring, Becoming Better Together (BBT), a third-party consulting organization, was conducting an equity audit of New Profit. The PPS team had invited BBT to evaluate our investment selection pilot by facilitating a focus group (see Appendix I) with the PAC. We hoped to incorporate their findings into potential future iterations of this work.

Evidence

“The experience is proof in and of itself. The authority lies in the experience itself—no one can negate the experience that you have.”

—Dr. Alan Lightman

Parent leaders read applications and recommended organizations, participated in phone interviews with social entrepreneurs, and presented their perspectives to New Profit’s Investment Committee. The PAC’s keen—and sometimes seemingly sole—focus on program model fidelity allowed the team to more surgically evaluate prospective applicants. This greatly affected the pool and profile of finalists, as more polished applicants were closely scrutinized, while smaller and scrappier organizations that showed promise, ended up being elevated. Throughout the three phases of the PAC engagement and our six internal investment phases, I was always intentional in prioritizing community and relationship building amongst the groups.

If you want to hear from the streets, you got to go to the streets—hearing our perspectives as parents made me feel heard and appreciated and that NP valued us by including us as parents in the process of making grants to organizations that parents/students participate in. It is necessary to walk the talk—by including us in the funding decisions, they are walking the talk—trying to make grants not made on relationships and who you know but based on feedback from “the people.” —*DaSean Jones, Parent Advisory Council member*

The PAC has added a layer to our collective thinking by raising and/or validating red flags for us, while also highlighting a few blind spots in our process. Something we immediately noticed was that the PAC was often far more deeply interested in the program model of the organization, rather than the story or vision of the social entrepreneur—this is a contrast to what I observed as New Profit’s priorities at this phase. To be fair, I believe New Profit looks much closely at the SE, because in their formula, the SE is the unit of change; the organization, less so. The SE is who New Profit tends to advise and support throughout the life of an investment period, so the organization places a high value on the coachability and relational dynamics with prospective organizations and SEs. The PAC, by contrast, did not have this relational burden as a concern. They did not have to discern relational dynamics with the SE, but rather,

they were surgical in analyzing the quality of the program model and service delivery. The PAC was constantly asking the necessary questions regarding how the organizations engaged and served children and families. This was their north star. The combination of perspectives was powerful, in that it led to many rich conversations internally and across grantee organizations around equity, antiracist practices, and growth mindset. The summation of the survey and focus group feedback from the PAC was instrumental in informing where the team did well and where it could stand to iterate in future constituent engagements. The PAC also brought a curiosity and healthy tension to each screening and constituent call.

The PAC was fully committed to supporting us with this pilot. They were also subjected to some of the tensions that New Profit faces as a funder, such as trying to be amenable to the needs of capacity-building organizations, while holding the tension of process deadlines and expectations for ways of working. This was particularly evident while they supported us in diligence with Ares. The extended delays from Ares delayed New Profit's processes and also the compensation timelines for half of the PAC. While there were clear and understandable frustrations, the PAC was also very supportive and compromising in their disposition.

At the end of the day, we are parents; we have other things we need to be doing to put this in perspective—what about that group we interviewed and they're not ready... what do we do when they're not ready—we need to move on to other orgs who are ready. A deadline and timeline is definitely needed so we can keep moving forward, get funding into the hands of those who need it right now... we just keep waiting to make a decision b/c we're waiting on one nonprofit to get their stuff together. —*Russchelle Moore, Parent Advisory Council Member*

Not only did the PAC's involvement influence the final investment decisions, but they also influenced New Profit's approach to the investment selection process. The feedback that they shared helped to inform how the Investment Committee would ultimately rule. This experience changed the

orientation of the Investment Committee, who have eagerly expressed interest in deepening their relationships with community members and a version 2.0 of this experience.

[I suggest that you] always have a parent selection board—the parents are going to ask the questions that New Profit may not be willing to ask; you have to bring parents to the table, because it's our kids who are being affected. —*PAC member*

In early December, as the outcome of the revised investment selection process with the Education Team began to bear fruit, my attention was turned outward to the broader organization. Yordanos Eyoel, a managing partner on New Profit's Catalyze Investment Team⁹ and leader of New Profit's Civic Lab¹⁰ sought my guidance on how she might empower her five-member team to take a similar participatory, community-engaged approach with her team, as they prepared to plan for their 2021 launches. I sat down with the team to learn more about their work, in general, but also to learn about the event they planned to launch, their approach and the work to date. Once I had a sense of their work and collective goals, I shared with them the intention and the outcomes of the 6-month engagement process with the parent leaders. Through this dialogue we created a shared understanding. I thought about the Six Conditions of Systems Change as I consulted with the team. I walked the team through some visual materials, such as my roadmap, engagement materials and a few PowerPoint presentations that mapped out the approach and the rationale behind each step. I purposely spent more time walking the team through the engagement process versus the more technical facets of the implementation plan. My reason for this approach was two-fold: first, as individuals and organizations adapt to the new conditions of remote learning and remote relationship building, it behooves them to be ever more mindful about how they engage, how they show up, and what first and lasting impressions they aspire to make with communities and individuals that may be less familiar with us and our work; second, I realized that I was

⁹ New Profit's Catalyze Investments provides \$50-\$100K in unrestricted grants, strategic advice, and a peer learning community over one-to-two years to catalyze the innovations of organizations with leaders and focus areas that have been historically underinvested in by philanthropy. New Profit provides Catalyze Investments to cohorts of organizations with underinvested leaders and focus areas.

¹⁰ Launched in 2019, New Profit's Civic Lab provides one-year unrestricted grants of \$50,000 and strategic capacity-building support to help entrepreneurs grow and increase the impact of their organizations, while also collectively contributing to the renewal of civic culture in America (NP Go website, 2020).

offering an opportunity to shift mental models, policies and practices within the Catalyze Team. Offering my perspective on constituent engagement best practices would no doubt shift some of the team's ways of operating and thinking. I wanted to be clear on *why* proposing these shifts was a good idea and name the expectation, that this new way of working could affect team operating norms around cadence of work and distribution of work amongst the team. My hope was that the Catalyze Team would be amenable to what I shared with them, as well as committed to trying out the approach with an intention to adopt and sustain the practices over time. For all intents and purposes, the session went well and I was asked to remain within the Catalyze Team's orbit in an advisor capacity, as they began their journey of iteration and implementation with their respective constituent community. I gladly accepted the offer and informed Yordanos and the Catalyze team to consider me a resource.

In addition to the inward systems change work, in December 2020, I partnered with New Profit communications staff and a cohort-mate, Jocelyn Rodriguez, from my doctoral program, to co-host a webinar on community engagement in philanthropy. Jocelyn and I interviewed a group of four members from New Profit's Parent Advisory Council and its Worker Advisory Board. This was a moment for relationship-building and capacity-building for the field. During the hour-long segment, we discussed a range of topics from their perspective, including recommendations for organizations seeking to do community engagement, personal stories of empowerment and advocacy, and reflections on their experiences. The content will be edited to serve as external content for the funding community on New Profit's respective social platforms and respective convenings, as well as internal content for organizational development.

This pilot was drawing attention from practitioners across the sector. In November 2020, Shruti and I were invited as guests on *The Nonprofit Lowdown*, a live-webinar and podcast series hosted by Rhea Wong. During an hour-long webinar, and soon to be podcast episode entitled "*Centering Communities in Grant-making*," which aired on February 25, 2021, Shruti and I discussed our reason and approach to participatory grantmaking (Wong, 2021). We fielded questions from attendees who were curious about how power was navigated, how decisions were made, and how one might navigate the tensions from

institutional funders who may not be onboard with this approach to grantmaking—which is of particular interest, since New Profit functions as an intermediary between large funders and family foundations, and capacity-building organizations.

Between May 2020 and October 2020, my theory of change evolved as I grew acclimated to workplace norms, key players in the work, and a deeper understanding of my project. In February 2021, I revisited my theory of change to discern if there was evidence to support the assumptions and stated goals that I’d put forth so many months earlier. In Figures 9, 10, and 11, I document the progress made and share the evidence therein for my theory of change’s three pillars.

Figure 9: Theory of Change Progress Tracker: “If…” Section

		Evidence		
Output	Outcome	Application Phase	Screening Phase	Diligence Phase
Identify allies and pockets of success	●	Co-created outreach memo and job description for parent recruitment with Maya and Alex; ongoing 1:1 convos with New Profit staff highlighted champions of the work internally; administered Ed Team survey and facilitated debrief; Shruti and I co-led an all-staff meeting on investment cycle and prospects; weekly planning meetings with Kim	Joined ad-hoc community of practice with three other New Profit staff members leading various community engagement initiatives; joined Equity Advisory Council	Investment Committee emphasizes desire to continue the piloted practice
Identify/ Create a framework for decision-making	●	Review past/current org. materials; learned RAPID framework (and its applications to my project) from Alex and supported a training on the content with a grantee organization while on 1-month contract; worked closely with Shruti to implement RAPID during internal and external screening processes; independent review of knowledge for action (RKA); organizing principles from prior work experience	Ongoing literature review for RKA; Capstone committee resource sharing and office hours; organizing principles from prior work experience	Building upon learnings, literature, and best practices, I created a new participatory framework (PEACE framework) for practitioners to utilize in the field; organizing principles from prior work experience
Recruit, compensate, and activate a community of parent leaders and		Seven parent leaders successfully recruited. Retained six. All parents successfully	All six remaining parent leaders opted in to continue participating. All parents successfully	All six remaining parent leaders opted in to continue participating.

funders	●	completed Phase 1 requirements All parents received stipends.	completed Phase 2 requirements. One parent is collaborating independently with an SE to bring a social service to Washington, D.C. Parent leaders volunteered to participate in client-facing webinar on community empowerment and philanthropy All parents received stipends.	All parents received stipends. All six parents have expressed interest in providing various forms of participatory support to New Profit and the field.
		0 funders volunteered to participate	0 funders volunteered to participate	0 funders volunteered to participate
Creating affinity and cross-functional spaces	●	Designed and led PAC kickoff and community building sessions; community building space in response to George Floyd murder and pandemic; co-designed and co-led strategy sessions with Shruti	Trained PAC to lead constituent interviews; integrated adult development practices into communities of practice; optional “office hours” with PAC were well attended (100%)	Community building space in response to Capitol Insurrection.* *All PAC members live in Washington, D.C.

Figure 10: Theory of Change Progress Tracker: “Then...” Section

Output	Outcome	Evidence		
		Application Phase	Screening Phase	Diligence Phase
Actively reduce some influences of institutional bias	●	12-member coalition of internal application reviewers from across New Profit assessed 174 applications and identified 10 final orgs all founded by people of color; PAC evaluated final 10 applications and provided recommendations for finalists	PAC recommended short list of finalists for selection; PAC selection heavily influenced/ informed final investment candidates; Wellbeing team deliberated and heavily assessed PAC input for final recommendation	Trained PAC on Investment Memo writing; PAC crafted a formal investment recommendation for committee and advisory; PAC presented insights/recommendations with Investment Committee
Understand how to independently design participatory processes across other portfolios	●	n/a	n/a	Advised and shared learnings with Catalyze Portfolio team on how to implement similar processes in their work for Q1 2021
		n/a	n/a	TBD: Outcome/ Impact of new practices by Catalyze

Commit assets to this work	●	Stipends assigned for PAC members and disbursed across three payment periods	n/a	n/a
Better position itself as a sector leader on issues of equity	◐	Announcement of parent-participation via media release.	New Profit leveraged relationships to informally share with funders, board members and social entrepreneurs about the inception and intention behind PAC	Guest Appearance on Nonprofit Lowdown webinar and podcast with Shruti. Episode titled “Centering Communities in Grant-making”
				TBD: Sustainability of parent/constituent integration model.

Figure 11: Theory of Change Progress Tracker: “Which in turn will...” Section

Output	Outcome	Evidence		
		Application Phase	Screening Phase	Diligence Phase
Empower communities to drive decisions about funding decisions	◐			PAC authored a formal investment opinion and presented to Investment Memo.
		PAC had input rights and influence but they did not have formal decision-making ability	PAC had input rights and influence but they did not have formal decision-making ability	PAC had input rights and influence but they did not have formal decision-making ability
Create conditions for easier adoption of practices by industry peers	◐		Ongoing communications with philanthropic and capacity-building organizations	<p>Created a roadmap manual for aid practitioners in performing similar participatory work</p> <p>Co-hosted webinar on best practices for community engagement and philanthropy.</p> <p>Co-wrote a field-facing blogpost for New Profit on the work being done in partnership with parents and front-line workers</p> <p>Shared learnings as a podcast guest (post-diligence)</p> <p>Created a formal proposal for engagement between New Profit and funders via</p>

				creation of regional PAC / constituent consultancies
Allow a broader range of social entrepreneurs addressing societal issues to gain exposure and access	●		Two organizations were reprioritized based on PAC decisions	Proposed a fee-for-service model for PAC/CBOs as a revenue generator and capacity builder

I spent the second half of 2020 leading New Profit’s implementation and intra/interorganizational learning from this initial attempt at reducing bias in this piloted process, specifically working to craft a process that thoughtfully included the perspectives of parents in investment selection throughout its myriad phases. More broadly, I also supported the investment team in thinking about diversity, equity and inclusion while implementing systemic process improvements, as it relates to grantmaking and people operations protocols internally. Human-centered design is being prioritized to varying degrees across other parts of New Profit. Engaging in this work allowed me to lean into my relational strengths.

The next phase of this strategic project was evaluating learnings and scaling what worked. This method of participatory philanthropy is nascent and not something widely adopted or utilized in mid-big philanthropies. The attempt to influence funders’ models and mindsets from its White supremacy roots will be an uphill battle. As a member of an influential philanthropic organization, I shared my learnings from strategy to implementation with a broader contingent of funders through several forums:

- Authored a guide titled “*Partnering with Communities through Participatory Philanthropy: A Field Guide*,” intended to serve as a manual for practitioners aiming to adopt similar participatory approaches in their organizations
- Co-hosted a webinar with several members from New Profit’s PAC and its Worker Advisory Board on the importance of meaningful community engagement in philanthropy
- Served as a guest with Shruti on a webinar and podcast called, “Nonprofit Lowdown” where the topic was “*Centering Communities in Grant-making*”

- Co-authored a blog on *NP Go* titled, “*Community Engagement: Learning’s from New Profit’s Parent Advisory Council & XPERT Worker Advisory Board*”

Though the road ahead is laden with challenges, it is also laden with opportunities to inform New Profit and the philanthropic sector amidst the flashpoints of racial justice and public health pandemics that continues to lay bare the consequences of upholding inequitable practices and systems. The time for this change is now.

Analysis

“Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”
—Bruce Lee

Working with the PAC was by all accounts a success—they actively brought their authentic experiences and biases into the discourse, while actively pushing the Wellbeing Team social entrepreneurs collective thinking around capability, impact and power. We debated, scored applications, debated, compromised, and debated some more. Each member meaningfully contributed to our discussions in myriad ways. For example, their input informed us prioritizing certain organizations, while deprioritizing others for consideration. Across the organization, New Profit is actively working with various third-party constituents ranging from parent leaders, to young people, to front-line workers. One of my aims was to find a framework that would have broad applications for not just the education team, but for the organization, as a means to increase the likelihood of buy-in and catalytic change on an organizational scale. I analyzed my strategic project and its impact through the Six Conditions of Systems Change Framework (Kania et al., 2018) and used resources from the Waters Center for Systems Thinking to help me make sense of my analysis. The Waters Center for Systems Thinking (waterscenterst.org) is a Pittsburgh-based consultancy, which provides a suite of resources to education institutions, businesses and nonprofits for capacity-building around systems-thinking design and problem-solving.

In the subsequent section of this Capstone, I applied the six defined components (see Appendix J) of Kania¹¹ et al.’s framework to analyze the respective dynamics within the context of my residency experience and my strategic project. This framework was useful as a visual and descriptive tool that provided a clear language and visual medium to understand the conditions I observed within New Profit’s system. However, as a tool, this framework did not provide the means to evaluate the interplay between said conditions. In order to analyze these systems-change conditions, I needed to approach them as a

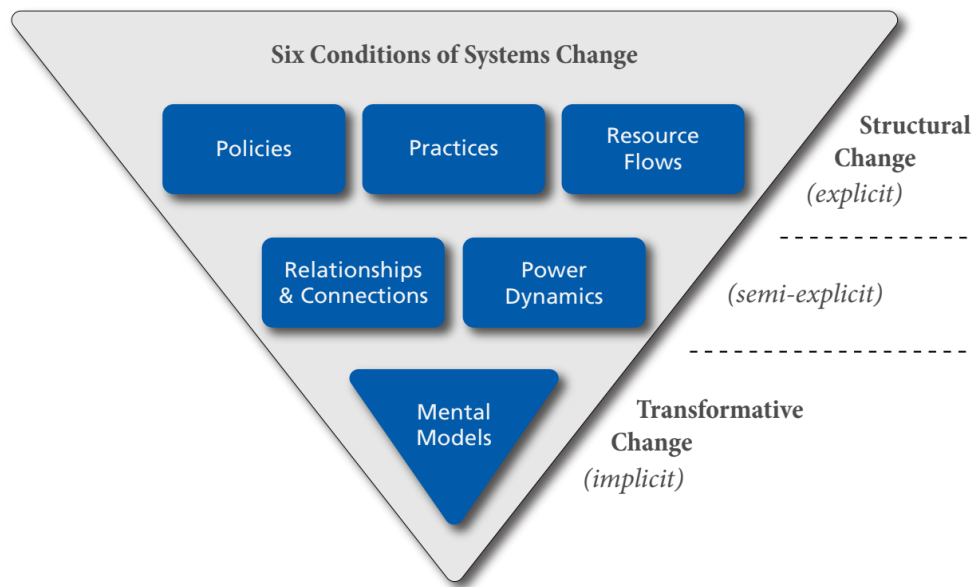
¹¹ John Kania was an entrepreneur-in-residence at New Profit from September 2018 to September 2020. He brought with him two decades of experience at FSG as a senior leader and board member. During his 2-year tenure at New Profit, he supported the organization and the social entrepreneurs that it supports, in implementing systems-change solutions into their respective practices.

systems-thinker. I selected seven best practices from the Waters Center for Systems Thinking¹² (see Appendix K), *Habits of a Systems Thinker*, which allowed me to use systems thinking in order to make sense of the systems change framework.

Enacting Systems Change for Social Good

In the most basic sense, “Systems change focuses on shifting conditions that hold the problems in place” (Kania et al., 2018, p. 3). These conditions have been separated into six domains: policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connection, power dynamics, and mental models (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Six Conditions of Systems Change



Source: (Kania et al., 2018)

Addressing policy, practices and resource flows can impact structural change within an institution, while cultivating strong working relationships and connections with players within the system sets conditions for how power may flow through the system. This is where elements such as trusting and psychologically-safe work environments that reward transparency and healthy risk-taking among all staff

¹² The *Habits of A Systems Thinker* best practices in the Appendix are from The Waters Centers 2020 Edition. I own a hard copy deck from a previous but similar 2015 edition which I utilized in my analysis.

is key. Lastly, transformative change is what is accomplished when the individual and collective behaviors within the system are activated to operate in a new way that no longer reflect their prior mental schema. The expected outcome of navigating through these various levels of systems change is an observable shift in behaviors, values and policies.

‘Systems change’ is not a new concept, but increasingly leaders of foundations, nonprofits, and other influential social sector institutions are hailing it as a promising way to achieve greater impact. The idea has moved from activist and organizer circles to the forefront of discussions among foundation CEOs and is increasingly cited in philanthropy publications and conferences. Yet despite all the attention, and a long tradition of academic study, the concept and its implications for funders and grantees can still seem hard to grasp and apply. (Kania et al., 2018, p. 2)

The systems that I sought to influence during my strategic project were internal and specific to New Profit, though I understood that the work that I’d be doing had the potential for broader implications for the field writ-large, given New Profit’s market position. In addition to the sector change work that I have outlined in this section, a similar systems-change approach is required at the organization level to enact policy change. Below, I’ve selected seven habits of systems thinkers and applied them to respective conditions within Kania et al.’s framework for interpretative purposes.

Seeks to understand the “big picture”

(Conditions: Practices / Relationships and Connections / Mental Models)

From day one, I knew navigating New Profit would be difficult, given the remote working environment foisted upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic. Researching New Profit, having preliminary coffee chats with a handful of staff and creating an entry plan were all helpful in giving me a grounding into the context of the organization. Most importantly, deciding to work as a month-long contractor prior to formally beginning my residency was invaluable, in that it essentially created an 11-month versus a 10-month engagement. I used that additional month to embed myself within the organization by lending myself to projects and supporting staff where possible—I was a sponge. I requested an org chart to

discern who people were and where they sat across the organization, then conducted outreach for “lunch and learns” and coffee chats. By the time I formally began my residency, I had found my “sea legs” within the organization.

Navigating New Profit would still be difficult, given the siloed-yet-cross-functional nature of teams—its organizational structure is unconventional in that it is not set up as a traditional hierarchy (see Appendix L). This is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, a preeminent scholar on organizational structure and teams, Amy Edmondson, concluded that, “More and more people in nearly every industry and type of company are now working on multiple teams that vary in duration, have a constantly shifting membership, and pursue moving targets” (Edmondson, 2020). This is New Profit. Understanding roles and how individuals and groups interacted was a challenge—more so as a remote work experience. Throughout my residency, I advocated to Shruti for where I wanted to position myself across the organization, as I learned of various governing bodies and programmatic work. Shruti was helpful in plugging me into biweekly Partner Meetings where I could see how New Profit was making inroads across various parts of the work. These meetings also allowed me facetime with mid- and upper-level leadership within the organization. These were additional opportunities for me to forge connections and understand what motivated individuals and teams.

Through discussions with staff across the organization, I learned of two previous efforts¹³ by New Profit to bring Boston youth constituents into its work. I requested programmatic materials for both initiatives and had additional meetings with the strategy leads to learn of challenges and opportunities as I embarked on my charge. Connecting with the Portfolio Performance and Support (PPS) team was also helpful. The confluence of all of these experiences allowed me to assess New Profit as a system and focus on areas that I might be able to influence throughout my project. The question that guided my thinking throughout has been, “How can I help New Profit engage communities differently?” These conversations

¹³ In recent years New Profit engaged in two broad constituent engagement initiatives—Reimagine Learning’s Youth Advocacy Strategy in 2017, lead by Delanoe Johnson (Senior Associate, Communications and Corporate Partnerships) and the Post Secondary Innovation for Equity (PIE) team’s investment selection with a Youth Committee in 2018, co-lead by Bill Jackson (Entrepreneur-in-Residence) and Gleandean Hamilton (Associate Partner, Learn to Earn).

and observations of practices allowed me to gauge the readiness and appetite for the kind of change that I'd be proposing. The culminating effect of my approach allowed me to incorporate learnings from past processes, while building off of New Profit's institutional history of constituent engagement. I now had a window into its mental model for how constituents ought to be engaged. I was also able to see how they approached each engagement and what sort of tangible and intangible resources they put behind each strategy—an identifier to the organization's commitment to the sustainability of the work.

Changes perspectives to increase understanding (Conditions: Policies / Power Dynamics / Mental Models)

Though the organizer in me wanted to take a wrecking ball to current processes in order to build them anew, I knew this would not be the reality of the work. In all areas, I had to seek compromise. Talking to people and understanding their motivations and interests allowed me to understand the gestalt of New Profit's staff and who they deferred to as content experts across varying practices and content areas. Sitting down with internal power brokers and influencers allowed me to understand where and to what degree I could push the organization and team in decentering its authority, as I developed the design process for the PAC engagement. The work plan for the Wellbeing Investment Selection Process (see Appendix M) was already finalized by the time I formally joined the team in June of 2020. I quickly realized that my vision for my strategic project would be tightly constrained by the parameters of the plan. I had to squeeze my vision into the plan in a manner that may have compromised the potential for deeper community engagement that I desired. The time constraint was initially difficult to manage, as so much of my work had to be front-loaded. There was far more time allocated to execution than to reflection. I would have preferred more balance between the two, particularly since we were designing and building something new. Learning is equally important as execution, sometimes more so, but I understand that I entered a system with norms and mores well-established before my arrival. I was made aware of the funding timelines within New Profit that were in conflict with what I was creating. Some of the innovations that I wanted to propose ended up on the cutting room floor. I also acknowledge that I only

had 30 days to create an aligned work plan, align internal financial processes (participant compensation processes), design outreach materials, and recruit parent leaders to the cause, so I'd have to compromise.

Uses understanding of system structure to identify possible leverage actions

(Conditions: Relationships and Connections / Power Dynamics / Policies)

Reviewing the formal operating structures and norms within the Education Portfolio and PPS teams, and the perceptions of their functions from its respective members, allowed me to understand the connective tissue between the two groups. More importantly, it allowed me to understand the motivations and areas of interest for each group as it pertained to my strategic project. In doing so, I was able to identify where I could enact small changes that would have a long-lasting effect as I sought to influence not only practices but processes. I grew to understand that the PPS team served as a nucleus within New Profit and was a true center of power. The PPS team included the organization's impact and evaluation personnel, whose assessments of respective investments was a key driver for whether investment selection teams conducted additional diligence or discontinued diligence on an organization—though these instances were rare. In using what I knew about the investment selection system and what each respective member wanted out of the process, I was able to identify leverage points where parent leaders could influence the system in a manner that “bent” New Profit's way of working without unnecessarily blowing up their processes—since that likely wouldn't promote buy-in or sustainability. I also wouldn't be making any friends by going that route. I spent considerable time during the summer of 2020 working with the PPS team members from its senior associate up to its managing partner.

As managing partner of portfolio investing, Trevor Brown and his PPS team were ultimate gatekeepers to the success of my work, since this team informs how New Profit conducts and executes investments. In speaking with Trevor, I was surprised by how open he was to pulling up the stops. During our conversation, he expressed his curiosity in getting parents reactions to New Profit's investment selection approach. He then went on to push his own thinking by stating, “Who cares about our approach, I wonder how parents would approach this thing, if they could. It's about their sense-making and their input.” I found this remark especially liberating, in that it left us both on the same page about trying to

find ways to not lead or bias parents in the process. Though this conversation left me with a greater sense of agency, I also acknowledged the inherent tension that it placed on me as an outsider/resident in the organization advocating for approaches with Shruti and the wellbeing team, as we were all operating under time constraints and ways of working. New Profit's PPS team holds so much influence across the six domains of systems change, whether they know it or not. By participating in a number of individual and small group discussions with them, I sought to understand their mental models, how these mindsets mapped onto the education team, and how I would hold the two as object while creating something new for this context.

Consider short term, long term and unintended consequences of actions
(Conditions: Practices / Resource Flows / Relationships & Connections / Power Dynamics)

New Profit is a place that seems to value entrepreneurial mindset and spirit. I observed them to be an organization that is open to both experimentation and pressure testing new ideas. In this workplace, “teaming” (see Appendix N) is a valued way of working, as it allows multiple perspectives from various experts from across the organization to band together for a brief duration to problem solve, test and iterate upon learnings.

‘Teaming’ is teamwork on the fly. When companies need to accomplish something that hasn't been done before, and might not be done again, traditional team structures aren't practical. It's just not possible to identify the right skills and knowledge in advance and to trust that circumstances will not change. Under those conditions, a leader's emphasis has to shift from composing and managing teams to inspiring and enabling teaming. Stable teams of people who have learned over time to work well together can be powerful tools. But given the speed of change, the intensity of market competition, and the unpredictability of customers' needs today, there often isn't enough time to build that kind of team. (Edmondson, 2020, para. 3)

In order for the Wellbeing Investment Selection Team to be successful under our time constraints, a teaming approach was needed. During weekly meetings, team members would discuss needs, next steps and responsibilities. Throughout the investment selection process, internal Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) consultants, operations specialists, and measurement and evaluation specialists, lent their respective expertise to our group by reviewing documents and providing short-term guidance on materials that were developing. Leveraging the expertise of internal consultants in content creation and discerning ways of working was a norm at New Profit. However, I believe that by creating an external third-party constituent structure (i.e., PAC), some of those teaming norms might be challenged in the long term, due to increased accountability measures, as Shruti and I had begun discussing potential configurations for the PAC/New Profit, which include a rotating bench of parent leaders that we might source from one or numerous organizations. This bench of parent leaders would embody particular competencies and specializations that would require their participation with the group for a specific function or duration. Moreover, we discussed potential distributed leadership models for parent leaders, where said parent leaders may lead a particular phase or part of the overall strategy.

Surfaces and tests assumptions

(Conditions: Mental Models / Power Dynamics)

I knew that I was coming into New Profit, and this work more generally, with a bias. My work in community advocacy and organizing had instilled in me an instinct to scrutinize, question and challenge the motives of powerful institutions, even seemingly altruistic ones. Knowing this, I took measured actions to get “under the hood” of New Profit in the most objective ways. I closely read materials from both the organization and the field, and conducted many one-on-one conversations.

In addition to the 40+ coffee chats (80% of staff) conducted via video and phone throughout my residency, I made sure to look beyond “the waters of New Profit” to garner outside perspectives. Before I even identified parent leaders for the process, I was set on bringing in additional perspectives into the process to test our team’s assumptions. During the Wellbeing Letter of Intent (LOI) revision process, I improvised by bringing in my personal network of parents to serve as a rag-tag group of experts who

utilized their lived experiences to identify our blindspots. They probed and provided recommendations and feedback on our questions, which resulted in a stronger and more accessible grantee application.

On the constituent engagement side of the work, working with Maya Martin from PAVE was invaluable. Although I have extensive FACE experience, I deferred to Maya, as she was not only a content expert but a *context expert*, as well. She knew her community and its members better than I did. As such, I invited her healthy critiques and constructive feedback. This approach was smart, not to mention co-creative, in that it allowed me to take a learning stance to understand more about her perspective and motivations, which in turn provided insight into the prospective parent leader candidates that I would be in community with further along in the process. Taking a learning stance in a context where I felt like an expert, allowed me to identify the biases that I was bringing to the design and execution of the work. I was forced to reflect on how my past experiences informed my theory of change as well as the assumptions that were being made in order for it to be true. As a result of this practice, my theory of change evolved over time, as I addressed my biases and learned more about my context.

By collaborating with parent leaders from PAVE, a grantee partner, I do wonder if I have set forth an expectation that stakeholder engagement be enacted solely with grantee partners. My intention and hope would be that New Profit not solely look to engage grantee partners in future engagements, but also organizations outside of the network. I imagine smaller capacity-building organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations that could also provide tremendous perspective and insight into additional participatory approaches, akin to what The North Star Fund has accomplished. In some ways, I consider this entire strategic project as an opportunity for me and New Profit to surface and test respective assumptions about progressive ways to do participatory measures in philanthropy. I anticipate the next iteration of this process to build upon the learnings from this experience.

Identifies the circular nature of complex cause and effect relationships

(Conditions: Policies / Relationships & Connections / Power Dynamics)

Adaptive work is often messy due to the preponderance of variables that are out of one's control for which the design process aims to control. I reflected on this as I designed the feedback loops and interdependencies that were anticipated between New Profit, funders and the PAC. I'd learned this lesson over time in my work as an educator, organizer and advocate. There is an art and a science to planning for addressing the chaos (unplanned variables) within a system. I was consistently operating with a framework in mind throughout the design and implementation process with stakeholders, meticulously thinking about how each part of the system would inform the other. I also know from lived experience, that life does not exist within a framework and challenges would inevitably arise.

One of the earliest challenges to the project arose late summer as capital and participation from funders appeared uncertain. Shruti managed ongoing engagements with funders within New Profit's network to discern their ability, interest and bandwidth to participate in the emerging strategy. While there was interest and energy from funders, they were concurrently navigating the economic uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on their business practices and professional bandwidth, which, in-turn, likely deprioritized their participation with us. Our community members (parent leaders), by contrast, were wrestling with their respective obligations as parents and employees.

Since the beginning of this Capstone, I have been clear that the team and I had been working under fairly tight time constraints throughout this project. Our desire was to have the deal terms signed and money out the door to our two investments before the year's end. The slowed response from Ares ended up hindering half of the PAC's ability to conduct constituent interviews and craft a formal investment memo recommendation. The delays in Phase 3 resulted in half of the PAC members being compensated a month later than their peers.

Time was a constant constraint throughout the process. Scheduling constituent interviews across time zones was an added layer of complexity. The time that it took for the leaders of Ares and Clairvoyant

to provide a list of constituents for New Profit to interview, coupled with the time that it took on New Profit's end to coordinate the PAC members to align on availability for the interviews, was greater than expected. While Clairvoyant's three constituent interviews occurred between October 20–22, Ares constituent interviews would not occur for another month, due to delays. The compounded delays resulted in almost six week's difference between my plan and its reality. Moreover, the Ares PAC team had a different experience in that rather than conducting three one-on-one constituent interviews as planned, the organization modified its offering by providing two constituents (one parent, and one student), along with an opportunity for a parent to sit in on one of its planning meetings. We did not anticipate this modification, but realize it was likely in response to the difficulty that the organization had in securing constituents for us to interview. Although we did not plan for it, this adjustment from Ares added another layer of insight that the parent leaders would ultimately have to incorporate into their final insights in the investment memo. Since both PAC teams had different experiences, their feedback during our final debrief would not be an apples-to-apples correlation, but more about their overall experience. In some ways, the way things turned out best served us, in that the parent leaders left with a wider variety of experiences than we had initially offered them. My only wish was that the process timelines were not so far off, since the compensation structure was fixed to align with the completion of tasks during each phase. This is all likely par for the course when entering uncharted territory during a pilot such as this. In the end, both PAC teams fulfilled their roles and contributed to New Profit, Clairvoyant and Ares' leadership team's thinking.

Considers how mental models affect current reality and the future

(Conditions: Policies/ Resource Flows / Mental models)

In June 2020, I had kicked off my time with the broader education portfolio team by administering a survey and then leading them through a “What's your why?”-type of activity (see Appendix O), in which I intended to surface individual motivations, biases, and assumptions and collective purpose in relation to the constituent engagement process that we were preparing to launch. While reviewing some of the survey responses, I was initially concerned by how academic/cerebral they

were—too much head and not enough heart, but was pleasantly surprised by the rich (jargon free) discussion that we had as we debriefed the results.

I was attempting to tap into the mental models of the team. I like to think of Kania's mental model simply as "The ways of thinking and motivations for doing that informs why people do what they do" (Kania et al., 2018). I was wary about the project devolving into a highly tokenized or performative measure, so thought it best to ground the team in sharing practices, shared expectations, and shared language, as we prepared to engage with a community beyond New Profit. Regarding the future, I've put forth recommendations in subsequent sections of this Capstone that lay out in greater detail my thinking on how New Profit and big philanthropy might consider laying down the groundwork for deeper community partnerships.

By the time I joined New Profit as a resident, the timelines for investment selection were already set. I'd have to compromise on some community-building practices in order to fit within process constraints. Tending to relationship-building was secondary to ensuring our selection timeline was finalized by December 2020. As a result, we partnered with PAVE, a grantee-partner with whom we had a positive pre-existing relationship. Throughout the process, I wondered if this skewed our results. Specifically, did New Profit's relationship with PAVE bias the organization's feedback with us and did it even play a role in their decision to partner with us? These are unknown factors not easily discernible through a question-and-answer session.

To be clear, based on the number and quality of healthy debates and learning conversations that were had throughout the project between staff and the PAC, I do believe that each parent was honest with their opinions with us. As a practitioner/researcher, I was left wondering if lingering power dynamics from their grantee-grantor relationship influenced the outcome of the project. I do think there can be future opportunities to design a participatory process that is a variation of this piloted approach. I can imagine a circumstance where New Profit might engage with a community group to which it has no prior relationship, as a means of establishing a starting point where the balance of power has not already been influenced. This approach might yield powerful comparative data, as well as information about New

Profit's approach and process in integrating constituent perspectives into investment selection decisions and processes.

Implications for Self

“There is always enough time for the right work.”

—Margaret Wheatley

Would I consider my strategic project a success? It depends. As a pilot, I believe it was a substantial first attempt, however, as a sustained practice, I would recommend deeper and more meaningful community engagement. Considerations for how agency, voice and power permeate across the constituents matters. As it relates to my strategic project, though I believe that I successfully met the outcomes and deliverables—the design process was not as co-creative as I would have preferred. I would have preferred to have had the opportunity to co-design the entire process with the parent leaders. By approaching them with a defined plan, I felt as if I was utilizing my power to enforce versus engage. I remained mindful of this power dynamic throughout the project. I drew on some of my organizing and engagement principles to design and move the work forward, I still acknowledge that I was not co-designing a process with the community.

My initial mindset coming into this work was that co-creation always supersedes collaboration; however, as I reflect, I realize that this is not an “either / or” circumstance. Both collaboration and co-creation had merit in this process and *both* approaches will likely show up in any engagement practice. Collaboration is equally powerful and not inherently bad. By the time I connected with Maya, I’d already designed a process for engaging the parent leaders. I wrestle with the tension between authentic engagement when placed within confines of tight time constraints. The phrase, “Nothing about us without us!” has become a rallying cry in the organizing and advocacy community. My goal was to keep this mantra central to the design process. This phrase is the embodiment of what compels me to do the work that I do. As I endeavored to create a more equitable investment selection process for New Profit and the sector, I found myself calling back to my organizing and family and community engagement roots to inform some of the policies and practices that would be integral to my success.

While I did not co-create the investment selection process with Maya, I certainly incorporated her feedback on how to design materials and time parameters for her parent leaders. In doing so, we were

collaborating to build a stronger product. Moreover, as a founder and executive director of an influential advocacy organization, Maya and her parent community had their hands full with maintaining the organizational health of PAVE, and ensuring that their constituents of parents, educators and children in Washington, D.C. were being adequately served throughout this pandemic. My expectation and hope that they would have the bandwidth to co-create a process with me would have been an unrealistic, and possibly even a naive expectation. Co-creating this process together would have taken far more time than we had already allotted for with this current iteration of our engagement pilot. Expecting parent leaders or Maya to co-create this process with me, would have required a redirection of their focus and energy from the core work of PAVE—likely resulting in a rejection of partnership, since the work of my strategic was not necessarily core to PAVEs work in advocacy. My desire for more time was a privilege that neither New Profit or PAVE would be able to accommodate, perhaps rightfully so.

Effective co-creation requires a level of trust-building and a respective exchange of knowledge for success. New Profit’s investment selection process is designed in a logical way based on the way in which the organization was designed to function. For the PAC to fully engage in a co-creative process, would require their level of engagement with, and knowledge of, New Profits practices and processes to be deeper. During this initial pilot, New Profit was simply testing out the approach to see if it had any fidelity. By various indications, I would say that the approach worked and both New Profit and the PAC are growing in deeper partnership and trust as evidenced in a series of ongoing engagement efforts occurring between the PAC and the Education Portfolio team, beyond investment selection.

As the PAC grows in deeper relationship with New Profit, I trust there will be stronger relational ties, deeper understanding of ways of working, and additional opportunities for how parents might help design or inform the design of approaches and processes within the organization. New Profit had done well in empowering the PAC in an advisory capacity. They remain open to their input on processes and approaches to work. Currently, the PAC is helping the Education Portfolio think through what the future of education might look like, post-pandemic.

While reflecting on the residency experience and what I might discuss in this section, I thought it would be fun to revisit a few of the many leadership and personality assessments that I completed over the years to see how the data netted out now that I was nearing the end of my residency and Doctor of Education Leadership (EdLD) experience. I used the results of my Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Strengthsfinder, and Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) to interpret holistically how I may have engaged my peers, approached the work, and set personal goals.

Coming into residency, I'd set an intention to take a strong learning stance and to be deliberate in when I would lead and when I would follow. This posed a healthy tension for me as I'd grown accustomed to being in "action and solution-mode" throughout my career. I observed how human-centered design and proximate engagement was being prioritized to varying degrees across New Profit. Though proximity was the language being used to validate their approach, I was drawn to thinking more deeply about what New Profit were actually trying to solve. I began looking at the problem of practice regarding constituent engagement more as a "puzzle of practice." Perceiving my project as a puzzle and not a problem allowed me to be more curious and to more freely explore New Profit without submitting to potential pressures to "solve the problem" in 10 months time. Being curious, enabled me to wrestle with myriad perspectives and mindsets as I navigated the organization's people and politics. It also allowed me to not look at New Profit as having a "problem," but rather something that they hoped to solve, and I was brought on to support them through my learning on this 10-month journey.

Throughout my professional career, I've relentlessly sought to identify the "ideal level," if there is such a thing, to effect systemic change in my community. This desire set me on a quest across the country from Brooklyn to The Bay Area with several stops in between. On my journey from New York City Administration for Children Services to Harvard, I worked with families, individual students, classes, schools, communities and cities as I sought an elusive answer to the question: *What is the greatest lever and level to effect positive change in my community?*

In considering my time at New Profit and working within the institution of philanthropy, I was left reflecting on whether I could be a greater agent for change as an agitator inside formal systems versus outside of the formal systems, in this case institutional philanthropy. My general tension in this question is my acknowledgement that many of these formal systems currently root many societal problems in place in what I call a “holding pattern for social progress.” These holding patterns are endemic in the dichotomy of good actors in systems that behave badly. For example, our nation’s education system might be competitive in its aggregate outputs, while being abysmal in its success rates for Black, Brown and Indigenous students. Similarly, institutional philanthropy might be exemplary in improving social outcomes in low-income communities through its funding of social programs and services, but these institutions are also influencing policy changes that may not reflect the needs of its beneficiaries while concurrently stifling the voices of dissenting opinions of their approach.

If I do determine that working within large formal systems is the ideal place for me to effect social progress, then I would likely need to adopt a disposition that organizational behavior expert Dr. Debra Meyerson refers to as being a “tempered radical.”

Tempered radicals are people who operate on the fault line. They are organizational insiders who contribute and succeed in their jobs. At the same time, they are treated as outsiders because they represent ideals or agendas that are somehow at odds with the dominant culture (Meyerson, 2003, p. 5)

By being a tempered radical during my residency, I believe I was using my authority, and disposition as an organizer, to uproot barriers to both institutional and social progress by identifying and activating a coalition of the willing—people willing to apply the learnings from this pilot to their work, people willing to shift their mindsets of how they discussed and engaged with constituent communities, people willing to dedicate financial resources to investing in participatory processes as a means to learn, if nothing else. These are learnings I will not soon forget, as they will serve me well in life’s next chapter.

As I reflected on the aforementioned units of change, the idea of “grain size” has always been something that I wrestled with. I have lost much sleep dwelling on the answers to questions such as:

“How does one decide how broad or deep to go with an initiative, process or strategy?”, or *“How can we best create sustainable solutions that can withstand socio-political and technological forces?”* and *“Are the people that I am working with truly the ones with the most kinetic or potential power to enact change within the system?”* When it comes to seeking systemic solutions, bigger is not always better. Sometimes small replicable pockets of success can provide greater insight to the field (I believe this is the approach New Profit was taking). Similarly, scaling for depth versus breadth can sometimes be a best practice in addressing the root causes of deep systemic inequities versus topically spreading surface level innovations that work. There are countless examples of social impact community and education initiatives that have met varying degrees of successful implementation. However, something that they all have in common, regardless of outcome, is that each requires an investment of finite resources (i.e., people’s time, energy, and money) to create an outcome. Being mindful of the inputs and outcomes and the necessary tissue to connect the two has always been top of mind for me. As a public servant and nonprofit professional, something that is always clear is that our success was often contingent on financial management.

I sought to create a strategy that would address systemic issues, not be cost-prohibitive, and offer up valuable outcomes for practitioners and constituents involved. To accomplish this, I had to influence and lead from the middle, cultivate allies and move at the speed of trust. With all of this in mind, I looked to the literature to determine how practitioners thought about transformative scale, power and relationships within the community, family and philanthropic contexts and sought to contribute and build upon that body of knowledge.

A good way to think about transformative scale is the balance between inputs and outputs, where the goal is to maximize social outcomes while investing disproportionately less in organizational resources. This might sound sinister or capitalistic but, in this context, it is neither. For a social impact organization or nonprofit seeking to fund in a justice-oriented manner, this is the goal. I believe that the more impact a nonprofit can support while depleting fewer of its own resources, is a win! In thinking about transformative scale, I also considered the Six Conditions of Systems Change mentioned above and where decisions and actions would fall within that framework. My strategic project required that I engage

with organizational and institutional systems. By working with New Profit staff, funders, and community members, I was seeking to enact a systemic solutions approach while operating at various levels.

I found it was equally important to consider not just those individuals we *wanted* at the table (i.e., community members) but also the individuals who *needed* to be at the table, with the ultimate goal of shifting power and decision making to the grassroots/grasstops organizations within communities. Sometimes the people with formal power who need to be at the table are the ones that are reluctant or recalcitrant about being there. In these instances, we often end up preaching to the choir rather than to the full range of parties with formal decision-making power involved, resulting in often stalled or derailed attempts at progressive actions or reconstituting of power.

In the end, I am proud of the work that I was able to accomplish and happy to have made some friends along the way. I was able to pressure test some assumptions about philanthropy, proximity and power that had been ruminating in my mind for years. Moreover, I hope I was able to influence the thinking of peers and leaders within the social sector around the merits of exploring participatory processes to share power and grow deeper in community with constituents. While I was able to influence the approach and methods of working for a single influential funder, would the impact of the ecosystem of content (i.e., podcast, practitioner field guide, strategic proposals, etc) have the ripple effect across the philanthropic sector that I hoped it would? Time will tell. I leave my residency affirmed that power is not something that is static but shifts from individuals and groups over time. Societal will and the politics of the day ultimately determine how power is distributed and where it is concentrated. I am expectant to see how philanthropy responds to humanities demands for equitable treatment, its outcry for social justice, it's movement for peace and hope.

Implications for Site

*“Most people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in 10 years”
—Bill Gates*

New Profit’s Education Team accomplished a lot in 10 months! New Profit has opened a door that it cannot (and I believe should not) close. By sharing their practices and norms with community members, while also sharing power, I believe they have significantly raised the stakes of accountability while further opening themselves up to healthy criticism. By no means is this necessarily a bad thing, as I am an advocate for philanthropy being held to account, especially by those whom it seeks to serve. The entirety of this process was one collaborative event as junior-level staff lent their expertise along with senior-level executives, various organizational governing bodies, a collection of CEO/social entrepreneurs from external organizations, a community of parent leaders, and an internal volunteer corps of 10 staff members. This large cast each played a role and provided feedback which hastened, slowed, informed, and occasionally stalled the intended process. For New Profit, this implies the needs emphasized in the field guide that I created, to share best practices, formalize policy, and standardize its messaging on its ways of working and its theory of change for funders and community members. My hope is that my strategic project, deliverables, and the recommendations put forth in this Capstone serve New Profit as foundational resources on their journey.

I suspect that as this investment selection process with parents and/or other community constituents scales, it will evolve into one big teaming event. I call it “big teaming” as a play on Amy Edmondson’s research (2012) on teaming, to emphasize the potential scale of future undertakings that might be coming down the pike. I anticipate a high volume of interest from community constituents who might be interested in participating in a rotating bench of representatives and specialists who lend their expertise to New Profit. I reference this in the “Analysis” section of this Capstone. If New Profit expands the leadership roles of parent leaders while concurrently bringing on a rotation of parent leaders, and building in opportunities for constituents to provide feedback and expertise on short term engagements,

then this will likely activate a network of community stakeholders, internal staff, and funders who will all have expertise to contribute and a role to play.

Over the past 20 years, New Profit has had a few starts and stops regarding its equity mission. At times, it seemed nebulous, too broad, too specific or too ambitious. What is different this time is that the organization itself is becoming more reflective of, and responsive to, the communities that it serves. Through staffing practices and intentional professional engagements, across various diversity indicators, the staff and New Profit's network affiliates are growing. In 2019, they set an organizational goal of reaching a minimum of 50% representation of social entrepreneurs of color, with a prioritization for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous social entrepreneurs across their Build portfolio. In 2020, they achieved this goal.

Throughout the Capstone, I outlined the various time and operational constraints that I and the investment selection team members were under in completing selection and diligence within the prescribed 6-month-standard process. I am a firm believer in moving at the speed of trust and that the implications of this might require adjusting internal practices to reflect the need to mold firm connective tissue between all parties involved in the process. I believe this to be particularly true when engaging with individuals and groups that are external to an organization as there must be shared understandings and group agreements that are believed and lived collectively rather than being espoused and enforced by a dominant group or individual.

The absence of funders from this pilot was a missed opportunity—for them. Though New Profit was a beneficiary of this experience, we were also the team conducting the design and implementation. As an evaluator, we were coming in with a level of bias and power. A third party of funders would have been valuable in that they could have provided feedback on their experience with our process, and more importantly, they may have developed a new perspective on constituent engagement by listening and learning with and from the PAC. In philanthropy there tends to be a multiplier or network effect where

once an influential funder supports an organization's strategy or work, other funders then follow on with their support.

If New Profit intends to continue and build upon this participatory process with external constituents, I believe a more measured approach will be required to reconcile norms, values and expectations about work and process between New Profit and community constituents. Investing the time to create formal systems and structures to house the processes and learnings from this parent-engagement pilot within the organization will serve New Profit well as it revises its messaging to constituents and builds upon its learning over time. To a large extent, my attempt to seamlessly integrate the parent-engagement process into the current investment selection process was motivated by this opinion. This approach will shift the practice of knowledge within the organization being housed within a(n) individual(s), and will shift the knowledge base to a more centralized part of the organization, where it is accessible to all. New Profit is currently synthesizing the learnings from this parent-engagement initiative into its portfolio practice with an intention to scale learnings within the organization as well as the sector, given the myriad participatory philanthropy resources that were created during our ecosystem-building process.

Collaboration ~~Versus~~ And Co-Creation

Initially, I believed co-creation to be the better alternative to collaboration, however, I believe both approaches have their time and place. Practitioners sometimes use the terms co-creation and collaboration interchangeably. I believe the two are distinct. In my own practice, I define a collaborative process as one by which individuals or groups within a system are moving toward a desired goal or purpose, while generally playing to their respective strengths. A co-creative process is one by which individuals or groups are exchanging ideas, compromising, forming agreements while intentionally moving toward a shared goal, and often, learning from each other while executing. The distinction here is power, knowledge sharing, and time. Power flows through both groups but in a collaborative process, it can much more easily be felt as a team driving, or being driven toward a goal by an identifiable source. In

this example, the team is executing but there is not necessarily a multidirectional exchange of ideas, as team members are operating within their core functions toward a shared goal. Each member lends their expertise to increase the probability of success and reduce risk. In a co-creative process, members are developing goals, shared agreements and ways of working that may not necessarily lead to all members playing to their strengths. In a co-creative process, team members play to their strengths as much as they are taking a learning stance to understand and learn from the expertise of their fellow collaborators. This intentional exchange of knowledge leads to an expansion of the skills and knowledge base of collaborators in co-creative processes. I believe this exchange of ideas creates conditions for creator creativity and innovation. My engagement process with the PAC included activities that were both collaborative, where we were executing in our core skill areas, and co-creative, where we were exchanging ideas, pushing on perspectives and participating in a design process. There was an intention in how each approach was employed. Community engagement, and strategic partnerships were central tenets to my strategic project.

In a collaborative process, team members contribute to the broader goals of the collective but they tend to operate from a place of strength, operating within their core capabilities to contribute to the overall success of the team. By playing to their core competencies, collaborators are helping the team and its overall objectives by minimizing risks and leveraging their expertise. In the PAC partnership, we successfully collaborated as New Profit deferred to its strengths of investment selection and processes therein, while the parent leaders deferred to their strength of advocacy and lived experiences as parents. Collectively, we played to our strengths and collaborated to create a new way of funding organizations.

The many substantive discussions with Shruti, the Education team and the PAC, illuminated a clear values alignment and interest in ensuring that this work would live on. Shruti and I approached this initial engagement as a pilot with an intention to implement lessons learned into future iterations. In thinking about the arguments and positions put forth in this Capstone, I wanted to create a proposal for constituent engagement that accomplished three things:

- validated the merits of participatory philanthropy;

- created a vehicle for sustainable relationship-building between New Profit, its capacity building organization (CBO) grantees, and its parent community constituents; and
- provided opportunities to disseminate decision-making power amongst parent constituents while protecting them from tokenization.

At the heart of the PAC Strategic Proposal (see Appendix P) are two approaches that are meant to elevate the profile and influence of community voices by providing a formal platform for them to engage with high-net-worth individuals, family foundations, and philanthropic institutions seeking to fund a service in their region and/or community. The first proposal focuses on capacity building as it would allow New Profit to share best practices with the PAC or similar community group with the intention of the PAC ultimately serving as a self-sustaining entity that can support investment selection and other participatory practices within New Profit on a long-term basis through a “train the trainer” approach. The second proposal includes capacity building for a community-based organization while also providing revenue-generating potential as a consultancy. In this proposal, New Profit would share some of its tangible and intangible resources (i.e., pro bono Deloitte consulting supports) with the advisory constituent group to upskill and cultivate a community of practice that evaluates and brings their unique evaluative lens to grantmaking to funders across the sector using a fee-for-service approach. The forum for this work would serve twofold: (a) as a revenue driver for the community group by way of funding the community-based affiliate (i.e., the PAC and PAVE relationship), and (b) as a dedicated forum for participatory practices that elevate community voice into grantmaking. Since proximity would be essential to the success of this proposal, the assumption is that this approach would scale across respective regions where New Profit has a deep profile and presence (i.e. Northeast, Midwest, Northern California, etc.) in order to identify partners in the region to which they might partner to cultivate and develop localized advisory groups.

The residency experience allowed me to explore various design principles and best practices from both the literature and from my years working in community advocacy. Residency was a lab experience where I was able to push the boundaries of power in a controlled environment—it was a space to test and

innovate. Below, I have shared a non-exhaustive list of process recommendations along with a strategic proposal outlining what future engagements between the PAC (or similar constituent body) and New Profit might look like. The recommendations build upon the collective Education Team's learning, current New Profit principles and practices, my lived experience, and the literature review with an intention to create desired outcomes that promote democratized philanthropic processes, proximate engagement amongst constituents, and a sustainable revenue-creating structure for community-based organizations.

Recommendations

- Apply the *proximity as expertise* principle internally to assess whether and how the perspectives and feedback of junior staff and staff of color are represented in team and organization decisions.
- Continue welcoming and elevating contrarian perspectives as a source for learning.
- Trust but verify that teams are aligned on equity goals on an individual and collective level at the beginning of each project.
- The team(s)/holders of this work must lead with love and be highly relational in their interactions with community constituents.
- Distribute Leadership / Disseminate Power
 - Train parent leader(s) to co-lead this work along with a New Profit staff person (i.e., a community liaison role).
 - Be clear in roles and responsibilities.
 - Trust community decisions.
 - Plan for learning conversations and courageous conversations as you go deeper into the work across communities and stakeholders.
 - Expand decision rights for community constituents.
 - Be prepared to support community decisions that may divert from organizations goals.

- Provide community councils with substantive decision rights (i.e., approve/decide) as a means to ceding power and exhibiting trust.
- Continue funding this work and compensating community constituents.
- Create a contracted position or an in-role promotion for a staff person to manage constituent engagement on projects.
- **Anticipate variability**
 - Be flexible with timelines while holding firm deadlines.
 - Expect to compromise and negotiate with community members as organization norms and expectations of time/commitment might vary from pace of work and needs of community.
 - Continue operating from a learning stance; the success of participatory processes is adaptive and heavily reliant on core tenets of humility, curiosity and respect.
- **Create an interactive process with ample feedback loops**
 - Incorporate learnings from the field/practice.
 - Debrief on strategy execution with community council and identify areas of strong performance and areas for improvement.
 - Co-create a tool to assess harmful practices¹⁴ (i.e., areas where harmful practices or outcomes were observed by stakeholders).
- **Chronicle and Celebrate Your Work... and tell others about it (internally and externally).**
 - Enthusiastically chronicle and share your successes and challenges with staff funders and social entrepreneurs.

¹⁴ The idea of an assessment of harm between funders and capacity-building organizations and communities is one raised by Dr. Megan Francis. The premise is a periodic (annual) accounting of harmful practices experienced by communities from philanthropy with the intention of reducing those harms over time through assessment and evaluation. Francis, M (2020). Lecture on Abolitionist Visions. Personal Collection of M. Francis, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

Implications for Sector

“Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.”
—Mike Tyson

The philanthropic sector is one that loves strategies and plans. Impact is its doctrine and metrics is its god. This is a sector that operates very much under business principles and frameworks. Plans and frameworks allow funders to feel safe and that they are “minimizing risks” and planning for all of the contingencies. The thing is that participatory philanthropy is a very human process and a potentially messy process. The goal is to not be discouraged by the mess, but to anticipate it and welcome it. To provide a brief analogy, I am reminded of the famous Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield boxing matches of the late 1990s. At a press conference, a reporter pressed Tyson on whether or not he was afraid of Holyfield’s fight plan to which Tyson famously replied that “Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.” Crass as this might be, Tyson was right. Philanthropy often operates safely within insulated plans, frameworks and timelines that exclude community voices in meaningful ways. Opening up one’s processes and decision-making processes will open you up to exposure and the proverbial “punch in the mouth” from constituents. The question is, what will philanthropy do *after* it takes the hit of scrutiny and criticism?

Funders, though I’ve discussed at length the merits of participatory processes while taking you on New Profit’s journey, you may still be wondering to yourself “What’s in it for me?” Though its etymology traces back to Latin meaning “lover of humanity,” it would be naive to not also consider the field of philanthropy from a business perspective. For all of the funders out there, listen up! This is your value proposition: as America grows increasingly diverse across race and class, communities are rightfully advocating for their needs and exercising their power when they are left dissatisfied or not adequately served. It will behoove you to best serve your constituents by getting proximate and in fellowship with them, in order to understand *their* pain points and potential solutions from *their* perspective. Fail to do this and you risk growing irrelevant, slower to respond to the rapidly changing social conditions and, bottom line, less impactful. Your ability to produce impact is what draws dollars to your organization.

Remember, serving communities and producing impact *is* your bottom line.

Institutional philanthropy must reckon with the ways it amasses wealth and sustains itself through capitalistic structures that oppress low income and communities of color, while serving as tax shields for the wealthy. Reckoning with the history of inequitable practices within the philanthropic sector, along with discussions on the broader social and economic inequities from which philanthropic dollars are generated, will require difficult conversations and necessary policy actions. It will be messy. I believe that out of this “mess,” trust and strong partnerships can be built, if philanthropists are willing to take “a hit on the chin” for the sake of learning and ego.

Financial investments / grantmaking within the field of (venture) philanthropy is largely driven by anticipated impacts and outcomes of investment decisions. The return on investment (ROI) is assessed through evaluation and measurement. What I have proposed through my Capstone and framework is a lens to reassess the drivers of impact. I am offering an opportunity for funders to take a bet on themselves and be open to learning something new, to not being seen as the authority or holder of knowledge, and to share the tangible and intangible resources with communities historically underserved as a means to enable them to empower themselves.

There is seemingly a growing interest from across the public and private sector around tenets of effective community engagement. This growing interest can likely be attributed to the expansion of equity-driven practices and appetite to discuss social issues in the past decade—or year for that matter—as we observe the growing movement for Black lives, COVID-19 health disparities, or the insurrection of the United States Capitol by White nationalists. Increasingly, communities are tapping into their inherent power and are advocating for their needs, while concurrently, local governments, community-based organizations, and some philanthropies are realizing the value of working alongside communities. Any desire to effectively partner with communities must acknowledge the past and present policies that are actively working to disempower communities, while also acknowledging the opportunities for change.

Philanthropy must move beyond charity to focusing on justice by focusing on root causes. As noble as justice-oriented philanthropy may seem, by and large, there is little appetite for it. In fact, the

National Committee for Responsive Grantmaking estimates that only 15% of foundation funding is spent on social justice grantmaking, defined as grants “that work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are least well off politically, economically, and socially (Jagpal & Laskowski, 2011). Shifting such broad paradigms require more than the actions of independent justice-oriented actors to effect change, but rather true systemic solutions to systems change. A primary goal of my strategic project was to influence new ways of approaching investment selection that would center constituents (i.e., families) in the work while decentering the influence of the organization and shifting the flow of power.

I learned much during the span of time spent as a resident at New Profit. In addition to lessons learned from the PAC and staff, I was also able to garner insights from the literature, and reflect on my own professional practices. The influences of these experiences have culminated in a community engagement framework that I created which prioritizes proximity, equity and distributed leadership. This framework served as the foundation for the PAC Strategic Proposal with broader sector applications.

Proximity, Equity and Community Empowerment (PEACE) Framework

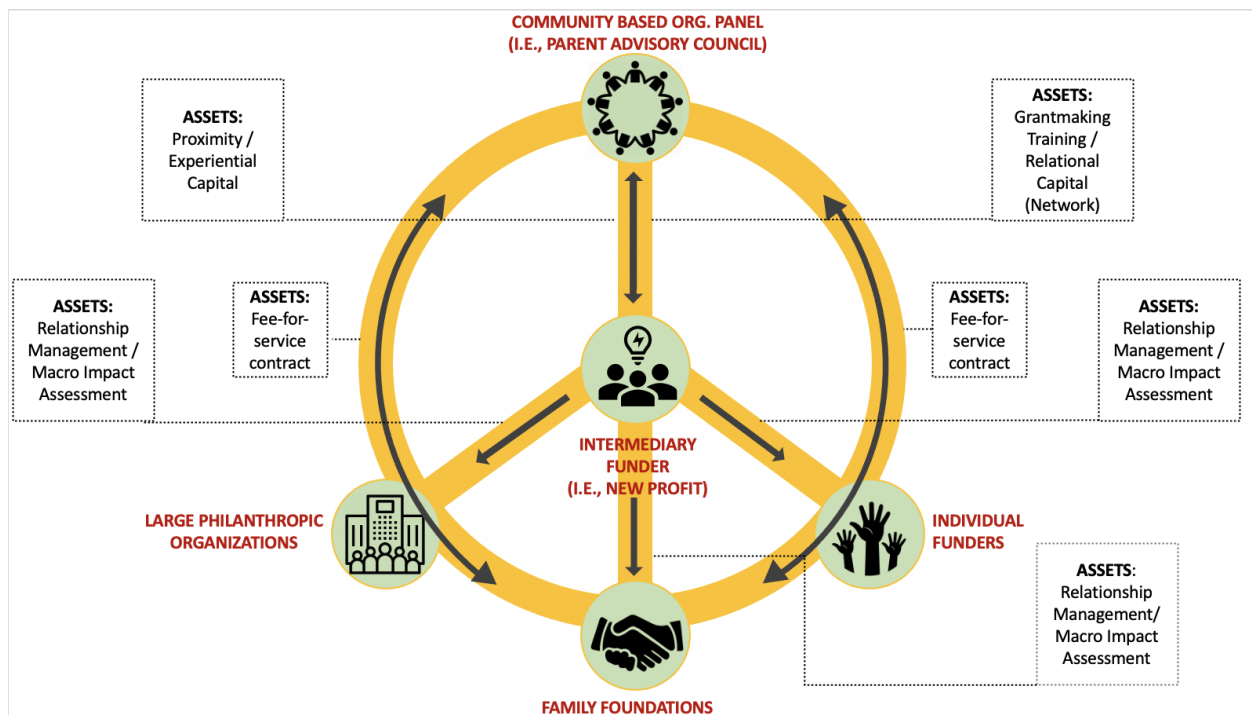
The Proximity, Equity, and Community Empowerment (PEACE) Framework shifts the dominant model of philanthropy to one where the role of beneficiaries is central and empowered. I designed this framework with the hope that it provides an approach in which capacity-building organizations might leverage their contextual expertise to inform the institution of philanthropy in a way that is empowering for community constituents. I hope the framework supports the work being done within New Profit, along with philanthropic entities, and capacity-building organizations. Below, you will find a summary and visual of the framework.

The PEACE Framework is intended for use by funders seeking to share power with communities while cultivating stronger relational ties with beneficiaries. The process is intended to integrate existing internal funding structures to external governing bodies composed of community representatives. The model is highly localized and is likely right-sized for funders investing in specific communities and/or

regions. A national funder seeking to implement this model would have to identify a specific pre-existing funding geography for implementation.

I created the PEACE Framework (see Figure 13) as a means of linking **communities** more closely to **funders** and **grantees and/or affiliated community-based organizations**. Working in partnership, the members of these community-based organizations create networks of constituent advisory panels composed of community members. The PAC Strategic Proposal (see Appendix P) provides a model for how the PEACE Framework might look in practice, with New Profit serving as an example. In some communities, these types of governance panels may already exist while in others, they may need to be created via community partnerships. Similar to the PAC, these community panels will have varying degrees of decision rights and will co-create resource-sharing processes (i.e., investment selection, knowledge exchange, creating culturally-responsive content, etc.) along with funders via an agreed upon fee-for-service contract.

Figure 13: Philanthropic Equity and Community Engagement (PEACE) Framework



Proximity- Trust and relationships are central tenets to the PEACE framework. The PEACE framework promotes proximate engagement between communities and formal philanthropic organizations beyond community panels or advisory committees by embedding philanthropy within communities. It emphasizes scaling for depth as well as breadth at a local scale. The intermediary funder serves as the relationship manager between their sector partners and the community-based organization affiliate and the respective community panel. The intermediary funder (i.e., New Profit or similar intermediary) serves as the capacity building organization for the community panel.

Equity- Leadership opportunities and decision-making abilities are distributed across the matrix of relationships. Funders share specified amounts of unrestricted financial assets along with network resources to communities. Communities are invited to share learnings and outcomes with funders in a non-punitive exchange. All parties reflect on learnings and iterate upon them with the community panel serving as the liaison between the philanthropic institutions and the broader community. Each investment selection period counts as a learning cycle. With each cycle, the ecosystem shifts towards more equitable outcomes in virtuous cycles of learning.

Community Empowerment- Community panels serve as not only a knowledge-sharing body, they also serve as trusted representatives for the broader local community (beneficiaries). The desired outcome for practitioners using this framework should not be to solely gain insights from community panels, but rather, the goal is to cultivate trust and acceptance into communities at local scale while establishing channels to shift decision-making and resource sharing between communities and philanthropic organizations. In this model, the community/constituent panels serve as trusted advisors that manage the relationship between community members and philanthropic institutions. This approach creates an added level of access for philanthropies to assess their impact, from grantees who traditionally serve as a proxy for communities, and directly from communities as well. Community panels operate through a community-based organization affiliate. This affiliate manages the service contract and compensates the advisory panel, while the intermediary manages the relationship, as needed.

Conclusion

To be clear, philanthropy is not going anywhere, nor is it my stance that it should. What I have put forward in the aforementioned sections are arguments, examples, and proposals for how it can be done *better*. New Profit's education investment focus for the funding cycle was wellbeing and instructional supports and services in schools that positively impact educators, youth and families. The selection process featured a number of new approaches designed to center equity; including creating a more equitable application format for grantees, creating a parent advisory council to partner with and provide input and co-lead throughout the investment selection process, while also retooling our investment committee meeting to be more streamlined and inclusive as well.

With liberty and agency as a central focus of this discussion on philanthropy, while we are all free to give, there are harmful and less harmful ways of doing so. Borrowing from Stevenson's playbook (2015), I believe that the ideal purpose of philanthropy should not be equality, but justice. While most of the discourse thus far has focused on the precarious nature of organized philanthropy and its ability to sometimes negatively influence the social and political levers that affect one's daily life, there are pockets of successful philanthropic models being implemented across the United States and abroad that dilute the concentration of power and politics from the person to the populace through participatory processes.

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Appendix A

New Profit Support Model



Who is New Profit?

We are a nonprofit that pioneered a new model for philanthropy that applies principles from for-profit investing and consulting to the social impact sector. In partnership with a national network of philanthropists, we back a portfolio of breakthrough social entrepreneurs with unrestricted grants and strategic support to help them grow their impact.

What is unique about New Profit's portfolio support?

As funders we aim to:

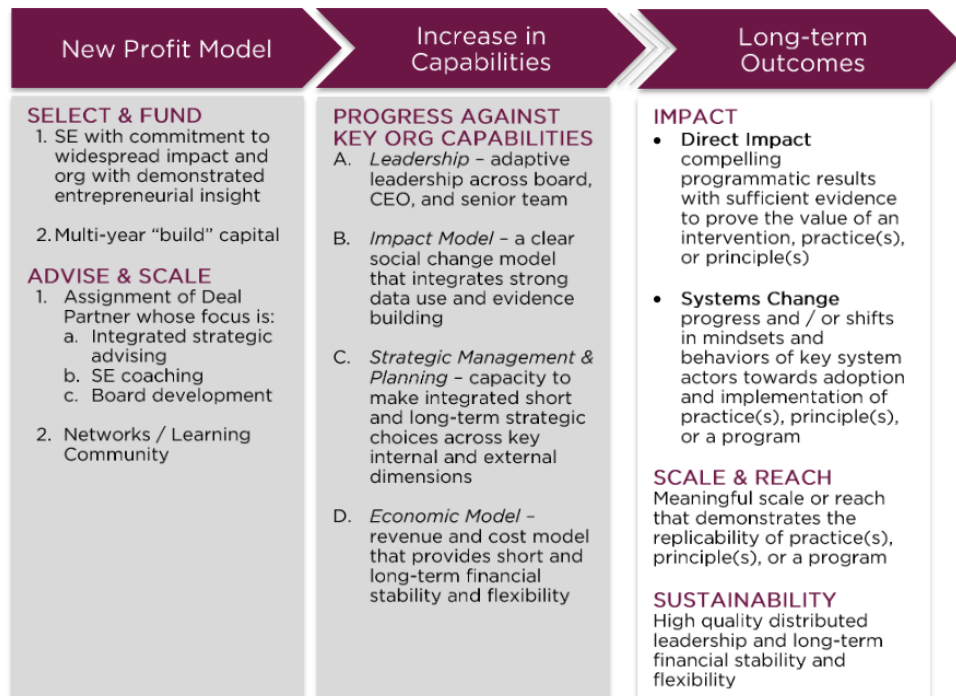
- Stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our SEs in support of their vision for impact
- Invest over multiple years
- Assume a variety of roles vis-a-vis the organization (Advisor, Coach, Board Member)
- Deliver insights and supports that are built on the experiences and instincts of SEs

As strategic advisors we:

- Take the long-view
- Have "skin in the game"
- Provide guidance across multiple dimensions of organizational growth
- Build relationships and invest time to ensure relevant and holistic guidance

What are the goals of the New Profit support model?

We start with Social Entrepreneurs who share our vision for widespread impact. We provide them with multi-year unrestricted funding and a dedicated 'Deal Partner'. Our funding and strategic guidance is geared towards building organizations' key capabilities. We believe that increases in these capabilities are the necessary foundation for impact, scale, and sustainability, in the long term. Below is a summary of New Profit's deal-level logic model:





What do Portfolio Organizations get from New Profit?

All New Profit portfolio organizations receive the following core elements of our support model.

- **Multi-year Build Capital:** Portfolio organizations receive multi-year funding aligned with the term of the investment. Our funding serves as critical 'build capital' for developing the capabilities required for sustained impact and growth.
- **Access to Network:** Throughout our investment period and beyond New Profit invites portfolio organizations and alumni to take part in convenings that bring together peer organizations, field experts, and philanthropic players from across our rich national network.
- **Holistic Organizational Diagnosis:** New Profit supports portfolio organizations in diagnosing their capabilities and creating a holistic picture of their strengths and weaknesses. We provide the Social Entrepreneur with the tools and strategic guidance to hold and monitor progress against this holistic picture throughout our partnership and beyond.
- **New Profit Board Member:** Portfolio organizations are assigned a New Profit Deal Partner who takes a seat on the organization's Board of Directors for the term of our investment.
- **Strategic Advisor and Coach:** The assigned Deal Partner also serves as an ongoing strategic advisor and coach to the Social Entrepreneur. Drawing on New Profit's collective pattern recognition and learning from the last 20 years of supporting portfolio organizations, Deal Partners provide thought partnership and strategic advice with a focus on:
 - *Board Development* - coaching to the Social Entrepreneur and board to strengthen the engagement and institutional stewardship of the organization's board.
 - *Social Entrepreneur Coaching* - coaching the CEO on navigating the pitfalls of organizational leadership and growth common to fast-growing organizations.
 - *Integrated Strategic Advising* - helping the Social Entrepreneur and board make strategic choices that integrate across an organization's intended impact, economic model, and operational capabilities over the short and long-term.

At New Profit's discretion, select portfolio organizations may receive additional limited supports including pro-bono support from Deloitte, evaluation advising, and policy advising through New Profit's policy arm, America Forward.

What happens at the end of the investment term?

Typically, New Profit Build investments span four years from the signing of investment terms. At the end of this period, the New Profit Deal Partner steps off the portfolio organization's board and the organization graduates from the New Profit portfolio. New Profit continues to have strong relationships with alumni organizations, including celebrating their continued success and engaging them in network opportunities and convenings.

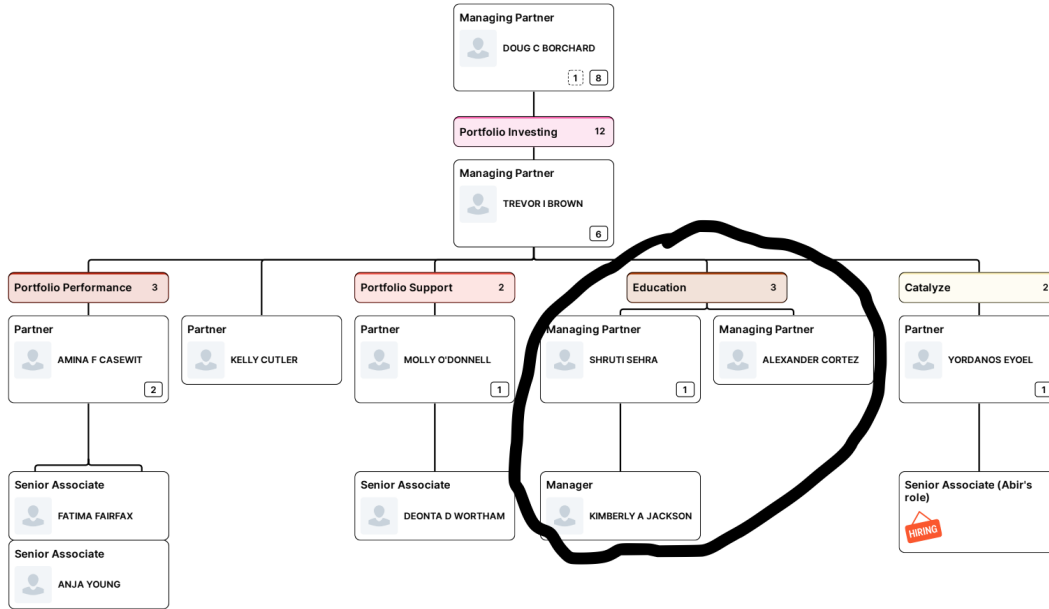
Source: New Profit Deal Support Model for Social Entrepreneurs

Appendix B

Education Portfolio Core Team and Support Staff








current org chart 05142020
 Chief Executive Officer > Managing Partner
 VANESSA KIRSCH > DOUG C BORCHARD

Made with
 Pingboard



Source: New Profit Organization Chart, accessed May 2020

Education Team

			
Shruti Sehra Managing Partner, Education Portfolio	Alex Cortez Managing Partner, Education Portfolio	Molly O'Donnell Partner, Portfolio Investments	Helayne Jones Senior Advisor, Education Portfolio
			
Kim Jackson Nielsen Manager, Education Portfolio	Jenna Spencer Manager, Investor Relations	Hassan Brown Doctoral Resident, Education Portfolio	

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Source: Education 101 Informational Slide, August 2020

Appendix C

Portfolio Performance and Support Core Functions



Portfolio Performance & Support (PPS)

The PPS Team is the backbone/operations hub for New Profit's Portfolio. When New Profit invests in organizations, we provide multi-year unrestricted capital (for BUILD investments) and pair organizations with a Deal Partner who serves as a strategic advisor, senior leadership coach, and Board member. To support the Portfolio's work the PPS Team (a) manages the selection and onboarding of portfolio organizations (b) supports Deal Partners as they advise portfolio organizations, (c) captures ongoing learning, and (d) measures the performance and progress of portfolio organizations and deal partners.

Source: PPS Function Overview Slide, October 2020

Appendix D

PAC Outreach and Recruitment Letter

New Profit Wellbeing Investment Selection Cycle Parent Advisory Council (PAC) July 2020

New Profit's Investment Selection Team seeks to partner with a small group of Parent Leaders to advise on the selection of organizations we should fund that focus on the wellbeing of young people, educators and families. We are exploring this exciting opportunity to learn with and from Parent Leaders. We understand that parents are the earliest educators and leaders in the lives of children. We seek your thought partnership, expertise and guidance in identifying up to six organizations from across the country that are best serving children and the adults that support them.

Background

New Profit is a national pioneering nonprofit that funds leaders and organizations that are taking on America's toughest, most entrenched challenges. New Profit provides unrestricted funding and support to other nonprofits to help them grow their program, build out their strategy, and advise their leadership.

New Profit is seeking to invest in and partner with organizations focused on supporting wellbeing in education, a focus area that has always been important and is now even more needed, given the heightened public awareness of racial injustice and the reality that school has been—and will continue to be—severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we navigate this global pandemic, the holistic wellbeing of young people in the education system has to be re-examined to acknowledge that school is so much more than a physical building or a curriculum. A school is an ecosystem that serves, and is served by, young people, educators, families, and others. Embedded in this focus is our belief that both organization leaders and

parent leaders who are proximate to communities bring skills and expertise that our society needs to advance equitable wellbeing and influence a new era of problem-solving.

Introducing the Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

Over the next few months, the Investment Selection Team, in partnership with the PAC, will select up to six organizations from an initial group of 10-15 innovative organizations that are applying for strategic and financial support. We are looking for 6-8 parents, preferably with children currently in K-12, to provide advice and perspective during our selection process by:

- reading and reviewing up to 4 applications,
- participating in interviews with the organization leaders,
- conducting interviews with the organization's beneficiaries, and
- crafting a formal investment selection opinion (a few paragraphs) for the two to six organizations that New Profit's Investment Selection Committee and Board of Directors will review during New Profit's final decision-making.

We are seeking Parent Leaders who understand the challenges and shared experiences faced by students from systematically underserved communities.

Expectations and Commitments

Our Wellbeing Selection Process will unfold in three phases.

1. Phase 1, August—Early September (REQUIRED) of the selection process focuses on the application review. This phase emphasizes a series of community-building, training and application review exercises.
2. Phase 2, Mid-September (OPTIONAL) focuses on interviewing and screening of grantee-candidates.

3. Phase 3, September to mid-October (OPTIONAL) is the final phase of the process where parent leaders will have the opportunity to conduct interviews with the organization's beneficiaries and provide a written recommendation on the final organizations for consideration by New Profit's Investment Committee and Board of Directors.

We ask that **all** participants participate in Phase 1 and then opt-in to Phases 2 and 3.

Additional details can be found in the table below.

3 PHASE PROCESS

AUGUST-OCTOBER

Phase 1: Application Review	Phase 2: Screening Interviews (Optional/Opt-in)	Phase 3: Diligence Review (Optional/Opt-in)
<p>Parent Community Kickoff Event Let's connect and build our community! (Week of Aug 10th; 1.5 hours)</p> <p>Application Review Training Event Learn how to evaluate organization applications (Week of Aug 17th; 2 hours)</p> <p>Read Applications/Share Feedback Independently read and provide feedback on 3-4 organization applications. (Aug 26- Sept 7; hold 4 hours for independent work)</p> <p>Parents and Funder Convening Determine the final 2-4 organizations for Screening (Sept 9th or 10th; 2.5 hours)</p>	<p>Screening Call Training/Prep Session Learn about screening process and create interview questions for social entrepreneurs (Week of Sept 14-17; 1 hour)</p> <p>Screening Calls w/ Social Entrepreneurs Co-lead screening interviews with New Profit Leadership Team (Sept 17-21; Up to 2 90-minute calls and a 30-minute parent debrief call)</p>	<p>Conduct Constituent Interviews Parents lead interviews with community stakeholders. New Profit Team provides support (Sept –October; conduct 2 45-minute interviews)</p> <p>Provide Parent Recommendation Provide a formal written recommendation of consent/dissent to New Profit Investment Committee (Early-mid October)</p>
<p>We anticipate 10-12 hours total time commitment. You will receive a \$500 stipend for your participation at the end of this phase. (Early Aug-Early Sept)</p>	<p>We anticipate 3-4 hours total time commitment. You will receive a \$150 stipend for your participation at the end of this phase. (Early Sept- mid Sept.)</p>	<p>We anticipate 6-7 hours total time commitment. You will receive a \$300 stipend for your participation at the end of this phase. (Early Sept – mid Oct.)</p>
<p>We would work with parent leaders in the PAC to - as much as possible - organize any calls around your schedule of other commitments.</p>		

We Welcome You to Join Us If You Are....

- **Passionate** about educational equity for all children, educators and communities
- **Curious** about organizations providing wellbeing services and supports
- **Motivated** to improve learning and social outcomes for young people

- **A team player** that enjoys learning and having fun in a community of peers
- **Desiring** an opportunity to deepen/strengthen your engagement, writing, and interviewing abilities.

Will you join us? Please direct all interest and inquiries to hassan_brown@newprofit.org.

Source: PAC Outreach Letter and Job Description, July 2020

Appendix E

New Profit Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

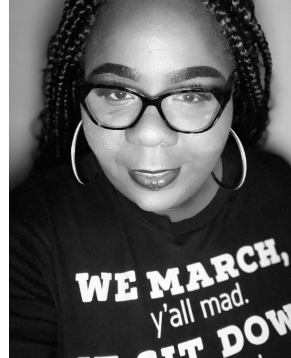


Darya Davis

As a born and raised Washingtonian and a resident of Congress Heights, I've always had a passion for quality education. While education was not my initial career path, I fulfilled my desires by joining and leading several parent teacher associations and social groups. I believe creating a strong environment between schools and parents has utmost importance to building a strong community.

In the last seven years, I have accelerated my efforts and choose to be a voice for the voiceless. I joined several more community forums, where I was the liaison between the school and parents, but I also took the task of becoming a Board member on several Public Charter school and educational organizations. My determination for education reform stems from the fact that every child deserves quality education in a safe and productive environment no matter the neighborhood, economic or social class they were given.

On several occasions I've been called a chameleon. I meet in the boardroom with political figures to discuss pertinent educational concerns but never miss a beat with my families in the local neighborhood. My genuine love for education shines through and I was named co-chair of the former Somerset Prep PCS, as well as a parent leader for PAVE DC Ward eight PLE board.



Russchelle Moore

My name is Russchelle Moore and I am a second-year college student, looking to obtain my bachelors and masters in social media marketing and public relations management. I am a recent 2018 graduate of The Academy of Hope adult public charter school in Washington, D.C. I graduated as valedictorian of the 2018 class, I am currently an honor student at Strayer University, I am on three honors boards, The National Society of Collegiate Scholars, The honors society, The Society for Leadership and Achievements, and the Golden Key, which is an international honors society, I'm also Strayer's student ambassador for the Washington, D.C. campus.

This is a new journey for me I never thought that I would be made for college, and I didn't think college was made for me, I also never dreamt that I would get this far, even after gaining my high school diploma after leaving school 24 years prior, I am a parent of three young men I'm a grandmother of a vibrant, t2-year-old little girl and I am also an advocate for families of the District of Columbia public school system. I've been a parent advocate for nearly 4 years, I desire to be the voice that so many of your Black and Brown families need and can depend on. A fun fact about myself, I am a certified chef with more than 20 years of experience, and I'm a big kid at heart!



DaSean Jones

DaSean is a native Washingtonian who graduated from Anacostia High School (D.C.) and received his bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology from the University of the District of Columbia. DaSean is a proud and committed father of four children—three of whom attend Columbia Heights Education Campus, and one of whom attends Eagle Academy's Public Charter school. He currently lives in Ward 8 and works in DC's Child and Family Services Agency as a PEER (Parent Engagement Educational Resource) specialist, dedicated to the safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families. Advocating for parents and children is something he thoroughly enjoys. He's currently volunteering as a member of PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voice in Education) as a parent leader in education for D.C. Ward 8, to help parents have a voice in improving our education system standards and policies. He is also a brother of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.



Yolanda Corbett

—13 years working as a parent advocate

What motivates you to do the work that you do for your community?

I am a native Washingtonian who is a product of a long-standing broken educational system. Throughout my advocacy, I have met so many families that are far removed from one of our key elements of life “education” that when schools need the families to support their scholars, they can not. I am here to be a voice for the voiceless by empowering families through education and facilitating imperative community conversations.

What excites you about this opportunity with New Profit?

Money speaks before resolution, so I am happy to be a part of a movement that invites the people that are going to be impacted to the table.

Demographic information about your children (i.e. their age and grade, etc.).

Three boys, ages 13 (autistic) 9th grade; 12, 7th grade and 6, 1st grade.

I am a chic Black geek



Brittany Wade

A proud Ward 7 resident, Brittany Wade serves as a city-wide parent leader for PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education). As an alumnus of the D.C. Public Charter School System and mother of five, it is a priority for Brittany to ensure that all students have a realistic chance of success *because* of their educational experience, not despite their educational experience. Brittany joined PAVE to support the organization’s mission of empowering and connecting with D.C. parents to provide a platform for families to make more informed choices in the education experience for our city. She remains to be a voice echoing the call for an equitable education experience for students and schools city-wide, with an emphasis East of the River (EOTR).

Brittany is currently chief operations officer of Semper Sanitize, LLC a District-based facilities services company. She is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and a native of Kansas City, MO. When not engaged in the many professional tasks that keep her occupied, Brittany enjoys walking through the beautiful green \ lands of Ward 7 with her family, gardening, and beautifying her beloved Burrville community.



Euclides Rengifo Cordoba

I have about 6 years of being an advocate for parents formally and informally from the point of equality, human rights, and advocating for education.

What motivates me to do work for my community is the passion that my mother instilled in me since I was a child, who became an educator all her life and as I grew up, I have been developing and transmitting that ability to fight to seek equal rights and to live fairer.

What excites me the most is being able to work with a group of leading parents at the national level to be able to make significant contributions so that financial resources are used by organizations that are doing an excellent job to ensure that there is a better education based on real needs with the focus of parents.

I have two children; Yenner Rengifo is my oldest son, he is 14 years old and is studying 9th grade at DC International DCPS school and my daughter Mailys Rengifo is in 4th grade at D.C. Bilingual PCS school, they are both bilingual in English and Spanish and currently they want to learn French and Portuguese

A fun fact about me is that I like to eat and enjoy the different typical dishes of all cultures. I am a coordinator of Afro-Colombian folklore dances and I love to dance and teach how to dance.

Source: PAC Member Profiles, Submitted August 2020

Appendix F

Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Virtual Kickoff Agenda

PAC Kickoff Run of Show [internal]

Agenda (90 mins)

- Intro/Icebreaker and Norms (15 mins)
- New Profit: Who we are (10 mins)
 - Overview and Context
- "What's your why?" - Whole group (20 mins)
 - MJ Clip (4 mins)
 - Parent Jamboard Activity (virtual sticky notes) (4 mins)
 - Parent Debrief (7 mins)
 - New Profit's "Why": (i.e.equity, learning, funders/parents as partners, social justice, COVID) (5 mins)
- Wellbeing and Grant Selection Process (35 mins)
 - What does "Wellbeing" Mean to You?- Breakout group (2 groups) discussions (7 mins)
 - Debrief (5 mins)
 - Discuss the Wellbeing LOI (23 mins)
 - Introduce PAC Duties and Responsibilities
 - General Process
 - Parent Integration Process
 - Walk through 3 Phases: discuss role, importance, time commitment
- Q&A/ Next Steps (10 mins)

Source: PAC Kickoff Agenda, August 2020

Appendix G

(PAC) Reading and Evaluation Training

Read, Review, Share Thoughts

Read

Read the LOI (all PART V: short-answer questions) and the **additional “compelling” document**. As you go through, search for the story the applicant is trying to tell. Some applications are written by people who are professionals in writing applications, others are not. Keep in mind the quality of the writing is not as important as the content of the story being told. **Aim to spend 30-45 minutes/application reading.**

Reflect

After/while reading, reflect on what you’re hearing. What questions do you have? Are they answered in the application or not? What excites you? What concerns you? How are your own experiences and biases (not all biases are bad) playing into your review?

Submit

Fill out the Google sheet with three questions for each organization - What excites you about this application? What concerns do you have? **What questions would you want to ask the social entrepreneur?** Aim to spend 15-30 mins/application responding.

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The slide is part of a Google Slides presentation. On the right side, there is a video conference grid showing several participants. The slide content includes a vertical navigation bar with 'Read', 'Reflect', and 'Submit' sections, each with a corresponding text box. The text boxes provide instructions for reading and reflecting on LOI documents, and for submitting feedback on a Google sheet.

Reading & Reviewing Principles

Keep in mind these three principles as you’re scoring:

- There’s a lot of art in this science; embrace the ambiguity – this process requires judgement based on limited information, and **there are no right answers**
- Your comments are an important input in a rigorous process **replete with checks and balances**
- We are not looking for a review of fit to New Profit (we have already done that and will continue to do so). **We are looking for you to bring your expertise to bear in helping us see what we are not seeing.** Take a holistic view of all the data you’re seeing in the LOI and the appropriate supplementary materials when sharing your thoughts.

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The slide is part of a Google Slides presentation. On the right side, there is a video conference grid showing several participants. The slide content includes a list of three principles for scoring applications. The text is bolded for emphasis on key phrases like 'no right answers', 'checks and balances', and 'bring your expertise to bear'.

Source: Parent Advisory Council Reading and Ranking Training in August 2020

Appendix H

PAC Phase 1 Feedback Survey Results

Why did you want to be a part of the PAC?

6 responses

I wanted to see what goes into the decision making process when it comes to organizations that are responsible for investing into financially into community impacting organizations.

As a parent of a young black boy, I know how hard things are and how difficult it is for my son and others like him, to have a safe haven and safe space to go to where people that look like him can understand the struggles. I wanted to be apart of the selection process to help our black families get the necessary help needed.

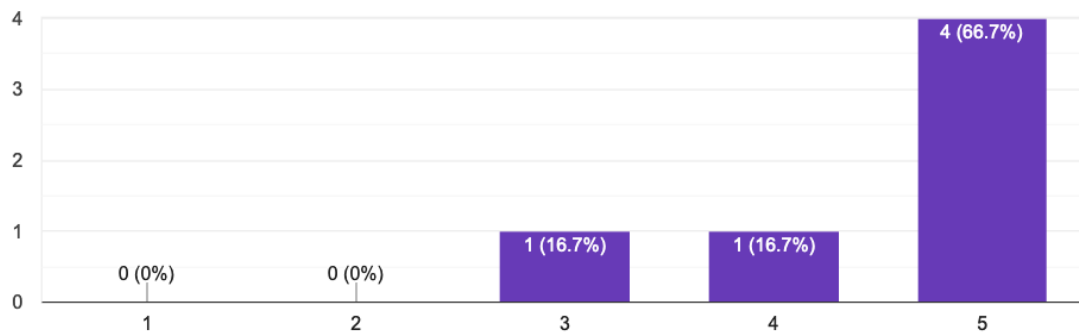
Because it is very important that a parent and educator, through their experience, can give objective recommendations that help the organization that is going to be financed to really have a program that represents a package of aid with positive impact and tangible results in vulnerable populations that belongs to a minority social group.

to understand the process in choosing and evaluating organizations who are advocating for fund to provide community services

I wanted to gain more work experience and help organizations understand what parents want to see and feel from them.

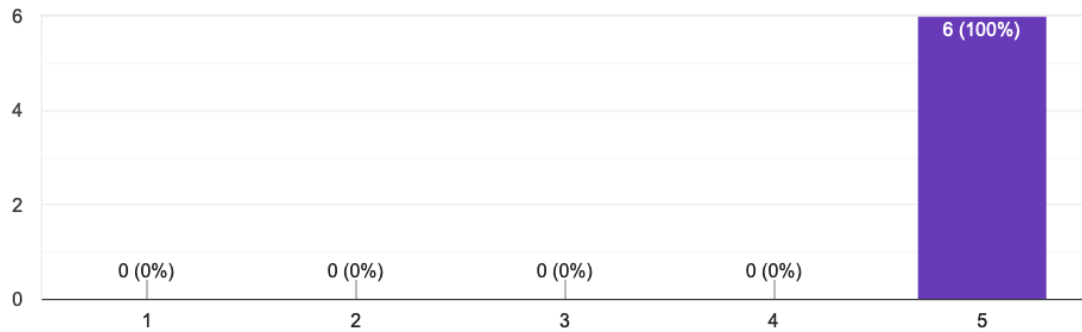
How helpful was the one-on-one parent interview in helping you decide to participate in the PAC?

6 responses



Were the expectations regarding your responsibilities clear throughout your participation?

6 responses



Please share your rationale for how you scored the previous question.

6 responses

Hassan was really great when explaining what the expectations were for participation. It was especially helpful to hear what drives him when it comes to this work and help to further prove that this work was done with good people at the helm.

I scored according my position as a PAC participant

Because I was present in all the trainings, meetings and trainings, I was able to clarify my doubts before starting to participate in the important process where, that is why I think I was clear about the process.

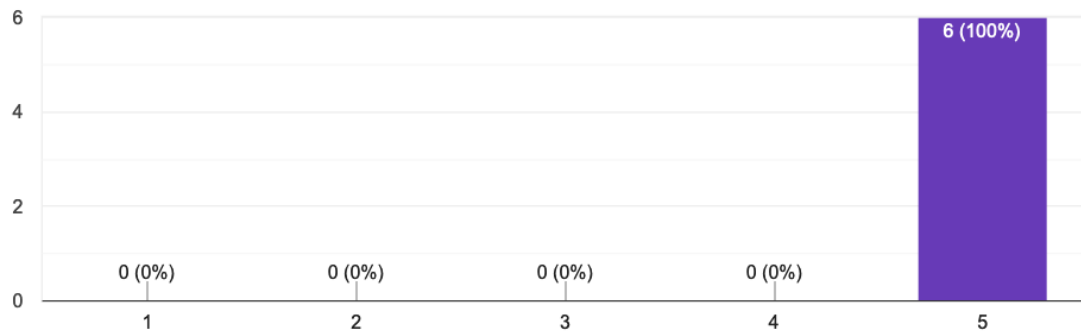
we met via zoom to discuss process how to read and assess SE groups. We identified concerns, things we liked, and disliked. expressed our biases and expounded on it. We were instructed to do the previous and also read them individuals trying not to compare if their were similarities

Hassan sent emails and updates to make sure we all knew when things were due and where he could help.

All my questions were answered and the quality expected was explained.

How supported did you feel in being able to fully participate in the process?

6 responses



Please share your rationale for how you scored the previous question. Feel free to recommend additional ways that we could have supported you better.

6 responses

I have a tendency to over think and felt that my input would be viewed as remedial. Feeling inadequate to participate, I reached out to Hassan to express my concern and frustration. After talking me down off of the figurative ledge, Hassan reassuring commitment to helping us talk through and walk through the process was super helpful. I also appreciated the set aside office hours that were available to us in order to ensure that we felt good about the opinions and insight we were offering.

It was great to be able to have the New Profit team me available when needed

I believe that they gave us all the necessary tools and the time necessary to carry out this important work.

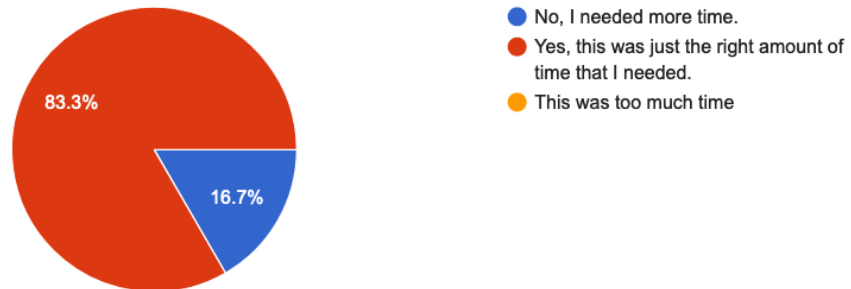
clear instructions were provided, regular meetings and email reminders, open to make contact if assistance was needed and plenty of time to read with a clear deadline to have your evaluation completed, there was plenty of support

I felt supported by the team any questions I had were answered and there were sessions were would could receive extra help if needed. Over all it was pretty straight forward though.

NA

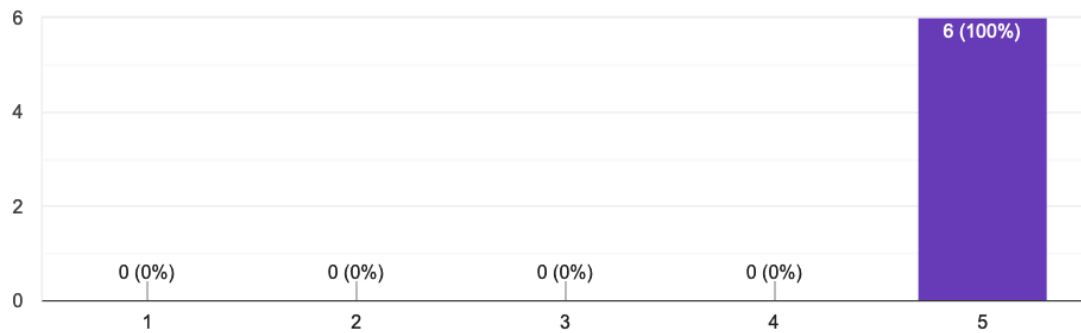
Was the 12-day application review period an adequate amount of time for you to provide feedback?

6 responses



To what degree do you feel like the PAC's feedback has been valued?

6 responses



Please share your rationale for how you scored the previous question.

6 responses

During these times, it seems as if the pressures of deadlines have increased, that being said, perhaps it was the timing of multitasking family priorities and other projects that made 12 days feel like two. In regard to feeling as if our PAC feedback was valued, I would say, yes. It was evident during our feedback session presentation that our views were truly considered. It was helpful to see what were the commonalities in thought between New Profit and PAC. I also appreciate the opportunity to discuss and advocate for those organizations that we may have felt passionate about and the opportunity to express why and the potential to give them another try.

Our feedback was respected and appreciated

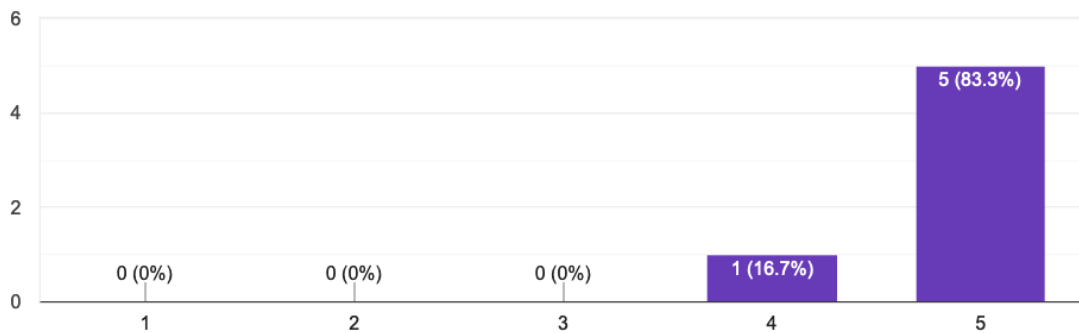
Because our feedback was discussed and attended in a meeting, they were also recorded in the work format where we were able to make our recommendations.

we were made to feel included in the process and all our feedback was received, documented and also the finished selection process was fairly determined by the information we provided

Every question and comment each of the group members had were reviewed and explained why we had these questions or comments. In depth

To what degree did you feel empowered to share your feedback with the group?

6 responses



Please share your rationale for how you scored the previous question.

6 responses

It was helpful to work amongst my peers. Having worked with the team previously and understand each others values made the feedback session feel valuable. I appreciated the opportunity to hear openly everyone's perspective and have the space to discuss our thoughts.

No judgment

With great confidence, respect and spontaneity because the work group is made up of parent leaders who represent values for the work they do due to the society that each one represents.

we were asked to provide feedback and we met as a group to share and provide our opinion that the group added additional insight without the assistance of the New-Profit adding any leading views

It felt empowering just sharing my thoughts and opinions about what these non-profits presented.

NA

What did you enjoy most about Phase 1?

6 responses

The true inclusive feeling and partnership between PAC and New Profit.

Reading all of the great applications and seeing the common goal for black and brown families

The harmony of the team, and the leadership of the coordinators.

reading the proposals

I enjoyed going through this process with my fellow PAVE members. Giving my feedback on these really important non-profits that are doing great work in black and brown communities.

Hearing everyone's opinion

What did you least enjoy about Phase 1?

6 responses

I enjoyed the total experience.

A lot of tedious reading

N/A

trying to get clarity from the proposals when they were vague and repetitious

I enjoyed this process.

NA

Are there any areas where we could have improved our management of the PAC meetings? (i.e., frequency of communications, frequency of meetings, clarity of materials, etc.)

6 responses

N/A

No.

nope, the communication wand clarity was on point

In my opinion everything went really well.

NA

Knowing what you know now, would you go through this experience again if given the opportunity?
Why/Why not?

6 responses

Yes, New Profit was very thoughtful towards considering what our schedules and availability would look like during these times and it showed. The advanced scheduled notice and the additional support if access to office hours made his feel like a seamless effort.

I would do this again because, it's so many more good organizations that need help.

Yes, because it would continue to help the right organizations to be chosen to carry out social service to vulnerable communities, those in greatest need and minority groups.

yes, because it provided a inside look at how the orgs present themselves while trying to expand

Yes, I think its always good to have other opinions and creatiques when your serving black and brown communities.

Yes.... smooth easy process

Please feel free to share any additional thoughts or comments about this Phase 1 PAC experience with us.

4 responses

I am truly grateful to have been considered and chosen to participate in such an eye opening process. This was and is still truly invigorating to see the many different avenues there are to explore what that it could/would look like for me in the future to explore expanding my desire to help my own community.

I throughly enjoyed this

Thank you very much for allowing us as parents to help you select the organizations that obtain resources so that they are used in the best possible way for the solution of problems and needs of our society, please continue doing this process that is worthy to be admired because it allows resources not to be lost and used, providing efficient and quality service.

it was interesting to read proposals see how they presented themselves

Source: Anonymous PAC Phase 1 Survey Responses, September 2020

Appendix I
PAC Focus Group Feedback with BBT

New Profit PAC Focus Group Questions (identifying information redacted)

Participants: (all Black-presenting folks; one Black Latinx/Hispanic)

[REDACTED]

1. *In what ways do selection and diligence reflect New Profit's expressed commitment to equity? How can New Profit increasingly demonstrate equity?*

They are trying to based on who they selected to be on their PAC; also saw a diverse group of people in the SE they interviewed

Bringing the PAC together was a strong effort to bring together a group of people to meet potential grantees; the process of reading thru the information, the discussions with no judgement, accepting feedback even with biases

met Alex Cortez (one of the SEs) a year and a half ago; Alex met with a group of 15 parents— included—and Alex included their thoughts and sentiments into what he's doing in his organization. Even with diverse thoughts and backgrounds, they (PAC + Alex) have a shared purpose

2. *How are New Profit's commitments to diversity and inclusiveness reflected in selection and diligence?*
3. *Based on your experience, what equitable outcomes does New Profit aspire to have in its grantmaking process? What more could be done to achieve equity in the grantmaking process?*

They communicated a need to focus on programs proximate to the communities served; appreciated that they (PAC) were involved as resources to bring perspectives of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people; they understood the need for resources for Black, Brown, and Indigenous

people. If you want to hear from streets, you got to go to the streets—hearing our perspectives as parents made me feel heard and appreciated and that NP valued them by including them as parents in the process of making grants to organizations that parents/students participate in. It is necessary to walk the talk—by including us in the funding decisions, they are walking the talk—trying to make grants not made on relationships and who you know but based on feedback from “the people.”

We are not an easy group to get by, hats off to them for bringing us in, letting us say what we wanted/needed to say without censoring—we were able to be authentic and not sugarcoating what we see, think, believe.

We are the stakeholders/we are the parents.

New Profit came in asking for assistance.

A lot of these corporations/nonprofit get people to tell them what they want to hear. There is a sort of professionalism that a lot of people have to do when they are on staff. We brought authenticity to the situation. They wanted the full scope from parents because we are the stakeholders. We are parents first.

4. *What do you think is the experience of social entrepreneurs in New Profit's selection and diligence processes?*

Experience ■ had in talking with an “Clairvoyant” student—she was very knowledgeable about what the school was trying to do to prepare her for high school and college; it was interesting to get a question:answer period with the student, how it would benefit her, and on what timeframe it became more intense and important in her steps moving forward... student felt comfortable, was knowledgeable, didn't show any “preparatory” sense of performing for the interview - she probably knew what they questions were and he was pleased that she wasn't prepped to give certain answers.

■■■■—speaking to some of the CEOs at the beginning of the process, she asked all the hard questions—wanted to test how much the CEOs are about it and not just giving lip service to the answers, they take it serious and demonstrate being accountable for what they say they are going to do

■■■■—it’s serious funding, there is accountability to use the funds responsibly, stepping up and doing the work. When we had received the breakdown of each org we were reviewing and what NP was looking for we used our own scale of what we would be looking for from orgs that service families like us. We wanted them to see that we were intentional about holding them accountable for the money they were seeking and if they were stepping up and doing the work.

■■■■—the organization I spoke with was very transparent in all of the questions that were thrown in his direction; when we were asked to “score” which orgs we would fund, I read over the organization that I picked again to ensure I was clear minded going into the interview. He was very transparent about who they wanted to be and how they wanted to expand; he gave a clear breakdown of what they were trying to do and what they were doing and what they wanted to do more. I appreciated all of his story and what his organization is about and wants to do moving forward—it wasn’t just smoke and mirrors

■■■■—I came to represent as an Afro and Latin, creates opening for everyone to weigh in on all of our communities Afro, Latinx communities; the best organization is not just for Latinx community but also for African American communities that have more vulnerabilities for growing the student—to help our communities; I am listening and I am very happy to be part of this process; I have come to see how NP is doing to bring \$\$\$ to organizations

5. *What were some of the challenging elements of the selection and diligence processes for you as Parent Advisors?*

I have praise for NP and Hassan to have the wherewithal to scheduling, emails and reminders, being centered on their schedules and needs; Hassan made it easy for her to participate by being a

sounding board, talking things thru with her so she didn't overanalyze her thoughts—would recommend this process to others as a way to bring parents in and feel included

As a parent participant this was an ideal process to let us exercise our voice and contributions.

█—I know always NP was for me the best way. Was helpful to see how the organizations are working. We are talking about a big budget and a lot of money for the organizations. We could go and get evidence on site, go to the place, and see how it is working.

To make a decision, I was thinking about the Coronavirus situation, can this process allow us to go and see the organization in action; it would be good for us to go and see the organization to get a “taste” of what is going on... that would be an improvement he would make. Would want to see the organization to have evidence of what is working; on paper people can say whatever they want, but when we go to the organization, we can see greater evidence that reinforces what they are putting down on paper

This was an easy process, especially for everything we have going on as parents. The deadlines weren't too much and Hassan was very helpful in giving reminders, prepping them for who would be in the interviews—it was nice to build a relationship with Hassan along the way. Because everything was virtual, we had to be very diligent to meet the people you were working with and providing as clear and concise information as possible; I saw that happen and echo sentiments about Hassan's helpfulness in the process—he anticipated questions before we asked them and was always ready to address whatever questions they did have; from my perspective they did everything they could do to bring us along in this process.

6. *How could New Profit have engaged you more effectively?*
7. *New Profit has a stated commitment to support more organizations led by Black, Indigineous, and Latinx people. What needs to be different in the process for New Profit to select the types of leaders New Profit wants to select now?*

- a. Follow up if needed: What is the gap between what they are doing now and what should be done to select the types of leaders they want to select now?

██████—of the orgs has a pro-Black mission; I had the opportunity to meet the top lady and she was not black—I think she was Asian and that raised questions for me; if we are breaking down systemic barriers and cultural appropriation, when we have orgs who present themselves as pro-black and are not led by Black, Latinx, Indigenous leaders, we are going to keep an eye on that to ensure they are about it and not just about saying the words.

██████—Another org was led by a Black woman who was in her role for only a few months and most of the ppl in the org were not black people—they were hard on them to make sure they are using integrity and not just using pro-Black as a way to get \$\$\$.

██████—Reading through the application, I didn't have an opportunity to meet with the CEOs, I had to read between the lines - applications, videos, etc.—██████ was an organization geared towards families that were not from the U.S., they were helping people be aware of where they were from and where they are now. ████████ helped students “all of the students have to be accountable for themselves” everyone reads their report cards aloud in a public setting—I hear what they are trying to do to build mutual accountability and it could have also brought a lot of shame; there were cultural differences in what they were trying to do thru this process but I don't see any family from the US who would openly accept their child being shamed publicly and be able to bring back; I like the idea of sharing stories, a reverse education model where they meet people where they are at and take them further; there was a whole lot of disciplinary language - they did a good job of putting things on paper and when I looked at the interview, they weren't able to address how they would work with students who didn't tow the line...

8. *How could NP build their network and/or pipeline so there are more ppl who know about NP and can apply for access to funding?*

██████—it was great that they reached out to PAVE - reach out to PAVE in other states; there were a lot of CA-based orgs, they need to expand their base beyond the West Coast; I think NP was too

lenient with deadlines and CEOs so they can get \$\$\$ and start using it more quickly - you need to be available and prioritize this process.

There are charter boards in every state—they have a list of all the boards and are getting ahead of the funding processes for schools that are going to start.

Have a parent advisor group with NP so they can get parent perspective, especially of parents of school-aged children and get the perspectives of parents whose students are currently in the system.

9. *What do you think about NP prioritizing organizations that want to grow nationally vs. being deeply embedded in communities (the geography question Shruti was raising)....*

Think it's a good idea for them to grow orgs nationally—there is no shortage of organizations and people who need help

Make sure that as orgs grow and scale that the mission is maintained in the original model - don't push to grow too quickly that the mission gets lost and the integrity of the organization gets lost

■—I am big on not just bringing your portfolio and showing your work, and we talked to parents, students, and CEOs. That's as important as statistics. We need numbers, we need active participants within the organization who are willing to be screened about how they are trying to put their program out there, portfolio presentation to help give a base idea of what's going on, best practices and principles and models not just cookie cutter models—we want portfolios, CEOs, board members who can talk about how the model is being used and widely and commonly known so that they are unified in their communication - bring hard numbers about outcomes and we also need the #s and we need to see the people who those numbers reflect and all those involved can speak on the model and best practices of the organization to present a unified front - when there is common and shared mission, language, etc. then I would feel comfortable with expansion

██████—no matter how big or small the organization, they need funding—thinking about
██████—they aren't in our communities, how can NP fund smaller organizations that
don't have the huge recognition yet

Blue sky: ██████—more structured timeline for the process. When is the money being
distributed? The process is stretched out. We want to keep it moving and not be dormant. Hold
the schools accountable to meeting the deadlines. Meet them or move on to the next organization.

██████—I agree with ██████ If orgs are putting their portfolios together in order to get
funding, if you are expecting someone to fund you, you have to go through all of the steps in
order to get the funding and you have to be able to meet the standards that come upon you.
Should not be dragged on for months. When that happens, they are taking spots someone else
could have had. We could have been interviewing a nonprofit that was actually ready.

At the end of the day, we are parents, we have other things we need to be doing to put this in
perspective—what about that group we interviewed and they're not ready.... what do we do when
they're not ready—we need to move on to other orgs who are ready. A deadline and timeline is
definitely needed so we can keep moving forward, get funding into the hands of those who need it
right now...we just keep waiting to make a decision b/c we're waiting on one nonprofit to get their
stuff together.

██████—Give the PAC team more time to talk to each candidate. I still had questions even after
talking to them because I only got to speak to a mother and daughter. I would have liked talking
to a teacher and the CEO. There are a lot of questions I didn't ask b/c of the information was
presented to me, think we should interview everyone so we get a holistic view of multiple
perspectives and be able to ask all of the questions I'd ask

“Ares” is the organization that is not getting their stuff together—we’ve been at this for months, we’re all in the same COVID-19 situation—if you can’t get it together, I’m not sure I can trust you with the \$\$\$.

■—in choosing organizations, I have to be honest, if I was the head of the organization, I think depending on the organization, I would have to ask them to get me some empirical data to support why they are using certain models and practices, in addition to providing statistical data about outcomes. There has to be a timeline and you have to meet that timeline—if you’re early, you’re on time, if you’re on time, you’re late, if you’re late then you better not show up.

■—I am thinking about growing a small organization, I was thinking about small organizations; the two finalists at this point are not small organizations, they are building big programs, they know how to get donors/supporters, build programs, etc. They will use the money to grow better than they are right now...one organization is helping our community but it doesn’t have the resources to build the program, small organizations who are starting good programs but they don’t have the support b/c they don’t have an umbrella for growing quickly. Was thinking about nonprofits who once or twice per year have regular community meetings (is this what he’s saying?). For every different community, getting input from the community about who (which organizations) is doing excellent work in the community—could help NP broaden their network and pipeline. Small organizations often have big impacts, they need to grow more within their own communities before they replicate nationally.

10. What else would you like to share with New Profit as they consider revamping the diligence process?

Always have a parent selection board—the parents are going to ask the questions that NP may not be willing to ask; you have to bring parents to the table b/c it’s our kids who are being affected. If they want to be more in line—find more ways for parents to be involved in the NP process

There is so much going on right now and our perspectives are so important in really serving students—survey parents to hear what they feel, want, desire

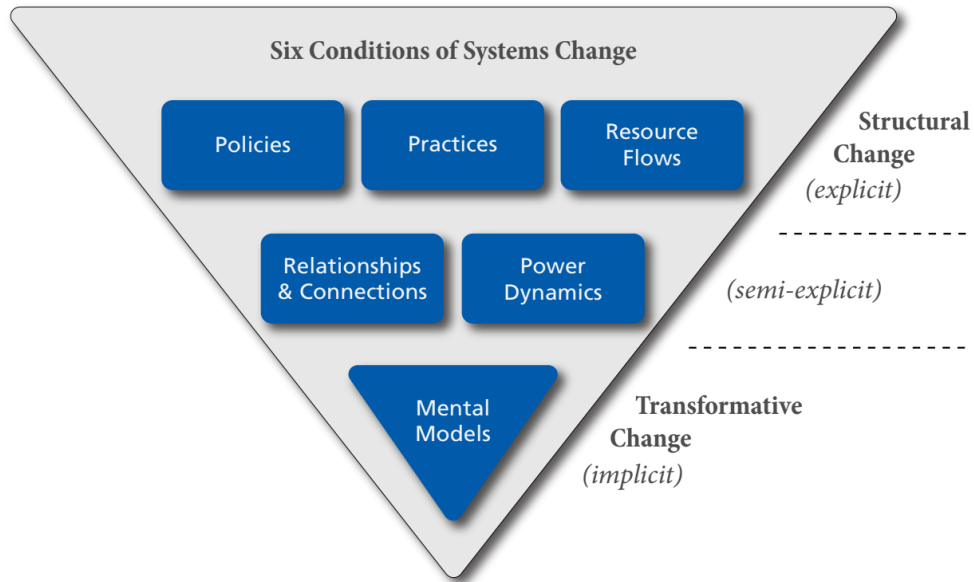
At the end of the day, b/c we are parents, if you're going to do this on the regular, you need to add parent insight into what they'd want; I also think they should have a first place and runner up (to get consensus with group) being able to compensate the organizations who went thru this whole process get something for all of their effort

Parents will always be the best advocates for their children—best advocates for students

Source: Anonymized PAC Focus Group Feedback Survey Responses, November 2020

Appendix J

Six Conditions of Systems Change Definitions



Systems Change Definitions

“**Policies:** Government, institutional and organizational rules, regulations, and priorities that guide the entity’s own and others’ actions.

Practices: Espoused activities of institutions, coalitions, networks, and other entities targeted to improving social and environmental progress. Also, within the entity, the procedures, guidelines, or informal shared habits that comprise their work.

Resource Flows: How money, people, knowledge, information, and other assets such as infrastructure is allocated and distributed.

Relationships & Connections: Quality of connections and communication occurring among actors in the system, especially among those with differing histories and viewpoints.

Power Dynamics: The distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organizations.

Mental Models: Habits of thought—deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk.”

Source: Kania, et al., (2018).

Appendix K

Habits of a Systems Thinker (Waters Center for Systems Thinking)

HABITS OF A SYSTEMS THINKER
2020 Edition

SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND THE BIG PICTURE
Illustration: A person looking at a landscape with a volcano, palm trees, and a beach.

OBSERVES HOW ELEMENTS WITHIN SYSTEMS CHANGE OVER TIME, GENERATING PATTERNS AND TRENDS
Illustration: A graph with 'Size' on the y-axis and 'Time' on the x-axis. A woman is shown at different stages of her life (child, adult).

RECOGNIZES THE IMPACT OF TIME DELAYS WHEN EXPLORING CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIPS
Illustration: A woman drinking a soda with a thought bubble showing a delayed reaction.

CONSIDERS HOW MENTAL MODELS AFFECT CURRENT REALITY AND THE FUTURE
Illustration: A woman holding a dog with thought bubbles showing different mental models of the dog's behavior.

CONSIDERS AN ISSUE FULLY AND RESISTS THE URGE TO COME TO A QUICK CONCLUSION
Illustration: A woman with a thought bubble of a scale of justice.

USES UNDERSTANDING OF SYSTEM STRUCTURE TO IDENTIFY POSSIBLE LEVERAGE ACTIONS
Illustration: A person fishing with a red arrow indicating a leverage point in the system.

CHANGES PERSPECTIVES TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING
Illustration: A person at a school with a thought bubble of a question mark and a lightbulb.

RECOGNIZES THAT A SYSTEM'S STRUCTURE GENERATES ITS BEHAVIOR
Illustration: A person flying a kite with a thought bubble of a red windmill.

CONSIDERS SHORT-TERM, LONG-TERM AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF ACTIONS
Illustration: A person holding money with thought bubbles of a building, headphones, and shoes.

IDENTIFIES THE CIRCULAR NATURE OF COMPLEX CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIPS
Illustration: A sunflower with circular arrows indicating feedback loops.

PAYS ATTENTION TO ACCUMULATIONS AND THEIR RATES OF CHANGE
Illustration: A person watering a plant with a thought bubble of a large water droplet.

MAKES MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITHIN AND BETWEEN SYSTEMS
Illustration: A central person with arrows connecting to icons for School, Work, Family, Home, and Faith.

CHECKS RESULTS AND CHANGES ACTIONS IF NEEDED: "SUCCESSIVE APPROXIMATION"
Illustration: A person cooking with a thought bubble of 'More Seasoning'.

SURFACES AND TESTS ASSUMPTIONS
Illustration: A person pointing at a graph with question marks and a speech bubble.

Waters Center For Systems Thinking
© 2020 Waters Center for Systems Thinking
WatersCenterST.org

Source: (Waters Center for Systems Thinking, 2020)

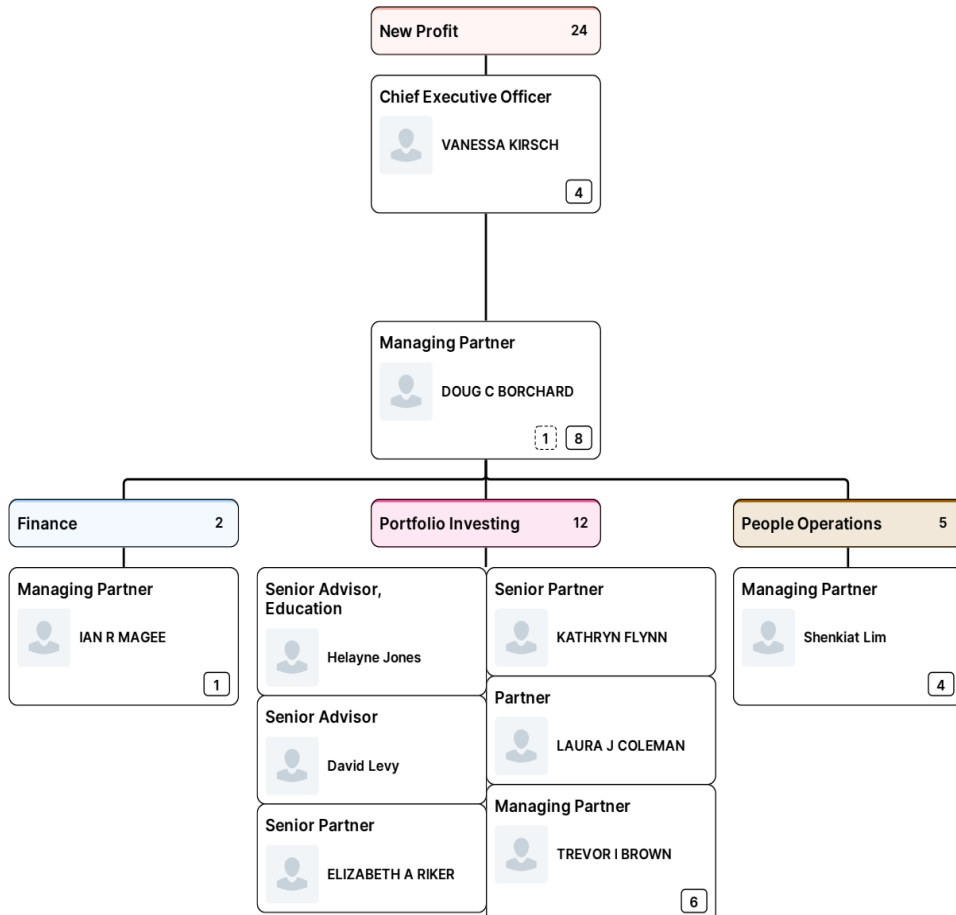
Appendix L

New Profit Organizational Structure

current org chart 05142020

Chief Executive Officer
VANESSA KIRSCH

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Pingboard

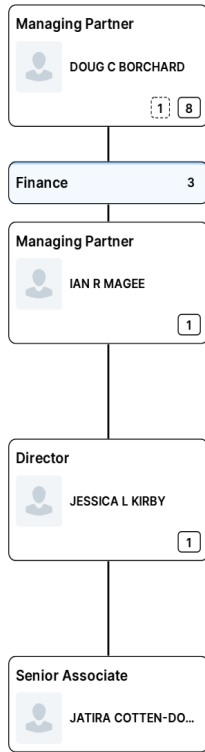


current org chart 05142020

Chief Executive Officer
VANESSA KIRSCH

Managing Partner
DOUG C BORCHARD

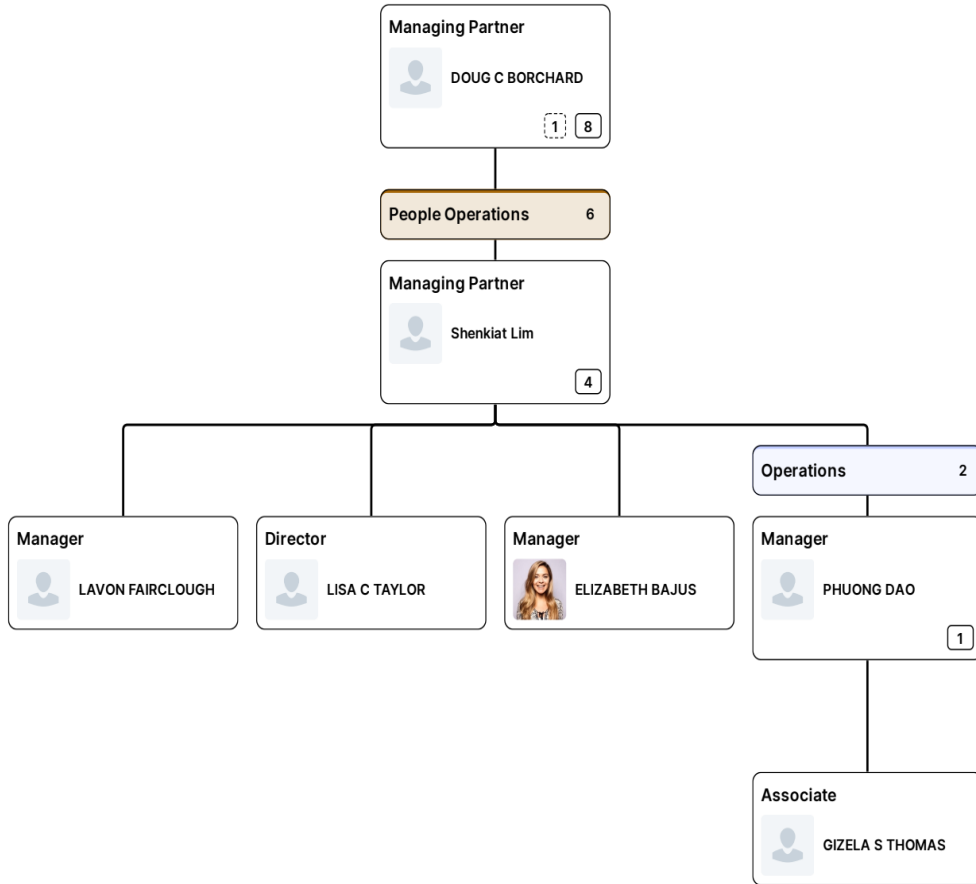
Made with
Pingboard



current org chart 05142020

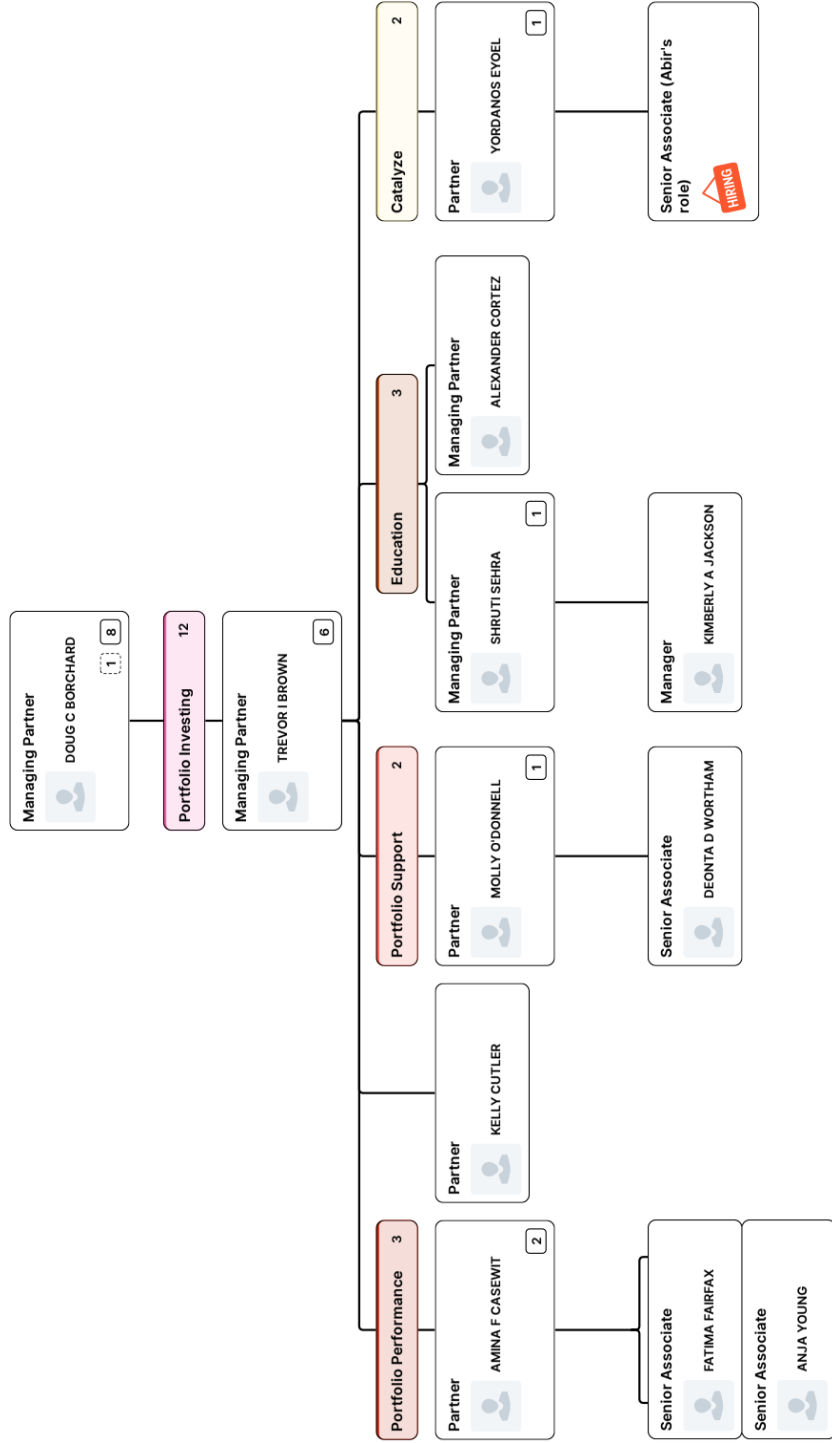
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VANESSA KIRSCH > DOUG C BORCHARD

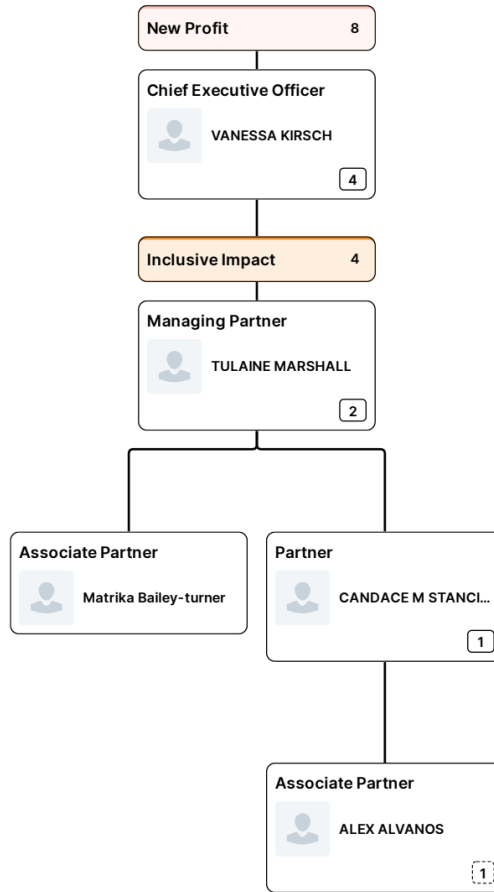
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current org chart 05142020

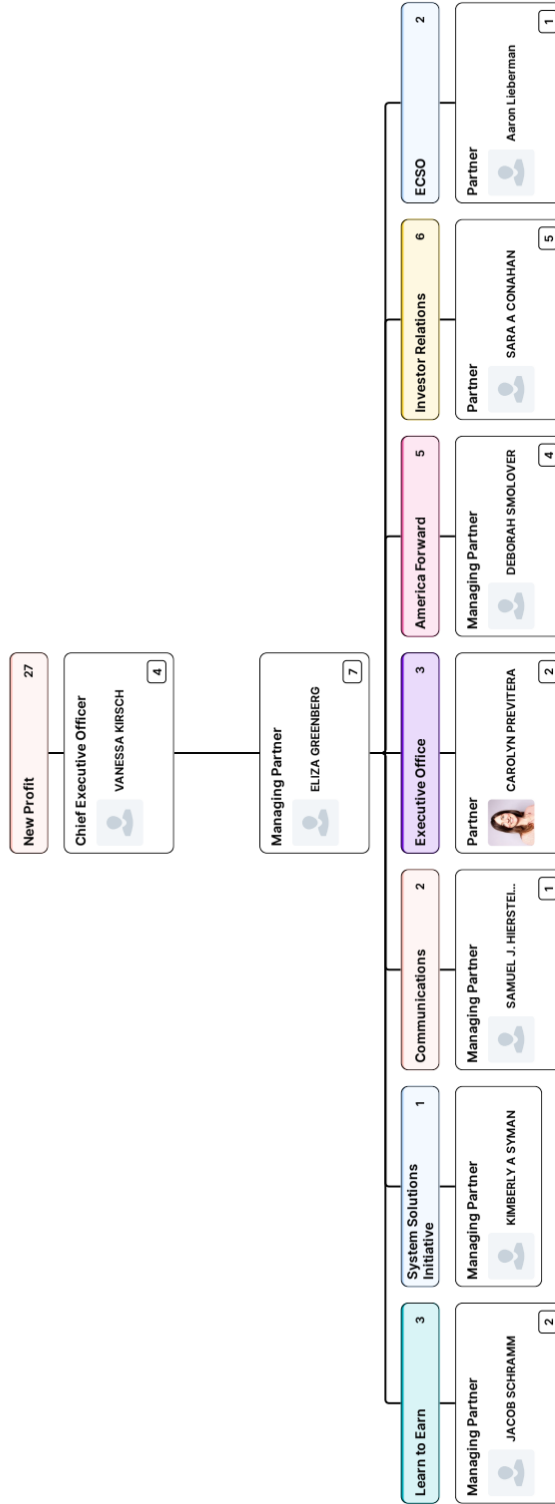
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 VANESSA KIRSCH > DOUG C BORCHARD





current org chart 05142020

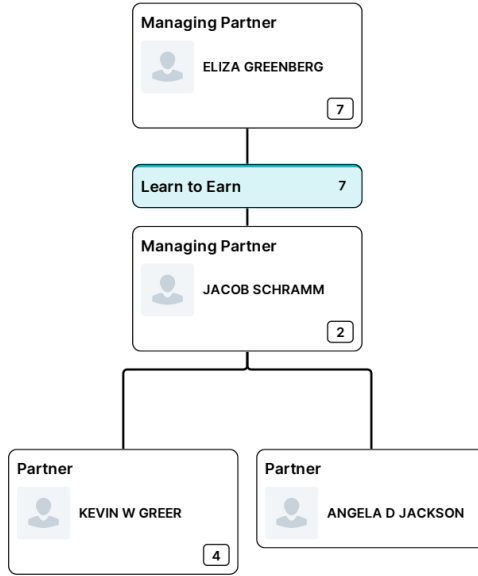
Chief Executive Officer
VANESSA KIRSCH



current org chart 05142020

Chief Executive Officer > Managing Partner
VANESSA KIRSCH > ELIZA GREENBERG

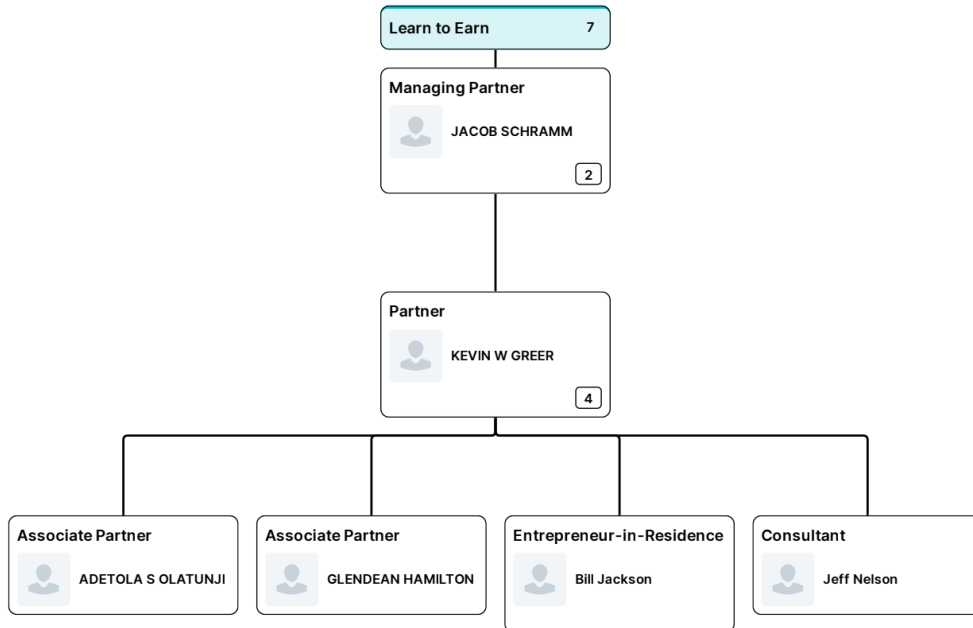
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current org chart 05142020

Chief Executive Officer > Managing Partner > Managing Partner
VANESSA KIRSCH > ELIZA GREENBERG > JACOB SCHRAMM

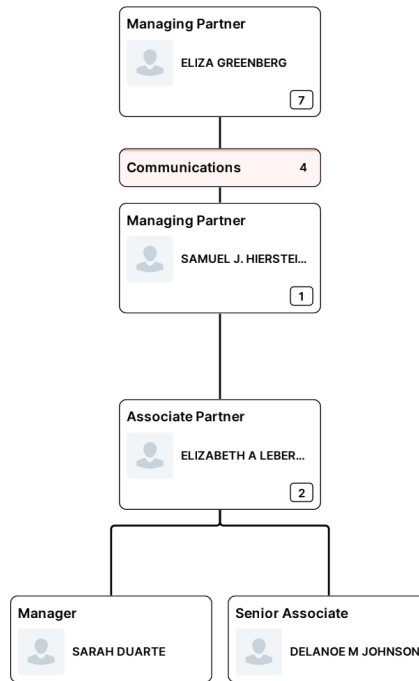
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current org chart 05142020

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VANESSA KIRSCH > ELIZA GREENBERG

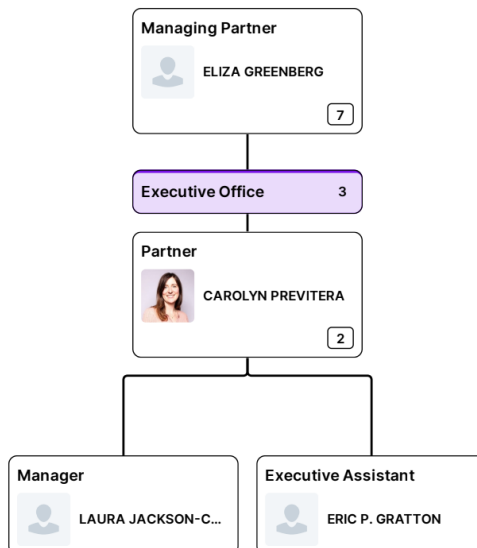
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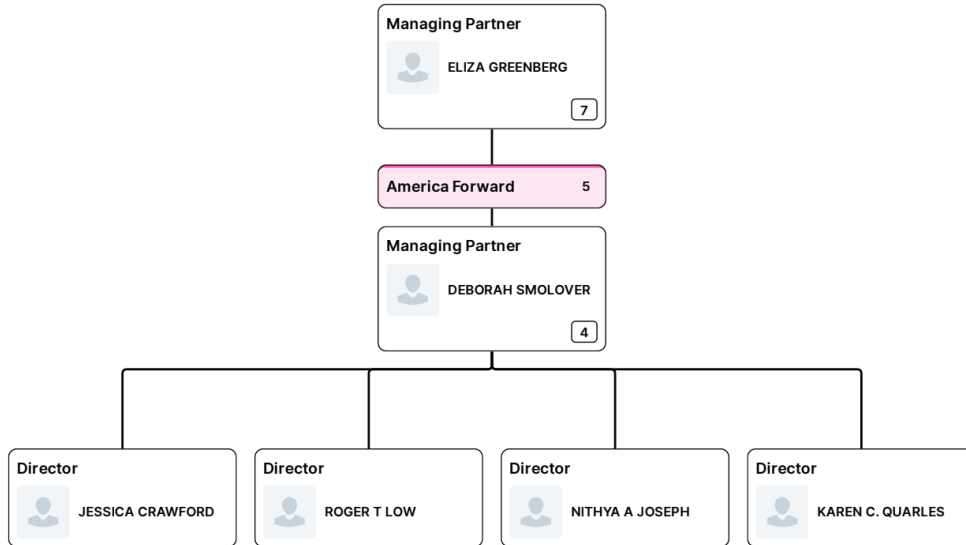


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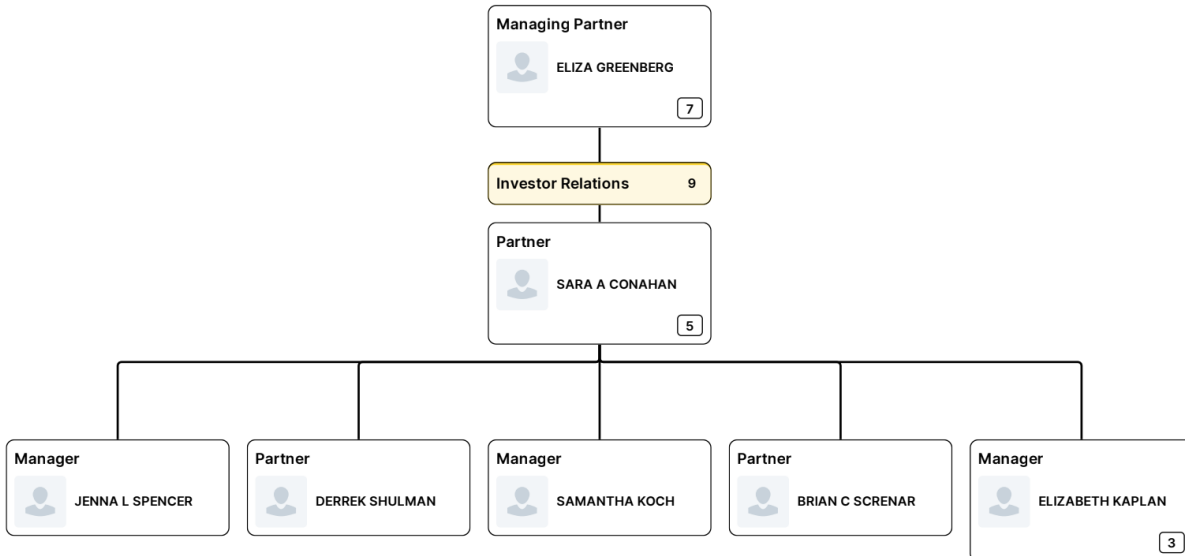
Chief Executive Officer > Managing Partner
VANESSA KIRSCH > ELIZA GREENBERG

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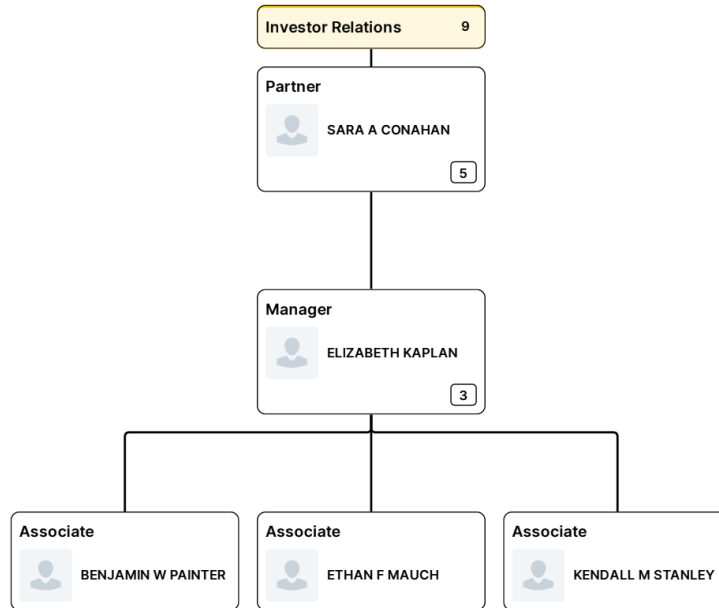
current org chart 05142020



current org chart 05142020

Chief Executive Officer > Managing Partner > Partner
VANESSA KIRSCH > ELIZA GREENBERG > SARA A CONAHAN

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current org chart 05142020

Chief Executive Officer > Managing Partner
VANESSA KIRSCH > ELIZA GREENBERG

Made with
Pingboard



Source: New Profit Organization Chart, accessed May 2020

Appendix M

Modified Wellbeing Investment Selection Work Plan (2020)

	6/8-6/12	6/15-6/19	6/22-6/26	6/29-7/3 and 7/3	7/6-7/10	7/13-7/17	7/20-7/24	7/27-7/31	8/3-8/7	8/10-8/14	8/17-8/21	8/24-8/28	8/31-9/4	9/7-9/11	9/14-9/18	12/7-12/11
Team FTO & other notes																
Team meetings	6/11	6/17	6/26	6/29	7/7	7/14	7/22	7/29	8/4	8/12	8/18	8/27	9/2	9/9		
Prepare LOI																
First Round: Parent Feedback on LOI Ed Team		6/15-6/17	6/25													
Write blog post announcing LOI targeted outreach?)																
LOI blog post posted				7/10												
LOI email blasted out					7/16											
Create Parent Job Descriptions* -learn reviews on 7/7																
Meet with Maya for feedback																
External Announcement to Pilot Funders/Parents																
PAVE Parent Meeting- info session and distribution of JDs																
LOI due date																
Parent 1:1 meetings																
Kim sorts through LOI submissions and organizes them																
First cut based on eligibility criteria																
be rating the wellbeing programmatic question, the programmatic																
Scores due back from NP raters																
Numerical processing of NP rater scores																
the topfalling to the bottom to ask for any objections																
Finalize set of LOIs for reading & ranking; prep for R&R training																
Reading & ranking training for internal NP readers & rankers																
Training sessions) with parents and funders																
Parent Session #1- Purpose, Community-building																
Funder Session- Orienting mindsets and learning stance																
Reading & ranking scores due back from NP readers																
Sort through R&R scores																
Prep for R&R internal discussion meeting																
team debrief/next steps																
Send LOIs to parents and funders																
evaluate them (using a protocol/criteria we will provide)																
input collection TBD)																
Screening by NP and PAC (?)																
September 15th: Investment Committee Meeting																
**Add steps for feedback to organizations																
(Post LOI/Screening):																
memo drafting)																
orgs																
accordingly																
November 23: Send memos to board for a vote																
December 7: Board vote complete																
Update parents on voting outcome																
December 15: Deal terms signed																
December 22: First disbursement out																

Source: Wellbeing in Education Team Work Plan, June 2020

Appendix N

Edmondson's Teaming on the Fly

Teamwork on the fly

By Amy C. Edmondson

In today's fast-moving, ultracompetitive global business environment, you can't rely on stable teams to get the work done. Instead, you need "teaming."

Teaming is flexible teamwork. It's a way to gather experts from far-flung divisions and disciplines into temporary groups to tackle unexpected problems and identify emerging opportunities. It's happening now in nearly every industry and type of company.

To "team" well, employees and organizations must embrace principles of **project management**—such as scoping out the project, structuring the group, and sorting tasks by level of interdependence—and of **team leadership**, such as emphasizing purpose, building psychological safety, and embracing failure and conflict.

Those who master teaming will reap benefits. Teaming allows individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, and networks, and it lets companies accelerate the delivery of current offerings while responding quickly to new challenges. Teaming is a way to get work done while figuring out how to do it better.

The Rewards of Teaming

The most challenging attributes of teaming can also yield big organizational and individual benefits.

Multiple functions must work together	People are geographically dispersed	Relationships are temporary	No two projects are alike	The work can be uncertain and chaotic
CHALLENGES				
Conflict can arise among people with differing values, norms, jargon, and expertise.	Time zone differences and electronic communication present logistical hurdles.	People may not have time to build trust and mutual understanding.	Individuals must get up to speed on brand-new topics quickly, again and again.	Fluid situations require constant communication and coordination.
BENEFITS				
ORGANIZATIONAL Innovation from combining skills and perspectives Ability to solve cross-disciplinary problems INDIVIDUAL Boundary-spanning skills Understanding of other disciplines Broader perspective on the business	ORGANIZATIONAL Greater alignment across divisions Better diffusion of the company's culture INDIVIDUAL Familiarity with people in different locations Deeper understanding of different cultures and of the organization's operations	ORGANIZATIONAL More shared experience among colleagues Greater camaraderie across the company INDIVIDUAL Interpersonal skills Extensive network of collaborators	ORGANIZATIONAL Ability to meet changing customer needs INDIVIDUAL Flexibility and agility Ability to import ideas from one context to another	ORGANIZATIONAL Ability to manage unexpected events INDIVIDUAL Project management skills Experimentation skills

Teaming helps individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and networks. And it lets companies accelerate the delivery of current products and services while responding quickly to new opportunities. Teaming is a way to get work done while figuring out how to do it better; it's executing and learning at the same time.

To excel in a complex and uncertain business environment, people need to work together in new and unpredictable ways. That's why successful teaming starts with an embrace of the unknown and a commitment to learning that drives employees to absorb, and sometimes create, new knowledge while executing.

Source: (Edmondson, 2012)

Appendix O

Education Team Motivational Survey (2020 Wellbeing Launch)

As an Education Team, what's our purpose for bringing parent voice into the review process?

6 responses

Parent empowerment is or should be central to our TOA to improve the lives of learners

-To better understand, from the parent perspective, what works and what doesn't. Along with this, what is needed most?

-As parents read LOIs, understand what resonates with them and what doesn't.

-Understand what key questions parents believe are most important for us to dig into during screening and diligence.

Fundamentally, I think of this as part of the process of decolonizing wealth. We have a very small number of people who have built wealth based on a complex but clear set of institutions that enabled a small number of people to build and maintain wealth. And, to be clear, the majority of our donor base are those people and they are well-intentioned in their desire to give. Yet they - and we - are often not proximate to the immediate needs of communities, particularly those that have been systematically left out of that wealth-creating scope. So - to me, this is about bringing the community into our process and a very real and meaningful way.

More specifically, I would say that we value proximity as expertise, so bringing in parents, as experts in their children and the needs of their communities, feels spot on.

Finally, related to the two things above, I see this as an opportunity to start to drive systemic change not only by us leading on this (and publishing/sharing about it) but also by us engaging a set of funders in this

Why is this important to us?

6 responses

Giving privilege and lifting voices of the people who are most proximate to a cornerstone of our work.

-Parents are one of the best sources of information about what works for kids in education, and we haven't done enough to access parent expertise on this topic in the past.

-Parents are the most proximate to students our grantees serve. It is critical for us to understand their perspectives and input on the funding decisions we make.

-The value parents see in a prospective grantee's model or solution can be a good indicator of the enthusiasm they might have for it and the degree to which they might push school administrators to buy into the model. This can have implications for the ability of the potential grantee to grow and scale its model.

I think I answered this above - but summarizing:

--decolonizing wealth - both systemically and internally at New Profit

--getting to better decisions on where to invest

New Profit cannot claim to be an anti-racist or social-justice organization without critically examining how we make decisions, too often void of stakeholder voice. I hope that in our near future, every LOI process is led by stakeholders closest to the communities with whom we seek to engage and that continue to be paid for their work.

For families, what is the value proposition for engaging with us?

6 responses

I think there could be a few things - but I highly recommend talking with Maya Martin about this and seeing what resonates with her:

--Impacting how philanthropy is spent at New Profit

--Impacting how New Profit approaches investment selection

--Impacting how other funders view the assets communities bring and potentially how they spend money

--Creating a new way of working for the field

--Building some skills around investment selection that they could use at New Profit and to support other funders

While I think it's important to offer financial compensation, I don't want to make this part of the value proposition because it can undermine motivation and pervert the process.

All families and community members care deeply about their children and communities. The barrier to entry is not families but those in power including well-intentioned non-profits. I believe it's about opening the possibility through true co-creation, authentic partnership and compensating people for their labor.

Very concretely - I hope we pay parents to engage and that this can be a resume builder (Grantmaking advisor to New Profit). Additionally, value in that they are able to help direct funding towards solutions that they see as highly valuable and hopefully would benefit from in their own communities directly or indirectly

What do we hope to learn and act on as a result of this engagement?

5 responses

Test

1. What parents see as important in their lives and the lives of their learners. 2. New ways to build authentic relationship with those proximity

I think we at New Profit can sometimes get "too set in our ways" about how to do investment selection, and I think including parents will open up many lines of inquiry and questions that we would not have otherwise considered. I think including parents will test our assumptions and push us to adapt our investment selection process in meaningful, and hopefully long-lasting, ways.

--Would love to modify the IS process on the back end of this based on feedback from the parents involved. There's a lot to improve and I think this, along with our Equity Audit, will be coming at a great time for us to make some wholesale changes to our process.

I imagine we will learn a lot about the accessibility of our own content and criteria and will likely question some of our own orthodoxies. My hope is we learn through this some emerging practices around how to engage families/students/beneficiaries in decisionmaking going forward for future investment rounds.

Is there anything outside the scope of questions that you are wondering or that you'd like to share?

6 responses

Why is New Profit best positioned to do this work? What groups will we partner with? Our POV re: when we will lead and when we will follow.

No -- I am really excited about this!

just that i LOVE the idea of parents having veto rights (which you know)

I would love to think about how we are extending this model of true parent power and stakeholder engagement across the entire organization.

We have tried to do this in light ways in the past with mixed success. I would point to the PL process where we had a parent/educator group interview the SEs and then they were not actually decisionmakers they were just input. I think there is a question with regard to how we would weigh/integrate the POV of parents. For example, if the parent group has strong disagreement with our readers - how would we handle that? we need to be clear about the role and processes going in so people don't have mismatched expectations and I would expect some tensions (not in a bad way but helpful/learning way) will emerge. Happy to speak more about the PL process from what I recall and I also did some work with YouthBuild awhile ago for their students to be readers which didn't come to fruition due to some timing elements but got some good feedback from their program manager around the required training, etc.

Source: Anonymous Education Team Motivational Survey Responses, June 2020

Appendix P

Early Draft PAC Strategic Proposal



Parent Advisory Council Strategy Proposal

Document Summary

In the summer of 2020, New Profit's Education Portfolio Team launched an investment cycle that focused on funding wellbeing support for youth, educators and communities. This investment cycle was particularly exciting as it marked the inaugural launch of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The PAC is a consortium of parents from the Washington, DC based community-based organization, Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE). PAVE is a former New Profit grantee partner.

Below we have shared a bit about our purpose, what we learned, and considerations for where we home to take this strategy and engagement in the future.

Our Purpose:

Our Wellbeing Investment Selection Team desired to partner with proximate constituents, in this case parents, to help us determine which organizations were poised to tackle the multiple pandemics (COVID-19, racial injustice, social injustice) facing our country. Our team understood and respected the relationships that parents have as the earliest teachers and role models for our nation's children. Working with a former grantee partner, the team created an advisory body and partnered with a small group of parents to provide input into potential investment candidates.

Insights from the PAC Experience

Though we led the work with the PAC through a collaboration with a community-based organization, we do not believe that we should be the authority in this work. New Profit values proximity as expertise and understands the value that lived experiences of community members bring to this work. To this end, The Education Team envisions itself as a viable support role for current or prospective community-based organizations to lead the charge as we work together to scale this approach and the learnings therein for greater impact. Below we have shared a few insights from our time together with the PAC followed by a subsequent proposal.

Insights:

- a. **Be clear in roles and responsibilities-** use a decision-making framework to inform how decisions are made across stakeholders. Ensure that stakeholders have an opportunity to provide input and question the framework and how it might look in practice. **Be prepared to honestly respond to stakeholder queries regarding decision-making and power.**
- b. **Trust community decisions.**
- c. Plan for **learning conversations and courageous conversations** as you go deeper into the work across communities and stakeholders.
- d. **Be prepared to support community decisions that may divert from organizations goals.**

- e. Show appreciation by **funding the work. Ensure that compensation systems for stakeholders are easy to navigate.** Compensation at or above market rate is a best practice.
- f. **Lead with love.** This work is highly relational and requires a liaison between New Profit and stakeholder groups that is amicable and flexible in order to cultivate trust and navigate through the relationship management and tactical deliverables for the group at a pace consistent with the needs of all parties.
 - i. On the organizational side, this may require the creation of a “PAC Liaison” position to manage this work through formal staffing as a contracted position or an in-role promotion for a current New Profit staffer.

Strategic Proposal

1) Train the Trainer Model:

A New Profit PAC Liaison from the Education Portfolio Team will train 1-2 parent leader(s) from PAVE (preferred but not required) in the methods and approaches to co-leading constituent engagement in an upcoming investment selection cycle as a means of ceding power and distributing leadership across the Education Team and respective constituent advisory body.

The PAC Liaison’s role is to build leadership capacity within constituent leaders by:

- providing guidance and sharing leadership norms,
- revisiting / orienting the constituent leaders to New Profit’s investment selection approach,
- offering opportunities for constituent leaders to co-create, share feedback, and iterate on process improvements.

Constituent leader’s (i.e., parents) in turn will build capacity within their respective advisory body and community-based organization more broadly by:

- practicing and sharing leadership principles,
- Sharing norms around process,
- co-leading their peers through an investment selection process,
- collaborating in the creation of materials (1-pagers, surveys, etc) for the advisory group

2) Establish an Independent Advisory Council

A New Profit PAC Liaison would support the community-based organization (CBO) partner in the creation of an Independent Advisory Council (IAC) intended to act as a consultative body for other philanthropic players in the market (i.e., family foundation, individuals, small- large sized philanthropies) that are actively exploring/implementing constituent voice into their respective processes. Below, is a high-level vision for what this engagement might look like:

The PAC Liaison’s role is to serve as a relationship manager / connector between for philanthropic sector counterparts and CBO partners by:

- serving as a trainer for the CBO partner (similar to the train the trainer approach in strategy #1 and,
- sharing New Profit resources (i.e., pro bono service offerings with Monitor Deloitte) with CBO and IAC to support capacity building. A couple of possible areas of support are listed below:
 - Pricing strategy for a fee for service approach
 - Developing sustainable models

The CBO and IAC's role is to act as an independent service provider by:

- providing consultative to philanthropic organizations seeking to implement participatory processes,
- managing service contracts between IAC and philanthropic clients. CBO leadership manages service contract,
- Liaising with New Profit on an ad hoc basis, based on need.

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