



STUDY OF THE  
**COLUMBUS FOUNDATION'S**  
INVESTMENT IN THE  
**OHIO BENEFIT BANK™**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND FULL REPORT

PREPARED BY OHIO UNIVERSITY'S  
VOINOVICH SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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- Chris Jacobs, CEO
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## Other Key Stakeholders

- Ralph Gildehaus, Senior Program Director at MDC (former Director of The Ohio Benefit Bank at the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in Ohio)
- Ariel Miller, CEO and Executive Director at Episcopal Community Services Foundation
- Tina Dunphy, Corporation for National and Community Service
- National Council of Churches
- Four representatives from Ohio Benefit Bank sites
- Three representatives from Benefit Banks in other states

## Ohio Benefit Bank Partners and Supporters

### Federal

- Corporation for National and Community Service
- Internal Revenue Service
- Social Security Administration
- United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service

### State of Ohio

- Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
- Ohio Community Service Council
- Ohio Department of Aging
- Ohio Department of Development
- Ohio Department of Education
- Ohio Department of Insurance
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
- Ohio Department of Mental Health
- Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
- Ohio's County Departments of Job and Family Services

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Executive Summary .....	1
Key Findings .....	1
Concluding Points .....	4
Introduction.....	5
Brief History .....	5
Research Questions and Methods .....	9
Guiding Questions.....	9
Methods.....	9
Data Sources .....	9
Data Collection .....	10
Data Analysis .....	10
Findings.....	14
Key Findings for Question 1.....	14
Discussion of Key Findings for Question 1.....	14
Key Findings for Question 2.....	16
Discussion of Key Findings for Question 2.....	17
Key Findings for Question 3.....	21
Discussion of Key Findings for Question 3.....	22
Key Findings for Question 4.....	24
Discussion of Key Findings for Question 4.....	25
Key Findings for Question 5.....	27
Discussion of Key Findings for Question 5.....	28
Conclusion and Ideas for Consideration.....	31
Appendix A. Relationship Model .....	33
Appendix B. Systems Change Model.....	35
Appendix C. Best/Effective Practices.....	36



# Executive Summary

In 2013, The Columbus Foundation<sup>1</sup> commissioned Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs to conduct a study of the Foundation's investments in The Ohio Benefit Bank™ (OBB). The intent of the study was to assess the nature of those investments and to identify potential lessons that could inform future investing by the Foundation. Of particular interest was exploring the impact of a new type of funding used with this investment, referred to as Continuous Improvement. This new type of funding involved a shift by the Foundation to making a sustained, multi-year commitment to select organizations, including support for operating expenses and technical assistance from Foundation staff. Another unique aspect of the project is that by supporting OBB it further expanded the reach of the Foundation into a statewide initiative.

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- OBB is a technology-based platform that provides clients with access to a variety of government benefits at a single point in time.
  - The Ohio Association of Foodbanks (the Association) operates the program in Ohio and relies on many partners and sites throughout the state to implement it.
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At the start of the project, researchers conducted an in-person facilitated discussion with six key stakeholders, and then conducted 17 follow-up interviews. The findings from the study are organized around the study's five guiding research questions, which were derived from the sponsor's interests. The analysis also incorporates three supplementary frameworks: a relationship model, a systems change model, and a literature review of best/effective practices in grantmaking. This executive summary presents the key findings from the study and discusses ideas for consideration. A full report follows it. A separate four-page summary is also available (see the Foundation's website: [www.columbusfoundation.org](http://www.columbusfoundation.org).)

## Key Findings

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### 1. Did the relationship between The Columbus Foundation and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks demonstrate the characteristics of a good partnership between a foundation and its grantee?

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- The relationship between the Foundation and the Association demonstrated many characteristics of a strong partnership, including two core elements assessed in this study: having shared goals and having a productive relationship.
  - The Foundation and the Association's goals regarding the OBB initiative had a high degree of fit, and the two groups had a shared definition of success. Both

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<sup>1</sup> The Columbus Foundation is a community foundation serving donors and communities primarily in central Ohio as a charitable trust and nonprofit corporation.

groups also agreed that the initiative would transform the way Ohioans in need could access tax credits and potential work supports.

- The two organizations had a very productive relationship. The Foundation took great care not to impose excessive burdens on the Association, and, in addition to monetary investments, contributed a great deal of non-financial resources. The Foundation's endorsement of the initiative also added credibility to the effort.
- The best practices exemplified by the Foundation with this research question include:
  - Educating and engaging donors
  - Identifying community issues
  - Reducing the application and reporting burden on grantees
  - Providing technical assistance to grantees
  - Convening community leaders, nonprofits or other funders doing similar work

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## **2. Did the Foundation's investments in the Association help OBB achieve its stated goals?**

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- OBB is widely regarded as a highly successful initiative, and is held up as a national model. The Columbus Foundation's investments in OBB clearly exceeded the goals set at the outset of the investment. Among the factors contributing to this success were:
  - A shared understanding of the necessity for a larger systems change to assist Ohioans in need.
  - A strong, multi-sector partnership formed early on around this common goal. Pivotal roles were played by four sectors, including key initial stakeholders in philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, the private sector, and the government sector. From the literature on sustainable change, this partnership arrangement forged three of the critical building blocks of systemic change.
  - The Foundation's launch of its Continuous Improvement funding. This provided the Association with more flexible grant dollars, including longer-term operating support, and non-monetary resources such as technical assistance and access to donors and other grantees. Notably, the stability from the operating support freed the Association to focus on strategy, piloting, and program implementation.
    - Stakeholders referred to the early investments by the Foundation as "catalytic" and applauded the foundation's encouragement of those risks.
    - Stakeholders noted that the Foundation managed the project in an extremely open, non-prescriptive manner.
- The best practices exemplified by the Foundation with this research question include:
  - Providing general operating support
  - Providing multi-year support
  - Providing capacity-building support
  - Educating and engaging donors in identifying and addressing community issues
  - Engaging in continuous learning and dissemination of lessons learned
  - Engaging stakeholders at key decision-making moments

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### **3. Has the Association extended the reach of the Foundation's initial investments? If so, what role has The Columbus Foundation's investment played in this extension?**

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- The Association has clearly extended the reach of the Foundation's initial investment.
  - Since 2006, the Foundation has invested over \$3 million dollars in support of OBB. Since then, OBB has extended into all 88 Ohio counties, established partnerships with over a thousand community and faith-based organizations, and helped over half a million Ohioans claim potential work supports worth over \$1 billion dollars. These supports include earned income and education tax credits; nutrition, health, child care, and home energy assistance; student financial aid; supplemental security income/social security disability insurance (SSI/SSDI); and veterans' education and training benefits.
  - A key type of leveraging by the Association has been to use the Foundation's investments as matching funds. This practice has allowed them to secure additional resources such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's outreach reimbursement (through the United States Department of Agriculture), and AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers (through the Corporation for National and Community Services).
- The Foundation played a key role in financially supporting the Association, which in turn allowed substantial public advocacy and policy changes to occur in support of OBB. More clarity by the Foundation could be helpful related to advocacy and leveraging.
- The best practices exemplified by the Foundation with this research question include:
  - Providing technical assistance to grantees and other charitable nonprofits
  - Providing capacity-building support

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### **4. How have the Foundation and the Association assured that the impact of the Foundation's investment will persist beyond the funding term?**

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- OBB appears to have become an integral part of Ohio's safety net for vulnerable persons, and appears well-positioned for continued growth.
- The capacity of the Foundation and the Association has grown substantially over the years, which positions the Association (and OBB) to continue their work successfully.
- Evidence of several sustaining forces for OBB include: routinized relationships (e.g., between OBB and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services), enacted policy changes (e.g., electronic submission and categorical eligibility), and permanent OBB-related staffing positions. OBB sites have reported the program to be highly sustainable.
- The best practices exemplified by the Foundation with this research question include:
  - Providing capacity-building support
  - Providing general operating support
  - Providing multi-year support
  - Providing technical assistance to grantees

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## 5. As a result of the investment in OBB, how might the Foundation proceed with future investments (both with regard to the Association and other grantees)?

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- Lessons learned from this investment include: the value of multi-sector partnerships for effecting system change, the rewards of selective risk-taking, and the ability of a foundation to invest successfully in a technology-related project.
- Possible ideas for future funding of the Association include: continuation of yearly funding, a matching grant through a funders' collaborative to increase investors, a transitional grant to disseminate lessons learned, and/or a sustainability planning grant.
- Other potential areas of future investment for the Foundation include: co-location of physical and behavioral health, Purpose-Built Communities, ASSET Initiative for Families with Young Children, and a general convening of community organizations with the express purpose of sparking ideas that the Foundation could help bring to fruition.

## Concluding Points

The partnership between The Columbus Foundation and Ohio Association of Foodbanks was extraordinarily successful. Both held a high degree of shared goals, and had a highly productive relationship. The Foundation provided generous monetary investments and, of equal importance, invaluable non-monetary support. The relatively hands-off, yet still highly involved management approach by the Foundation proved especially effective. The Association, for its part, showed remarkable talent in garnering public sector funding and nonprofit support through its strong advocacy skills. The Association credits the Foundation's presence with helping to mainstream the Association's advocacy. Although this was a mutual risk, it also demonstrates a clear commitment of the Foundation to empower others and grow organizational capacity. All of these elements have resulted in a highly successful and sustainable project.

The multi-sector partnership that developed in Ohio is by far one of the more unique attributes of the project. Among the four sectors, they shared a common goal of systems change, and all played crucial roles in effecting that transformation. This, in turn, resulted in Ohio becoming a flagship model, where other states have struggled. Two areas for potential reflection emerged, including expectations around leveraging and advocacy. The literature identifies both as critical to sustainability, although this project demonstrates they need not occur across all settings for success. Nonetheless, more upfront and ongoing dialogue with grantees could be beneficial.

Many stakeholders described features of the project as serendipitous, and to some extent believe that the success would be hard to replicate. Of particular concern was the likelihood of finding a combination of the following features: highly talented leadership, willing participants from across a variety of sectors, participants willing to take risks, and participants with truly shared goals that were consistent with their home organization's missions. Nonetheless, most stakeholders concluded that this combination of factors, while rare, would not be impossible to replicate. Finally, the value of a multi-sector partnership, the importance of selective risk-taking, and the impact of non-monetary support from the Foundation are all lessons that can inform future investments by the Foundation.

# Introduction

In 2013, The Columbus Foundation contracted with Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs to conduct a study of the Foundation's investments in The Ohio Benefit Bank™ (OBB) over a period of years. The primary intent of the study was to assess the nature of those investments, and to identify potential lessons that could inform future investing by the Foundation. The Foundation was interested in exploring the impact of a new type of funding used with this investment, referred to as Continuous Improvement.<sup>2</sup>

Researchers conducted an in-person facilitated discussion with six key stakeholders at the outset of the project, and subsequently held one-on-one interviews with 17 individuals. The key findings from the study are presented in this report. They are organized around five guiding research questions, which were derived from the primary interests of the sponsor.

## Brief History

During the facilitated discussion, stakeholders suggested including a historical account of the development of OBB. The information below provides that synopsis with an emphasis on some of the early aspects of how the initiative began in Ohio. A date-specific timeline is also available starting on page 8 of this report.

The Benefit Bank® online service (TBB™) is a technology-based platform started by Solutions for Progress, Inc. in 2002 with the goal of reducing poverty, and helping families achieve self-sufficiency. TBB provides clients with a way to access a wide variety of government benefits at a single point in time—ones that would otherwise require multiple, time-consuming application processes. Trained counselors guide clients through a series of questions to determine eligibility for tax credits, a variety of work support programs and other benefits. The net result of this process includes prepared tax returns, an assessment of potential eligibility for benefits, and the filing of multiple applications for benefits.

As Solutions for Progress developed TBB, the National Council of Churches (NCC), under the leadership of its General Secretary at the time, the Reverend Bob Edgar, received a federal grant, and a Philadelphia-based organization received a small grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This allowed Solutions for Progress to begin testing TBB and in 2004, the group approached Ohio as a possible demonstration state. The Episcopal Community Services of Ohio served as the first organizational home in developing TBB within the state, and soon after

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<sup>2</sup> The Columbus Foundation is a community foundation serving donors and communities primarily in central Ohio as a charitable trust and nonprofit corporation.

suggested it be housed within the Ohio Association of Foodbanks.<sup>3</sup> The Association also secured initial support for this work from departmental leadership in the Taft Administration.

About the same time, in 2005, Rev. Edgar contacted Ralph Gildehaus, who had worked for Rev. Edgar during his service in the United States Congress, about strategies for securing operational funding to launch OBB. Mr. Gildehaus and John Briscoe, National Council of Churches, met in February of 2006 with the United Way of Central Ohio, the Neighborhood House, the policy director of the gubernatorial campaign of Ted Strickland, and Emily Savors from The Columbus Foundation.

In late 2006, the Foundation issued a Critical Need Alert to its donors regarding the initiative. The Foundation offered a dollar-for-dollar match of up to \$100,000 for the project. Foundation donors exceeded expectations, and the Foundation invested a total of \$213,500.

At this point, a full array of partners comprised a unique multi-sector partnership. These included a philanthropic organization (The Columbus Foundation), nonprofit organizations (Ohio Association of Foodbanks, along with the NCC and Episcopal Community Services), a private sector company (Solutions for Progress), and the government sector (Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in Ohio (GOFBCI)). Over time, the number of partners from each of these sectors would grow (see acknowledgements page), including VISTA volunteers from a pivotal grant from Ohio's State Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

After the initial year, the Foundation decided to continue investing in OBB, and provided funds to continue its expansion. In 2008, The Columbus Foundation launched a new initiative, referred to as Continuous Improvement, and the Association became one of the first recipients of this type of award. As mentioned elsewhere, a key feature of the Continuous Improvement investment was providing sustained, multi-year support to a grantee with flexibility to cover different types of expenditures, including operating support, and also offering technical assistance by Foundation staff. Between 2009 and 2012, the Foundation invested over \$1.5 million through its Continuous Improvement awards.

Over the years, the Association appreciated the flexible, yet stable, funding provided by the Foundation and used it for operating support, expanding staff support, matching funding for AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, testing ways to improve and innovate the initiative, expanding the suite of benefits being assessed, training OBB sites, offering technical assistance to other states considering implementing the initiative, and commissioning an economic impact assessment and evaluation of the program. In 2013, the five-year Continuous Improvement cycle wrapped up, but the Foundation decided to continue supporting the initiative. It was transitioned to the Foundation's Traditional Grant application process, in the area of basic needs. When combined with donor support, the investment reached over \$3 million over a seven-year period.

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of The Columbus Foundation's initial investment, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks was known as the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks. For simplicity's sake, the organization is referred to as the Ohio Association of Foodbanks or the Association throughout this document.

## Figure 1. Timeline of The Ohio Benefit Bank

- 2002 – Solutions for Progress, Inc. begins development of The Benefit Bank online service (TBB).
- 2004 – The National Council of Churches (NCC) receives funding from a federal grant to develop TBB in various states.
- NCC works with Ariel Miller of Episcopal Community Services to learn about efforts to expand TBB to Ohio, and to serve as initial host. Ultimately, Ms. Miller contacts Lisa Hamler Fugitt at the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (now the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, herein referenced as the Association) and the two groups begin working to develop the TBB model in Ohio.
- 2005 – The NCC asks Ralph Gildehaus to help secure support for OBB.
- 2006 – Gildehaus approaches The Columbus Foundation to discuss funding for OBB.
- The Association becomes the lead organization of OBB.
  - The Columbus Foundation issues a Critical Need Alert, and makes an initial investment of \$213,500 in the OBB initiative.
  - Governor Bob Taft signs letter of support for the Association's first AmeriCorps VISTA grant.
  - The Ohio State Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service begins awarding AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers to the Association.
  - The Association has 50 operational sites by the year's end.
- 2007 – Governor Ted Strickland takes office, and names Gildehaus as Director of The Ohio Benefit Bank in the GOFBCI.
- With bipartisan support, funding is provided from the state budget. The Association enters into a contract with the GOFBCI to operate OBB.
  - The Association and GOFBCI conduct 14 community events across Ohio, attended by more than 1,200 people, to inform faith-based and community-based organizations about the opportunity to serve as OBB sites.
  - The Association's new OBB Regional Coordinators, placed with Regional Food Banks within the Association's network, work to recruit organizations as sites. The Association's AmeriCorps VISTA members train volunteers and staff from those organizations to serve as counselors.
  - The Association, GOFBCI, Solutions for Progress and others work with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to coordinate the benefits application process between OBB and ODJFS.
  - OBB expands to 201 sites statewide and serves approximately 7,000 people.
- 2008 – The Association and GOFBCI sponsor public service announcements, provide information, and negotiated partnerships/collaborations with a wide variety of state agencies and entities, including ODJFS, Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, Ohio Department of Youth Services, Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addition Services, Ohio Treasurer's Office, Ohio Foreclosure Prevention Task Force, Interagency Council on Homelessness and Affordable Housing, and Ohio Poverty Commission.
- The Association is awarded Ohio's first USDA Food Stamp Outreach Grant.
  - The Columbus Foundation issues a multi-year award to the Association through its Continuous Improvement funding (to run from 2009 through 2012).
  - The Eligibility Gateway is launched, linking OBB sites with ODJFS offices. Electronic submission of applications for Food Stamps and Medicaid begins in December.

- Ohio University issues a report on the economic impact of OBB (commissioned by the Association with funding from The Columbus Foundation): [http://www.thebenefitbank.org/sites/default/files/OhioUniv\\_OBB.pdf](http://www.thebenefitbank.org/sites/default/files/OhioUniv_OBB.pdf).
- 2009 – OBB begins using electronic signatures on applications for Food Stamps and Medicaid.
- The Mobile Express van begins traveling throughout Ohio to bring OBB to areas of need.
  - The Association provides technical support to many states considering adopting TBB.
  - The “Enhanced Site” model (linking OBB and ODJFS caseworkers) begins to be replicated outside of Franklin County.
  - OBB qualifies clients for more than an estimated \$150 million in tax credits and potential work supports; 54,873 individuals are served; and 487 new OBB sites are developed.
- 2010 – The Foundation funds the installation of a new telephone system to help OBB better process the increasing call volume to its help line.
- The Association begins partnership with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections to train and place OBB counselors in prisons and pre-release centers.
  - The Association begins processing supplemental security income/social security disability insurance (SSI/SSDI) applications.
  - OBB Self-Serve edition is launched to expand services; ohiobenefits.org is also launched.
  - The Ohio Department of Education partners to incorporate National School Lunch Program Application into OBB, and expands direct certification of child nutrition programs.
  - The Columbus Foundation issues a Critical Need Alert, which helps raise nearly \$400,000 to support the programming of the veterans’ education benefits into OBB.
  - OBB qualifies clients for more than an estimated \$192 million in tax credits and potential work supports; almost 80,000 individuals are served; and 342 new OBB sites are developed.
  - Ohio University issues a report from a study of the impact of OBB (commissioned by the Association with funding from The Columbus Foundation): <http://columbusfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/OBB-Full-Report-FINAL.pdf>.
- 2011 – Governor John Kasich continues support of OBB, and funds expansion through GOFBCI.
- OBB qualifies clients for more than an estimated \$174 million in tax credits and potential work supports; 87,885 individuals served; 252 sites developed; 1,759 counselors trained.
- 2012 – The Continuous Improvement grant funding from the Foundation ends. The Association resumes applying for funding under the Foundation’s Traditional Grant process.
- OBB qualifies clients for more than an estimated \$230 million in tax credits and potential work supports; 102,362 individuals are served; 400 sites are developed; and 1,872 counselors trained.
- 2013 – The Foundation continues investing in OBB, and part of the funding is designated to develop an OBB tablet application.
- The Foundation commissions Ohio University to conduct a study of the investments made in OBB over the years.
  - OBB qualifies clients for more than an estimated \$250 million in tax credits and potential work supports; 107,153 individuals are served; 271 sites are developed; and 1,883 counselors trained.

# Research Questions and Methods

This project explored investments made in OBB by The Columbus Foundation from the start of funding in 2006 through late 2013. In particular, the Foundation was interested in reflecting on the nature of a multi-year, large-scale, statewide commitment such as the one they made with OBB. While OBB has been widely heralded as a success and recognized as a national model, the Foundation was interested in identifying those features of its investment in OBB that contributed to its success and how it could be replicated in future investments.

## Guiding Questions

The following questions guided the research into The Columbus Foundation's investment in OBB:

1. Did the relationship between The Columbus Foundation and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks demonstrate the characteristics of a good partnership between a foundation and its grantee?
2. Did The Columbus Foundation's investments in the Ohio Association of Foodbanks help OBB achieve its stated goals?
3. Has the Ohio Association of Foodbanks extended the reach of The Columbus Foundation's initial investments? If so, what role has The Columbus Foundation's investment played in this extension?
4. How have The Columbus Foundation and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks assured that the impact of the Foundation's investment will persist beyond the funding term?
5. As a result of the investment in OBB, how might The Columbus Foundation proceed with future investments (both with regard to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks and other grantees)?

## Methods

The study of The Columbus Foundation's investment in OBB included a document review, literature review, a day-long facilitated discussion with principal stakeholders, and a series of phone interviews with these and other stakeholders.

### *Data Sources*

This study drew on qualitative interview data provided by stakeholders from the following organizations:

- The Columbus Foundation (three individuals)
- The Ohio Association of Foodbanks (four individuals)
- Solutions for Progress (two individuals)
- Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (one individual)

- Episcopal Community Services Foundation (one individual)
- Corporation for National and Community Services (one individual)
- Ohio Benefit Bank sites (four individuals)
- Benefit Bank sites in other states (three individuals)

In a couple of cases, an individual was no longer with the stakeholder organization listed. They were then asked to answer the questions based on their experience while they were at the former organization.

### *Data Collection*

Initially, the research team conducted a day-long facilitated discussion with six key stakeholders who were identified by The Columbus Foundation and the Association as having played an instrumental role in the initial implementation of OBB. For this discussion, the evaluation team created a standardized open-ended interview protocol.

After these discussions, researchers conducted one-on-one interviews with 17 individuals. The interviews ranged from 11 to 61 minutes with an average length of 36 minutes. Interviews were conducted with individuals representing the organizational stakeholders listed in the data sources above. For these interviews, the evaluation team created 14 additional standardized, open-ended interview protocols.

### *Data Analysis*

The facilitated discussion and interviews were recorded and transcribed. They were then entered into MAXQDA qualitative analysis software for data management. Evaluators coded the data based on an *a priori* coding scheme (informed mainly by the question categories previously outlined and by the partnership framework described below). All transcripts were coded by at least two coders in order to reduce the possibility of researcher bias.<sup>4</sup> Next, evaluators compared their coding results, and refined categories into an emergent coding scheme.<sup>5</sup> For coding categories that included subjective terms such as “good,” “bad,” “high,” or “low,” evaluators calculated inter-coder reliability scores. Triangulation among analysts continued until inter-coder reliability equaled or exceeded 90 percent.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

<sup>5</sup> Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.; Holton, J. (2007). “The coding process and its challenges” in Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

<sup>6</sup> Patton (2002) defines analyst triangulation as “having two or more persons independently analyze the same qualitative data and compare their findings.” Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

### Supplementary Frameworks

Researchers drew on three additional frameworks to provide depth to the analysis, to supply coding terms for the issues of partnership and systems change, and to identify best or effective practices that were implemented by the Foundation through its investment in OBB.

### Relationship Model

To operationalize the concept of the relationship between an investor (donor) and grantee, researchers used a framework provided by Tierney and Steele.<sup>7</sup> This framework identifies the two key dimensions of relationships between donors and grantees as shared goals and a productive relationship. For *shared goals*, investors and grantees must have a shared definition of success, and a shared understanding of how that success will be achieved. For a *productive relationship*, investors must work to reduce the cost of their donated capital (e.g., by avoiding placing excessive reporting burdens on the grantee), and to add value to the project beyond the value of the invested capital (e.g., by facilitating introductions to other funders or raising awareness of the grantee organization). Tierney and Steele use these two dimensions of shared goals and productive relationships to generate a typology of relationships as depicted below in Figure 2.<sup>8</sup> See Appendix A for more details about the partnership framework.

**Figure 2. Tierney and Steele’s Donor-Grantee Relationship Model**

Shared Goals	High	Forced March	Partnership
	Low	Train Wreck	Amiable Association
		Low	High
		Productive Relationship	

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<sup>7</sup> Other frameworks for assessing relationships between grantees and investors also exist, such as the one described by Patton et al. (2004). The framework provided by Tierney and Steele was selected because of its clear operationalization, and because it is consistent with what the rest of the literature identifies as salient features of investor-grantee relationships. Patton, M.Q., Bare, J., & Bonnet, D.G. (2004). “Building strong foundation-grantee relationships” in Braverman, M. T., Constantine, N. A., & Slater, J. K., eds. (2004) *Foundations and evaluation: Context and practices for effective philanthropy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass: 76-95.

<sup>8</sup> Tierney, T. & Steele, R. (2010). “The donor-grantee trap: How ineffective collaboration undermines philanthropic results for society, and what can be done about it. A guide for nonprofit leaders, their boards, and their donors.” <http://www.givesmart.org/grantees/The-Donor-Grantee-Trap.aspx> (accessed 1/7/14); See also Tierney, T. & Fleishman, J. L. (2011). *Give smart: Philanthropy that gets results*. New York: Public Affairs.

## Systems Change Model

A key goal of the collaboration between the Foundation and the Association was to effect systems change in the area of benefits' distribution. To conceptualize systems change, evaluators used the Building Blocks of Change model developed by Linkins, Brya, and Chandler, which defines systems change as “changes in organizational culture, policies, and procedures within individual organizations or across organizations that enhance or streamline access and reduce or eliminate barriers to needed services by a target population.”<sup>9</sup> The Building Blocks of Change model identifies five different domains in which activities and changes need to take place in order to create systems change: (1) examining the problem and understanding the need for change; (2) raising visibility and awareness; (3) developing partnerships and collaborations; (4) achieving a sense of collective accountability; and (5) sustaining changes to policies and practices. For more on the Building Blocks of Change model, see Appendix B.

## Best/Effective Practices

Another goal of this study was to identify those features of The Columbus Foundation's investment in OBB that were best or effective practices for grantmaking. To do this, researchers conducted a literature review to identify best or effective practices in community foundation investments in nonprofit organizations.<sup>10</sup> An abbreviated list of best or effective practices compiled through the literature review is on the following page. A complete list is available in Appendix C of this report.

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<sup>9</sup> Linkins, K.W., Frost, L.E., Boober, B., & Brya, J.J. (2013). “Moving from partnership to collective accountability and sustainable change: Applying a systems-change model to foundations' evolving roles.” *Foundation Review*, 5(2), 52-66; Linkins, K. W., Brya, J. J., & Chandler, D. (2008). “The frequent user of health services initiative: Final evaluation report.” Oakland, CA: California Healthcare Foundation, <http://beta.chcf.org/~media/MEDIA%20LIBRARY%20FILES/PDF/F/PDF%20FUHSIEvaluationReport.pdf> (last accessed 2/13/14). Other frameworks for assessing systems change also exist; however, this framework was selected because of its clear operationalization, and consistency with other literature on systems change.

<sup>10</sup> This report adopts the definitions for effective practices and best practices provided by the Compassion Capital Fund National Resource Center (CCFNRC): Effective practice is understood as “a general term used to refer to best, promising, and innovative practices as a whole. This term may also refer to a practice that has yet to be classified as best, promising, or innovative through a validation process.” Best practice is understood to be “a method or technique that has been proven to help organizations reach high levels of efficiency or effectiveness, and produce successful outcomes. Best practices are evidence-based, and proven effective through objective and comprehensive research and evaluation” CCFNRC (2010). Identifying and Promoting Effective Practices. <http://strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/Identifying%20and%20Promoting%20Effective%20Practices.pdf> (last accessed 3/18/14).

Below are select best or effective practices identified from the literature for grantmakers:<sup>11</sup>

- Consider the following strategies beyond own grantmaking to advance the Foundation's mission:
  - Collaborate with others grantors or donors that fund similar work.
  - Provide technical assistance to grantees and other charitable nonprofits.
  - Convene community leaders, nonprofits, and/or other funders doing similar work.
  - Engage in public policy and advocacy on own priority issues, and within the limits of the law.
- Provide general operating support.
- Provide multi-year support.
- Provide capacity-building support.
- Educate and engage donors in identifying and addressing community issues.
- Engage in continuous learning, and disseminate lessons learned.
- Engage stakeholders at key decision-making moments.
- Collaborate with other funders to channel resources to promising approaches.
- Identify community issues.
- Publicly review grantmaking priorities and objectives to help ensure grantmaking remains relevant and responsive.
- Reduce the application and reporting burden on grantees.
- Have an exit strategy that allows the grantee to sustain itself when the Foundation's funding ends.

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<sup>11</sup> Brest, P. & Harvey, H. (2008). *Money well spent: A strategic plan for smart philanthropy*. New York: Bloomberg Press; Brousseau, R. & Ramos, M. (2012). *Leading with core support: An assessment of the Weingart Foundation's core support grantmaking*. Learning Partnerships. <http://www.weingartfnd.org/files/Leading-with-Core-Support.pdf> (last accessed 3/6/14); Community Foundations National Standards Board (2013). *List of Standards* <http://www.cfstandards.org/standards> (last accessed 1/16/14); Edwards, S. (2013). *The benefits of multiyear grantmaking: A funder's perspective*. <http://jimjosephfoundation.org/the-benefits-of-multi-year-grantmaking/> (last accessed 1/9/14); Minnesota Council on Foundations (2009). *Principles for grantmakers: Practice options for philanthropic organizations*. [http://www.mcf.org/system/asset\\_manager\\_pdfs/0000/0927/principles.pdf](http://www.mcf.org/system/asset_manager_pdfs/0000/0927/principles.pdf) (last accessed 3/5/14); McCray, J. (2012). *Is grantmaking getting smarter? A national study of philanthropic practice*. Washington, D.C.: Grantmakers for Effective Organizations; National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) (2009). *Criteria for philanthropy at its best: Benchmarks to assess and enhance grantmaker impact*. [http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/paib-fulldoc\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/paib-fulldoc_lowres.pdf) (last accessed 1/9/14); NCRP (2003). *The core of the matter*. [http://www.ncrp.org/files/The\\_Core\\_of\\_the\\_Matter.pdf](http://www.ncrp.org/files/The_Core_of_the_Matter.pdf) (last accessed 1/9/14).

# Findings

The key findings from the analysis of the qualitative data are presented below. They are organized by the five guiding research questions of the study. A summary of key findings appears first and is followed by information that is more specific from the analysis.

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## **Question 1: Did the relationship between The Columbus Foundation and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks demonstrate the characteristics of a good partnership between a foundation and its grantee?**

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### *Key Findings for Question 1*

- The relationship between The Columbus Foundation and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks very strongly demonstrated many characteristics of good partnerships between community foundations and their grantees.
  - There was a good degree of fit between the Foundation and the Association’s goals regarding the OBB initiative, and the two groups had a shared definition of success.
  - The relationship between the Foundation and the Association was a very productive relationship. The Foundation took great care not to impose excessive burdens on the Association, and contributed a great deal of resources in addition to monetary investments. Some of the additional resources included technical assistance, convening of grantees and donors, and the prestige added by the Foundation’s endorsement of the initiative. Interviewees cited the additional non-monetary resources in particular as an area of strength.
- The best practices exemplified by The Columbus Foundation’s partnership with the Association include:
  - Educating and engaging donors
  - Identifying community issues
  - Reducing the application and reporting burden on grantees
  - Providing technical assistance to grantees
  - Convening community leaders, nonprofits, or other funders doing similar work

### *Discussion of Key Findings for Question 1*

Analysis of the nature of the Foundation’s relationship with the Association was guided by Tierney and Steele’s description of key elements of true partnerships between foundations and their grantees. Specifically, it assessed whether the organizations have the following elements:

- Shared Goals—this assesses whether there is a shared definition of success, and a shared understanding of the strategy needed to achieve it.
- Productive Relationship—this assesses whether the benefits achieved for society as a result of the investment exceed the costs of receiving a foundation’s capital, and whether a foundation adds value to the relationship beyond philanthropic capital.

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*You don't get better partners than them.*

-Ohio Association of Foodbanks

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### *Shared Goals*

Based on interview data, the goals of OBB and the goals of the Foundation were found to be highly compatible. The Foundation has an enduring interest in improving the situation of families with low to moderate incomes, and the core mission of the Association is to provide food and other resources to Ohioans in need. Moreover, the increased financial stability clients may achieve by using OBB could be leveraged into a more stable housing situation, which was one of the Foundation’s four target areas for investment, and also a goal for the Association. The Foundation’s own efforts to identify key issues affecting those in need in the community led to their identification of OBB as a good fit with their mission. Although the Foundation primarily serves central Ohio, their understanding of the project, and how it would be strengthened by spreading throughout the state, made it clear to the Foundation that investing in a statewide project was a good way to meet the needs in the Foundation’s service area. Interviews indicate that this was a fortuitous decision, because had the initiative not extended statewide, the government sector would have had been less interested in the initiative.

### *Shared Vision of How that Success will be Achieved*

The data indicated that both parties understood the goal of OBB’s implementation to be one of the overall systems change in which the nature of accessing government benefits in Ohio would be significantly altered. Grass roots outreach and an innovative technology platform helped forge new partnerships between faith-based organizations, community organizations, and government entities to make a broader range of benefits accessible to Ohioans in need. Both the Foundation and the Association understood that far-reaching changes to practices and policy would have to be made in order for OBB to be truly successful. In interviews, representatives of both the Foundation and the Association spoke about the project consistently in terms of systems change.

Two areas where the organizations showed less shared vision related to some advocacy and leveraging efforts. These areas are discussed in more detail later in the report but, briefly, the differences involved a lack of clarity about the extent to which the Foundation should publicly advocate for political systems change, and some lack of clarity regarding the degree to which the Foundation expected other private dollars to be leveraged as part of the overall strategy.

### *Cost of Capital Does Not Outweigh Benefits to Society*

According to interviewed stakeholders, the Foundation exercised great care to support the activities of the Association, and to allow for experimentation and risk-taking. In particular, the Foundation was careful not to impose requirements that would interfere with the Association’s ability to implement and expand OBB. Application and reporting requirements did not appear burdensome, and the Association reported there were not any excessive costs or burdens associated with receiving the Foundation’s investments. One Association official contrasted the Foundation to other funders, saying others often micromanage while the Foundation does not. Another Association official stressed that, while the Foundation paid a great deal of attention to its investment in OBB, it was the kind of attention that was helpful and not burdensome: “I firmly believe that their participation and attention to some of the details of the project—I am *not* saying that they’ve been overly burdensome or anything—but their attention to details has yielded results.”

### *Donor Adds Value Beyond Monetary Gifts*

Finally, the analysis suggested that The Columbus Foundation was highly successful in adding value beyond monetary donations to the Association. Of particular importance were the convenings of grantees that the Foundation held in order to provide the Association with an audience of potential partners. According to the Association, these convenings were

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*They were the most engaged, hands-off people I have seen.*

-Solutions for Progress

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instrumental in allowing them to generate the networks needed to launch and expand OBB. Another important non-monetary contribution made by the Foundation was the provision of technical assistance by Foundation staff members. Foundation staff members helped recruit nonprofit agencies to serve as OBB sites, communicated with other funders (primarily GOFBCI), and served as an intermediary between the many parties involved in OBB. According to the Association and others involved in the process, the ability to brainstorm with the Foundation, reflect on accomplishments, and discuss next moves was highly valuable to the process. According to one Association official, “They were much more than a funder. They were true partners...I think that we probably wouldn’t be as successful as we are if they weren’t investing more than just money.”

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## **Question 2: Did The Columbus Foundation’s investment in the Ohio Association of Foodbanks help OBB achieve its stated goals?**

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### ***Key Findings for Question 2***

- The Columbus Foundation’s investments in OBB clearly achieved, or exceeded the goals set at the outset of the investment. Among the factors contributing to this success were:
  - The shared understanding that a larger system change was necessary.

- The multi-sector partnership forged in pursuit of the goal of systems change, including The Columbus Foundation, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, Solutions for Progress, GOFBCI, and others.
- The Foundation's initiation of Continuous Improvement funding allowed it to provide the Association with more flexible grant dollars, including longer-term operating support. In addition, the Foundation's willingness to take an open, non-prescriptive approach toward the Association was instrumental.
- A shared goal of systems change and key strategies to build a foundation for that change to occur.
- The best practices that played a role in The Columbus Foundation's work to ensure that the Association would achieve its stated goals include:
  - Providing general operating support
  - Providing multi-year support
  - Providing capacity-building support
  - Educating and engaging donors in identifying and addressing community issues
  - Engaging in continuous learning, and disseminating lessons learned
  - Engaging stakeholders at key decision-making moments

### *Discussion of Key Findings for Question 2*

OBB is widely regarded as a highly successful initiative, and is held up by many as a national model. OBB has spread to all 88 Ohio counties, established partnerships with over a thousand community and faith-based organizations and, to date, has connected over half a million Ohioans to potential work supports and tax credits totaling over one billion dollars.<sup>12</sup> The Columbus Foundation has played a key role in this success for several reasons. First, the Foundation helped the Association secure necessary resources, both monetary and non-monetary. Second, the Foundation did not take a prescriptive approach toward the Association but instead enabled the Association to learn from its experiences and then adapt, experiment, and innovate as needed. Third, the Foundation was one of the key players in the multi-sector partnership that interviewees indicate was a defining feature in the successful launch and expansion of OBB throughout the state. As such, the Foundation provided the necessary catalytic investments that could not be provided by other sectors supporting the project.

### *Have the Appropriate Resources for Goals*

Interviewees indicated that the Foundation ensured that the Association had the necessary resources to launch and expand OBB in several ways. Most important, the Continuous Improvement funding was critical to making that happen. This new type of funding allowed for sustained, multi-year support and included allowable expenses for a type of funding often

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<sup>12</sup> Ohio Association of Foodbanks (2014). Fact Sheet 2.19.2014. <http://www.oashf.org/docs/publications/factsheet.pdf> (last accessed 3/17/14).

exempted by grantmakers: operating expenses. Recent literature often discusses the need for investing in nonprofits and their programming, and promotes the view that operating support is crucial to a nonprofit's ability to innovate, adapt, and avoid the "starvation cycle" that can result from nonprofits' inability to spend enough money on their own overhead.<sup>13</sup> Funding through the Continuous Improvement award also provided stability to the Association because it allowed for multi-year support, which freed the grantee to focus on strategy and program implementation. According to one Association official, "Just knowing there's some stability...will enable us...to move faster. If you have to constantly reapply then wait for a decision, which is what you have to do with many foundations, it can move quite slowly, and you are never sure if you are going to receive those funds. [Continuous Improvement funding] just enabled us to keep moving at lightning speed."

Other ways that the Foundation helped the Association have the appropriate resources to launch and expand OBB were not monetary in nature. The Foundation provided technical assistance with a dedicated staff member, which the Association reported to be quite valuable.

According to one Association official, "Something that worked really well was just sitting down and talking and going over some of the reports with them to really think through, 'Well, if you try this, how is this going to work?'" The Foundation also educated its donors about OBB, its purpose, and its ongoing needs through Critical Need Alerts. While this generated important funding for OBB, it also increased awareness about OBB and its value. Finally, as mentioned earlier, the Association held convenings of its grantees in order to provide the Association with an audience of potential OBB partners. The Association reported this as being highly valuable as well. One official remarked, "Giving us an audience to all of their grantees...just expanded the network exponentially."

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*Every day since that initial investment, we are in awe and truly humbled that you have partnered, that you trusted us enough to make the investment, and that you continue to allow us to innovate because of your commitment to allowing us to test different strategies and models. You are rare, in that funders don't do this.*

-The Ohio Association of Foodbanks

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the value of operating support, see Brousseau, R. & Ramos, M. (2012). Leading with core support: An assessment of the Weingart Foundation's core support grantmaking. Learning Partnerships. <http://www.weingartfnd.org/files/Leading-with-Core-Support.pdf> (last accessed 3/6/14); McCray, J. (2012). Is grantmaking getting smarter? A national study of philanthropic practice. Washington, D.C.: Grantmakers for Effective Organizations; National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (2009). Criteria for philanthropy at its best: Benchmarks to assess and enhance grantmaker impact. [http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/paib-fulldoc\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/paib-fulldoc_lowres.pdf) (last accessed 1/9/14); and National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (2003). The core of the matter. [http://www.ncrp.org/files/The\\_Core\\_of\\_the\\_Matter.pdf](http://www.ncrp.org/files/The_Core_of_the_Matter.pdf) (last accessed 1/9/14). For more on the nonprofit starvation cycle, see Wing, K. & Hager, M. A. (2004). Getting what we pay for: Low overhead limits nonprofit effectiveness. Nonprofit Overhead Cost Project, Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, Urban Institute, Center on Philanthropy, Indiana University. <http://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/Getting-What-We-Pay-For.pdf> (last accessed 3/8/14); and Gregory, A.G. & Howard, D. (2009). The nonprofit starvation cycle. *Stanford Innovation Review* 27. [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the\\_nonprofit\\_starvation\\_cycle/](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_nonprofit_starvation_cycle/) (last accessed 3/8/14).

## *Multi-Sector Partnership*

By far, one of the most distinctive features of OBB is the multi-sector partnership (among the philanthropic, nonprofit, private, and government sectors) that launched and supported the growth of OBB over the years. In particular, the Foundation’s role as a philanthropic agent allowed it to tolerate more experimental approaches to supporting OBB than might have been possible in other sectors. Interviewed stakeholders unanimously credited the Foundation with making a “catalytic investment” that allowed OBB to get started and provide “a proof of concept” that other more risk-averse partners, especially governmental entities, needed. This increased tolerance for risk also allowed the Association to try new things (such as the mobile express and hiring of regional coordinators) and to have the flexibility needed to react immediately to changing circumstances. According to a key governmental stakeholder, this experience serves as an example of how “a foundation can make catalytic investments in emerging social innovation to demonstrate it, incubate it, and bring it to scale.”

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*We each brought something to the table.*

-Ohio Association of Foodbanks

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*Everybody was playing distinct roles from their areas of expertise, which helped. We’re a very balanced team in that regard.*

-Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and  
Community Initiatives

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This more risk-tolerant role of the Foundation could then be blended with roles played by other sectors. For example, government often provides support after proof of a concept has been more established. In the case of OBB, the early success achieved helped earn the support of the Governor and GOFBCI, who became crucial partners in obtaining state funding for OBB, as well as securing the cooperation of ODJFS. In multi-sector partnerships, the nonprofit sector often brings a network of community and faith-based organizations which, in the case of OBB, were all potential OBB sites. In addition, the Association brought skills from a long history of successful public advocacy. The private sector, in this case Solutions for Progress, brought the technology platform that made the whole initiative possible, along with a high degree of technical support, and a deep commitment to helping low-income individuals improve their lives.

It should be noted that, while the philanthropic sector is better *able* to take risks than other sectors, this does not mean that individual philanthropic organizations are necessarily more *willing* to take risks.<sup>14</sup> When talking about the risk taken by the Foundation, one staff member said, “If this had had a different outcome, it’s possible that the Governing Committee and staff...would be more shy about doing that again...by [the Association] doing their work so well, so responsibly and so successfully, it also builds the will, the capacity, the comfort, the courage for The Columbus Foundation to undertake the next one.”

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<sup>14</sup> Millesen, J. & Martin, E. (2013). Community foundation strategy: Doing good and moderating effects of fear, tradition, and serendipity. Published online before print, doi: 10.1144/08997640134861195.

### *Flexible Approach Versus a Prescriptive Model*

When reflecting on their relationship with the Foundation, officials from the Association identified the Foundation as different from other foundations in its willingness to allow the Association to adapt and try new things. According to one Association leader, “Our sheer ability to innovate, test promising practices, most nonprofits would never do that. I think that’s the difference between the success of OBB in Ohio, and its support from The Columbus Foundation.” Many Association officials and other interviewed stakeholders commended the Foundation on its willingness to allow the Association to take risks and experiment with new ideas. They largely attributed the success of OBB to some of the risks it took, examples of which include its initial efforts to collaborate with ODJFS, its experimentation with mobile sites and new partnerships, and its decision to hire regional coordinators in an effort to spread OBB throughout the state.

### *Have the Appropriate Strategy for the Goals*

As mentioned previously, the Foundation and the Association shared an overarching goal of systems change. In terms of strategy, the Foundation helped the Association secure the resources needed for the first three of the “building blocks” (as defined by Linkins, Brya, and Chandler) that are critical components of systems change. (The last two building blocks of systems change, which pertain to sustainability, are discussed in the next research question).

- *Examination of existing practices/understanding of need for change:* As a Foundation that engages in continuous learning about the people it serves and the issues these people face, the Foundation was well positioned to understand the value of OBB, and could therefore articulate the purpose and value of OBB to the larger community.
- *Visibility/Awareness:* As a high profile community organization, the Foundation offered a high degree of credibility with the launch and expansion of OBB. The Foundation’s endorsement of the project opened doors for the Association and others as they sought to secure public support for OBB.
- *Developing partnerships and collaborations:* While the Association and GOFBCI lobbied heavily to secure key collaborations, such as that with ODJFS, the Foundation’s support played a significant role in this as well. As an example, the Foundation funded a pilot program for Enhanced Sites, which allowed OBB sites to connect directly to JFS caseworkers. The Foundation also convened its grantees in order to help the Association forge partnerships with potential OBB sites.

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**Question 3: Has the Ohio Association of Foodbanks extended the reach of The Columbus Foundation's initial investments? If so, what role has The Columbus Foundation's investment played in this extension?**

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***Key Findings for Question 3***

- The Association has extended the reach of The Columbus Foundation's initial investment. OBB has expanded into 88 Ohio counties, established partnerships with over a thousand community and faith-based organizations, and, to-date has assisted over half a million Ohioans claim work supports and tax credits potentially worth over one billion dollars.<sup>15</sup>
  - These supports include earned income and education tax credits; nutrition, health, child care, and home energy assistance; student financial aid; supplemental security income/social security disability insurance (SSI/SSDI); and veterans' education and training benefits.
  - A key type of leveraging by the Association has been to use the Foundation's investments as matching funds. This practice has allowed them to secure additional resources such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's outreach reimbursement (through the United States Department of Agriculture) and AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers (through the Corporation for National and Community Services).
- The Foundation played a vital role in financially supporting the Association, which in turn allowed substantial public advocacy and policy changes to occur in support of OBB. The Foundation and Association appeared to have less shared agreement related to some advocacy efforts and leveraging of the Foundation's investment with other private resources. Moving forward, it will be helpful to include processes that facilitate the development of more private sector funding. The Foundation may also want to review expectations regarding policy and advocacy change, and how it could be supportive of these efforts.
- The best practices exemplified by The Columbus Foundation in this area are:
  - Providing technical assistance to grantees and other charitable nonprofits
  - Providing capacity-building support

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*No grant in our history has had the multiplier effect this one does.*

*-The Columbus Foundation*

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<sup>15</sup> Ohio Association of Foodbanks (2014). Fact Sheet 2.19.2014.  
<http://www.oashf.org/docs/publication/factsheet.pdf> (last accessed 3/17/14).

## Discussion of Key Findings for Question 3

### Leveraging Funding

The Association leveraged the Foundation’s dollars in a number of ways. A key type of leveraging included the use of Foundation dollars as match funding which allowed the Association to successfully expand the program throughout Ohio with the use of AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers. According to a representative of Ohio’s State Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service, “[OBB] is the project that I would hold up as the best example of a VISTA project where we were able to connect the capacity-building [component we seek] and the impact on the low-income community.” The Association was further able to leverage funds by creating a Food Stamps outreach program, and bringing in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program reimbursement from the United States Department of Agriculture. There was also a cascading effect from this type of leveraging. OBB sites reported that, as a result of incorporating OBB into their organizations, they have been able to secure new funding and have partnered with other community agencies to deliver OBB services.

The Association leveraged funding to grow and develop partnerships with community and faith-based organizations across the state of Ohio. They built support for the initiative through a variety of stakeholder development strategies. By building a large number and variety of partnerships across the state, they helped extend the reach of the Foundation, and laid the groundwork for OBB’s long-term sustainability.

It is clear that the Foundation’s investments have been leveraged to attract otherwise un-accessed government funding. Additionally, the Association demonstrated an impressive ability to garner public support for the program. However, less leveraging occurred with other philanthropic and private sources. The Association did obtain other private funding for OBB (e.g., grants from the Gund Foundation, Kresge, and Wal-Mart), but the Foundation was by far the largest and most generous private investor in OBB.

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*This was an upstream investment, to gather more downstream, because if The Columbus Foundation had just taken the money that was given to OBB and given it to low-income families, it wouldn't have been anywhere as near the impact [of] this upstream investment by the Foundation, which did result in leveraging lots of state dollars and federal dollars that wouldn't have been there otherwise.*

-Solutions for Progress

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In interviewing Foundation staff, members themselves expressed a desire to have worked more explicitly on strategies in this area. However, other stakeholders noted the Association’s unique expertise in leveraging public and nonprofit resources, and another stakeholder (not from the Association) explained why it is often hard to bring in other funders on large-scale projects:

I have to tell you, it is very hard to get new foundations onboard, because the learning curve for them is very similar to the learning curve for the first funder. So, when you are busy, how much time do you really have to bring around another foundation? And

another thing I'll say is that there are only so many foundations that can pay a capital investment that is significant enough for this kind of initiative.

Moving forward, The Columbus Foundation may want to work more strategically with grantees to address ways in which more private funding can be leveraged, or to acknowledge a grantee's strengths and weaknesses and adjust mutual expectations accordingly.

Nonetheless, it is evident that this initiative has been successful and will be sustained. The estimated monetary value of the benefits for which OBB clients were qualified far exceeds the financial investments made in OBB. According to one stakeholder, "Early on the total investments, both state and philanthropic, have been repaid 10 and 15 times in the first couple of years." The value of the assistance for which Ohioans have been qualified profoundly exceeds the monetary value of the Foundation's investment in OBB.

### *Advocacy and Policy Impact*

The grantmaking literature suggests that foundations should seek policy change and advocacy efforts as end results to ensure that funded initiatives are sustained. Clearly, the Association has advocated for systems change and impacted policy in significant ways. Inclusion of OBB in the state budget, and securing the cooperation and support of ODJFS are two substantial examples that required a high degree of advocacy and policy expertise. The launch of the E-Gateway, the development of electronic submission and electronic signatures, and the establishment of categorical eligibility for food assistance are other examples of specific policies and processes that have positively changed as a result of OBB and its supporters.

As a primary investor in OBB, the Foundation's monetary investments clearly supported all of these policy successes, as well as non-financial support through efforts such as the convenings that allowed for partnership development. Likewise, during the facilitated discussion and follow-up interviews, parties seemed to agree conceptually with advocacy efforts, but some differences were also detected over the long-term role of government, philanthropy, and private sector for the initiative going forward. It is unclear whether the inherent tension in this situation was ever addressed as explicitly as it could have been. From this experience, it might be worthwhile for the Foundation to reflect on the role that a community foundation can and should play regarding political advocacy, and achieve internal clarity about this as a goal for sustainable results. Despite a lack of full shared agreement in this particular area, the initiative is still poised for continued success and growth.

### *Spread throughout Ohio*

Since its inception, OBB has expanded to be available now in sites throughout all 88 Ohio counties. When asked about factors that facilitated this spread throughout the state, the Association pointed in part to brainstorming sessions with the Foundation, and to strategic risk-taking by the Foundation. For example, technical assistance by the Foundation helped to develop the idea of the Benefit Bank Mobile Express, and funding by the Foundation helped with developing the Mobile Benefit Bank, hiring regional coordinators, and upgrading OBB phone

systems to handle increasing call volume as OBB grew. The Foundation played a vital role in the successful expansion of OBB throughout the state.

### *Spread to Other States*

TBB's spread into other states has been a slower process. The Foundation provided some funds to the Association to offer technical assistance to other states, with the goal of promoting Ohio as a national model that other states could emulate. When talking with TBB implementers in other states and stakeholders at Solutions for Progress, Ohio is consistently cited as an exemplary model. When asked what factors helped facilitate the spread of TBB to other states, respondents often named factors that were transferred or adapted from the Ohio model. These features include having a private donor willing to provide a catalytic investment, having a strong nonprofit affiliate with good connections throughout the state, having support from those holding the most influential office in the state (whether they be central government or county-level), and hiring regional coordinators to facilitate expansion across the state. In particular, respondents stressed the need for a strong nonprofit affiliate, and for a highly supportive source of initial funding to allow TBB to become established in the state. By playing such an instrumental role in the development of the Ohio model, which is being replicated by other states, and by providing funding for the Association to provide technical assistance to other states, the Foundation has supported the expansion of TBB into other states.

Two questions from the Foundation were why more states have not implemented TBB programs and why some states have struggled, especially given Ohio's successes. Interviews indicated a variety of reasons for less national expansion, including government reluctance to invest prior to "proof of concept," skepticism about the program's ability to transfer well to another state, state economies that are unable to produce funding for support, lack of private foundations to support the initiative, resistance from those invested in current or new state government-sponsored technological arrangements, "technology paralysis," sustainable staffing concerns, and, in some cases, a lack of desire to transform how low-income individuals access benefits.

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### **Question 4: How have The Columbus Foundation and the Ohio Association of Foodbanks assured that the impact of the Foundation's investment will persist beyond the term of funding?**

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#### *Key Findings for Question 4*

- OBB has become an integral part of the state's safety net for vulnerable persons, and is highly likely to be maintained far beyond the term of the funding from the Foundation.
- As a result of the Foundation's investment in the Association (and OBB), the capacity of both groups has grown, which positions the Association and OBB to continue its work successfully.

- There are routinized relationships (e.g., between OBB and ODJFS), policy changes in place (e.g., electronic submission and categorical eligibility), and permanent staffing positions that are sustaining forces for OBB. Additionally, OBB sites themselves report that the program is highly sustainable.
- The best practices exemplified by The Columbus Foundation in this area include:
  - Providing capacity-building support
  - Providing general operating support
  - Providing multi-year support
  - Providing technical assistance to grantees

## *Discussion of Key Findings for Question 4*

### *Capacity Growth*

While the Foundation expressed a great deal of respect for the Association’s leadership capacity at the outset of their collaboration, it is evident that the Association’s organizational capacity has been enhanced as a result of investments by the Foundation. Specialization of functions among staff members, including the hiring of a dedicated fiscal coordinator, is a clear indicator of increasing capacity. This capacity-building is not surprising, given the Foundation’s willingness to commit resources toward operating funds, which are crucial for a nonprofit’s ability to develop its own infrastructure. The increased capacity has placed the Association in a better position to continue their work as the lead organization of OBB.

The capacity of OBB as a system itself has clearly grown too as a result of investments by the Foundation. Examples of how the investments have been utilized include improvements to infrastructure such as upgrading of the phone system, hiring regional coordinators and central office staff, expansion of sites throughout the state, expansion of benefits and potential work supports in the platform, ongoing support, and convenings of OBB site staff. All of these have greatly increased the capacity of OBB and positioned it well to carry on its work.

When investing heavily in an organization, many foundations have the concern that their investments may be channeled too heavily toward individual leaders’ growth, and not toward the actual growth of a project. In the case of the Foundation’s investments here, it is apparent that the Association’s existing strong leadership was supported, and has grown as a result. Nevertheless, OBB and the Association appear to be quite sustainable, regardless of the identity of Association leaders, because the overall capacity of the whole organization has grown. As one stakeholder commented, “One of the things they have done is they have grown leadership there. It’s just amazing the number of people they have built into really strong professionals in this.” This growth in organizational capacity, as well as the factors outlined in the next section, indicate that the Foundation’s investment in the Association has created sustainable capacity growth in the organization.

It is worth noting that the Foundation itself reports an increase in its capacity as a result of its investments in the Association and OBB. In particular, the Foundation officials who were interviewed expressed a growing willingness to take risks, and call on donors to help with select causes as a result of the successful risk-taking and donor involvement in OBB.

### *Sustainability*

There are many factors that point to the sustainability of OBB as a program. The Association has proven to be an organization determined to continue to meet the needs of its clients, and has been successful in securing various resources to achieve its goals. The data tracking processes within the OBB platform, and the Association's own reporting mechanisms have allowed the Association to generate impressive data that funders often desire. As the technology continues to evolve and incorporates more benefits, there is the opportunity for OBB to assist even more individuals. Adding educational benefits (including potentially participating in the Assets for Education program) and healthcare navigation further secures long-term funding for the initiative.

OBB sites report that, at their level, OBB is highly sustainable, and that incorporating OBB into their organizations has allowed them to pull in more funding from other sources and to enlist more community partners. The two difficulties that arise for OBB sites appear to be the challenge of supporting a staff member to coordinate OBB operations at large sites, and confusion among some funders, who view as duplicative any investment in more than one organization that utilizes OBB.

Like most public programs, OBB is situated in an environment that is vulnerable to economic fluctuations and regular turnover of elected officials and their staff. These factors can work to erode the sustainability of even the most well-established programs. For example, ODJFS currently does not appear to be able to fund enough dedicated caseworkers to meet the full demands of Enhanced Sites. While these caveats remain, there are indications many of the steps needed to sustain this systems change have been made when looking at the final two building blocks discussed by Linkins, Brya, and Chandler.

- *Achieving a sense of collective responsibility:*
  - One of the indicators of collective accountability in this systems change model is whether the partnerships have extended beyond the initial target population. In the case of OBB, this has happened on several levels. At the larger program level, OBB and TBB have extended to incorporate veterans benefits, Social Security Disability Insurance, and other benefits not determined by income. At the level of individual OBB sites, there are many reports that their programs have expanded as a result of the increased efficiency and broader range of services that OBB allows them. Overall, OBB has become an integral part of the safety net protecting those in need throughout Ohio, and has become a platform for delivering other needed services and supports beyond tax credits and work supports.

- Another indicator of collective responsibility is the enculturation of collaboration into previously independently operating entities. In the case of OBB, it is clear that the new connections between OBB and ODJFS, for example, have become routinized.<sup>16</sup>
- *Sustaining changes to policies and practices:*
  - One of the indicators of sustained change is the presence of interagency memorandum of understandings and protocols to allow for service coordination. This is clearly the case between OBB and ODJFS, as one example.
  - Another indicator of sustained change is the permanence of staff positions that are critical to program implementation. It appears that staff positions such as fiscal manager for OBB and others have become permanent.<sup>17</sup>

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**Question 5: As a result of the investment in OBB, how might The Columbus Foundation proceed with future investments (both with regard to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks and other grantees)?**

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***Key Findings for Question 5***

- Lessons learned from the investment include recognizing the value of multi-sector partnerships for effecting system change, the rewards of selective risk-taking, and the possibility of a foundation successfully investing in a technology-related project.
- There are many possible ways in which the funding relationship with the Association could change moving forward. These include continuing yearly funding applications, supporting matching grants or a funders' collaborative to expand/share investing, and offering transition grants to disseminate lessons learned and/or engage in sustainability planning.
- Potential future areas of investment for the Foundation include co-location of physical and behavioral health, Purpose-Built Communities, ASSET Initiative for Families with Young Children, or a general convening of community organizations with the express purpose of sparking an idea that the Foundation could help bring to scale.

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<sup>16</sup> Indicators of collective responsibility for which insufficient data were collected by this evaluation are the following: cross-system collaboration leads to new joint funding opportunities, funding streams are pooled across systems to better serve a shared population or concern, and collaborative partners share a vision for policy and advocacy activities.

<sup>17</sup> A final indicator of sustained changes for which this study has not collected sufficient data is that program learning is incorporated into Human Resources training for new staff in order to continue promotion of a shared vision.

## *Discussion of Key Findings for Question 5*

### *Lessons Learned*

Evaluators asked stakeholders about lessons learned as a result of the Foundation’s investment in OBB and the Association. Among the most frequently cited lessons was the value of a supportive philanthropic partner who invests more than just money into a project while at the same time respecting the grantee’s ability to lead, learn, and innovate. According to one participant in the project, “Emily and her colleagues could always be counted on. All you had to do was to reach out to them and say, ‘Can you help us with this?’ and they were right there and they were knowledgeable, but on the other hand, they were saying, ‘We gave you the money, now you prove you can do it.’ So I really think they had this good balance.”

Another key lesson learned was the value of a multi-sector partnership when tackling large social issues. Each sector’s (philanthropic, nonprofit, private, and government) unique contributions were needed in order to implement, sustain, and expand OBB. The private sector created, sustained, and expanded the technology at a cost lower than would be expected from the government sector. The philanthropic sector took a risk by providing initial financial support and credibility to the project, and continuing with extensive financial and non-financial support for the program’s expansion. The nonprofit sector provided an organizational base for OBB, spearheaded advocacy efforts, and brought an extensive network of community and faith-based organizations into the project. Once OBB demonstrated its viability, the government sector provided financial and policy support.

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*We can make America a much better place. We really know how to do that. It is really figuring out how to take initiatives that bring together different/unique partnerships of advocates, philanthropy, government, and playing them out. A lot of them involve, dare I say it, some good technology that can help the process. But they all involve these partnerships that we don’t usually do, that traditionally we’ve avoided and really that’s the risk you all took in Ohio: the risk of being associated with one another.*

*-Solutions for Progress*

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A related lesson identified by participants was the value of selective risk-taking, for which many stakeholders commended the Foundation. According to one interview respondent, “[The Columbus Foundation] should be very proud of themselves. They have really done something quite extraordinary that most foundations don’t do... That terribly uneasy feeling in the pit of their stomach when they first confronted this is exactly where philanthropy should be... That’s really important because otherwise you just fund the same thing over and over again and change its name.” One Foundation official noted, “We saw our donors respond to our call for support, so we learned that donors would take risks with us, and that has been helpful in terms of how we work since then.” Another commented on the value of the risks taken by the Association: “None of the nonprofits that I would hold up as... most efficient and high-performing get there without taking risks.”

The Columbus Foundation's investment in OBB also demonstrated that foundations can successfully invest in projects that involve technology. For example, one of the interviewed stakeholders said,

The Columbus Foundation didn't get all turned around and confused about what I call 'technology paralysis,' which is what a lot of the Foundations have. I mean, I can't tell you how many foundations we've approached, and they've said, 'well we're not going to choose between technologies,' as if somehow that is a significant statement... Somehow a lot of foundations are just paralyzed by that decision... whereas I think Emily and her colleagues saw technology in the proper light and saw that it wasn't just about technology, it was about grass roots outreach and technology and leveraging federal resources. So I think actually it was not a big issue, that was the great part!

When asked to reflect on things they might do differently, interview respondents from both the Association and the Foundation expressed an appreciation for the evaluation efforts previously conducted, noting their importance in proving the effectiveness of OBB. At the same time, they indicated that, in retrospect, they would have liked to have extended evaluation efforts over a longer period of time in order to document the longer-term effects of OBB. Some stakeholders questioned why the amount of federal money left on the table each year continues to increase, despite the growth in the dollar amount of tax credits and potential benefits for which OBB clients have been qualified. Other stakeholders clarified that an increase in the number of people who are categorized as low-income is outpacing the increase in Ohioans' access to benefits. In addition, changes to federal programs also impact those numbers.

Both parties expressed a desire to improve upon what they characterized as already frank and open communication. At times, staff from both the Foundation and Association suggested there could have been an even greater degree of communication to ensure that both parties were meeting each other's expectations.

### *Future Relationship Between the Foundation and the Association*

The Association has expressed a clear desire to continue collaborating with the Foundation: "I hope we keep moving forward. I feel like the two of our organizations, we're really propelling a lot of folks, a lot of the organizations, a lot of the communities forward. I really hope that relationship continues to expand further, whether it's in dollars or idea sharing." Individual OBB sites also expressed a desire for continuing support: "It's important to keep investing in the training and support function of OBB so that there's a robust team of people in the regions who can help sites stay current." At the very least, it seems that OBB will continue to be a relevant partner for the Foundation because of the number of direct service organizations in mid-Ohio, and throughout the state that rely on OBB to provide assistance to Ohioans in need, and because OBB continues to expand both throughout Ohio and across the nation.

As the Foundation considers potential exit strategies, there are a variety of ways consistent with identified best practices for that to happen (see Appendix C for a longer list). One possible way is to provide matching funding for a period of time, and encourage other funders to invest substantially in the Association and OBB. Another way is to begin a funders' collaborative

around OBB in order to distribute funding costs. Transition grants could be made, including ones to disseminate lessons learned from the experiences of OBB and/or to engage in sustainability planning. The Foundation's continued public support of the Association and OBB are consistent with the effective practices in which funders highlight the successes of their grantees so that any exit from the funding relationship will not be misconstrued.

### *Future Investments by the Foundation*

Below are lessons learned from the Foundation's experiences that could be parlayed into future investments (these are general types of investment recommendations and were offered by stakeholders in the project and from a brief environmental scan):

- To build on the success of the multi-sector OBB partnership, the Foundation could consider investing in other multi-sector efforts, such as Purpose Built Communities.
- To build on the success of effecting systems change, the Foundation could consider investing in a project related to co-locating behavioral healthcare providers with physical healthcare providers, or the ASSET Initiative for Families with Young Children.
- The Foundation could take advantage of the infrastructure in place with OBB to tackle other major social problems, especially those pertaining to young children. According to one stakeholder, "There are a lot of players that are already bound together for one reason; they could be bound together for other reasons as well is what I'm suggesting."

When asked to suggest future investments or ideas for the Foundation based on lessons learned from the investment in OBB, interviewed stakeholders suggested the following:

- "I would like The Columbus Foundation to consider talking to other community foundations to reframe the discussion on public benefits as an economic investment in the whole community, not a transfer payment to the poor."
- "I wonder how much they have done in briefing other community foundations who then could play a similar role in their communities in focusing a public-private partnership to maximize investment in their communities."
- "I'm working from the supposition that...there are models that are being developed in Columbus, Ohio, that other nonprofits have some good ideas. And [The Columbus Foundation is] close to the ground, and they know what their folks need. And what their folks need is some capital, some coaching, some help to bring that forward. I think that's a very important role for foundations to play...Their next challenge is, how do we go out and find these? They don't just drop on you as easily as this one did, by and large. They essentially should be looking for social entrepreneurs who solve problems that the Foundation thinks need to be solved in its service area. And then you begin to fund them, even providing some mini-grants to keep in mind a little bit of money goes a long way sometimes."

## Conclusion and Ideas for Consideration

The partnership between The Columbus Foundation and Ohio Association of Foodbanks was extraordinarily successful. Both grantor and grantee maintained a high degree of shared goals throughout the funding period, and the relationship between the two parties was highly productive. The Foundation provided generous monetary support to the Association and, of equal importance, provided invaluable non-monetary support, including technical assistance and access to other grantees. The relatively hands-off, yet still highly involved management approach by the Foundation proved especially effective with the Association. The Association, for its part, showed remarkable talent in garnering public sector funding and nonprofit support through its strong advocacy skills. The Association credits the Foundation's presence with helping to mainstream the Association's advocacy. Although this was a mutual and risky undertaking for both parties, it also demonstrates a clear commitment of the Foundation to empower others and grow organizational capacity. All of these elements combined have resulted in a highly successful and sustainable project.

The multi-sector partnership that developed in Ohio is by far one of the more unique attributes of the project. It included strong, contributing stakeholders from four core sectors: philanthropy, nonprofit, private business, and government. Among the sectors, there was a mutual understanding that a systems change was required in order to achieve the goal of allowing Ohioans in need to gain access more easily to tax credits and potential work supports. All of the sectors played crucial roles in effecting the transformation. This collaboration, in turn, resulted in Ohio becoming a flagship model, where many other states have struggled.

While researching the Foundation's investment in the Association and OBB, areas for potential reflection emerged. The first relates to the issue of leveraging, which the grantmaking literature considers to be critical to sustainability. With this project, most leveraging occurred with a variety of public and nonprofit sources. Less leveraging occurred with private support beyond the Foundation. Moving forward, the Foundation may want to reflect on this outcome and determine what, if any, expectations it has about garnering additional private support for a project. If more is desired, the literature emphasizes the need for open and ongoing dialogue with the grantee about those goals. Nonetheless, as this project demonstrates, leveraging need not occur across all sectors for a project to be successful or sustaining. Likewise, additional philanthropic funding opportunities for this initiative could still arise in the future, especially with a focused plan. Another area for reflection is advocacy. Like leveraging, the grantmaking literature identifies this activity as critical for sustainability; however, concerns over impartiality and donor-stakeholder management lead many foundations to be less involved (at least publicly) than grantees may desire. As with leveraging, The Columbus Foundation may want to reflect on the importance of advocacy for sustainability, and whether it wants to increase support for these efforts.

Many stakeholders described features of the project as serendipitous, and to some extent believe that the success would be hard to replicate. Of particular concern was the possibility of finding a combination of the following features: highly talented leadership, willing participants from

across a variety of sectors, participants who were willing to take risks, and participants with truly shared goals that were consistent with their home organization's missions. Nonetheless, most stakeholders concluded that this combination of factors, while rare, would not be impossible to duplicate. For example, partnerships that have been forged across the sectors as a result of this project can be drawn upon for new purposes. Likewise, the extensive network of community and faith-based organizations that came together to form the OBB can be tapped for ideas and collaboration. Finally, the value of a multi-sector partnership, the importance of selective risk-taking, and the impact of non-monetary support from the Foundation are all significant lessons that can inform future investments by the Foundation.

# Appendix A. Relationship Model

To operationalize the concept of the relationship between an investor and a grantee, researchers used a framework provided by Tierney and Steele.<sup>18</sup> In this framework, there are two key dimensions of relationships between donor and grantee:

*Shared goals*—To have shared goals, investors and grantees must have a shared definition of success, and a shared understanding of how that success will be achieved.

*Productive relationship*—For a productive relationship with grantees, investors must reduce the cost of philanthropic capital so the costs of the capital do not outweigh the benefits that accrue to society and add value beyond money.

Tierney and Steele use these two dimensions of shared goals and productive relationships to generate a typology of relationships as depicted in the figure below.

**Figure 3. Tierney and Steele’s Donor-Grantee Relationship Model**

Shared Goals	High	Forced March	Partnership
	Low	Train Wreck	Amiable Association
		Low	High
		Productive Relationship	

**Partnership:** “Donor and grantee together—and continually—explore opportunities to build upon and leverage their relationship through innovative strategies, enhanced collaboration with other organizations and constituents, and increased financial and/or non-financial assistance. They have both shared goals and a highly productive working relationship.”

**Amiable Association:** “Donor and grantee are not strategically aligned, but the working relationship functions well...results might be improved if both parties engaged more fully on strategic issues, adding value and learning from one another.”

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<sup>18</sup> Tierney, T. & Steele, R. (2010). “The donor-grantee trap: How ineffective collaboration undermines philanthropic results for society, and what can be done about it. A guide for nonprofit leaders, their boards, and their donors” <http://www.givesmart.org/grantee/The-Donor-Grantee-Trap.aspx> (last accessed 1/7/14); See also Tierney, T. & Fleishman, J. L. (2011). *Give smart: Philanthropy that gets results*. New York: Public Affairs.

**Forced March:** “Overall goals are aligned, but potential is lost executing on those goals given the dramatic power imbalance between donor and grantee. The grantee functions essentially as a subcontractor with a high cost of capital.”

**Train Wreck:** “Donor and grantee have opposing or incomplete strategies and a largely dysfunctional relationship...Resources—both money and time—are routinely wasted.”

# Appendix B. Systems Change Model

The Building Blocks of Change model was created by Linkins, Brya, and Chandler with the goal of aligning the “activities and expectations of funders and grantees in designing and building strategies to achieve lasting systems and policy change.” The authors describe five domains in which activities and changes need to take place in order to generate true systems change:

**Table. 1. Building Blocks Model of System Change**

Domain	Description	Select Indicators
1	Examining the problem and understanding the need for change	Stakeholders can answer the questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What system(s) do you want to change?</li> <li>• Who has the authority to make these changes?</li> <li>• What are the key relationships and system interactions? What are the power dynamics in the community?</li> <li>• What data are available to show the status and issues that need to change?</li> </ul>
2	Raising visibility and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of potential or actual program impact is being generated and disseminated.</li> <li>• Key stakeholders may have been invited to participate in a collaborative.</li> </ul>
3	Developing partnerships and collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership and collaborations have changes to referral practices, systems delivery and transition planning, and these changes have been formalized.</li> <li>• New protocols have been developed and/or new partnerships have resulted.</li> <li>• Partners are sharing or leveraging resources to improve efficiency.</li> <li>• Collaboration improves communication or data sharing.</li> </ul>
4	Achieving a sense of collective accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The partnership/collaboration extends “beyond the original target population or issue addressed by the funded initiative.”</li> <li>• Data are being shared consistently to better address the needs of the population.</li> <li>• Collaboration is “part of the ‘culture’ and way of doing business.”</li> <li>• Cross-system collaboration leads to new joint funding opportunities.</li> <li>• Funding streams are joined across systems to better address a shared concern/population.</li> <li>• Partners share a vision for policy and advocacy activities.</li> </ul>
5	Sustaining changes to policies and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure is in place “to support data collection, sharing, and analysis across agencies and systems.”</li> <li>• Interagency MOUs and protocols facilitate service coordination. Critical staff positions are permanent and sustained.</li> </ul>

# Appendix C. Best/Effective Practices

## General best/effective practices in grantmaking<sup>19</sup>

1. Consider strategies beyond own grantmaking to advance the Foundation’s mission:
  - a. Collaborate with others who make grant awards or donors that fund similar work.
  - b. Provide technical assistance to grantees and other charitable nonprofits.
  - c. Convene community leaders, nonprofits and/or other funders doing similar work.
  - d. Engage in public policy and advocacy on own priority issues, and within the limits of the law.
  - e. Use evaluation as an ongoing process of organizational learning.
2. Provide general operating support.
3. Provide multi-year support.
4. Provide capacity-building support.
5. Educate and engage donors in identifying and addressing community issues.
6. Engage in continuous learning, and disseminate lessons learned.
7. Engage stakeholders at key decision-making moments.
8. Collaborate with other funders to channel resources to promising approaches.
9. Identify community issues.
10. Publicly review grantmaking priorities and objectives to help ensure grantmaking remains relevant and responsive.
11. Reduce the application and reporting burden on grantees.
12. From the beginning, have an exit strategy that allows the grantee to sustain itself when the Foundation’s funding ends.

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<sup>19</sup> Brest, P. & Harvey, H. (2008). *Money well spent: A strategic plan for smart philanthropy*. New York: Bloomberg Press; Brousseau, R. & Ramos, M. (2012). *Leading with core support: An assessment of the Weingart Foundation’s core support grantmaking*. Learning Partnerships. <http://www.weingartfnd.org/files/Leading-with-Core-Support.pdf> (last accessed 3/6/14); Community Foundations National Standards Board (2013). *List of Standards* <http://www.cfstandards.org/standards> (last accessed 1/16/14); Edwards, S. (2013). *The benefits of multiyear grantmaking: A funder’s perspective*. <http://jimjosephfoundation.org/the-benefits-of-multi-year-grantmaking/> (last accessed 1/9/14); Minnesota Council on Foundations (2009). *Principles for grantmakers: Practice options for philanthropic organizations*. [http://www.mcf.org/system/asset\\_manager\\_pdfs/0000/0927/principles.pdf](http://www.mcf.org/system/asset_manager_pdfs/0000/0927/principles.pdf) (last accessed 3/5/14); McCray, J. (2012). *Is grantmaking getting smarter? A national study of philanthropic practice*. Washington, D.C.: Grantmakers for Effective Organizations; National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) (2009). *Criteria for philanthropy at its best: Benchmarks to assess and enhance grantmaker impact*. [http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/paib-fulldoc\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/paib-fulldoc_lowres.pdf) (last accessed 1/9/14); NCRP (2003). *The core of the matter*. [http://www.ncrp.org/files/The\\_Core\\_of\\_the\\_Matter.pdf](http://www.ncrp.org/files/The_Core_of_the_Matter.pdf) (last accessed 1/9/14).

## Best/effective practices for exiting a grantmaking relationship<sup>20</sup>

1. Have a clear exit plan in place. Plan for exit from the outset of a relationship.
2. Clarify expectations about the timing and reason for exit early on and frequently with grantees and stakeholders.
3. Ask grantees for information about whether they have identified other potential funders as part of routine reporting requirements.
4. Use multiple modes of communication to deliver a consistent message about the exit strategy.
5. Involve the Foundation's chief executive office in communications about the exit.
6. Make sure all foundation staff and leadership are informed about the exit strategy, and are able to answer questions.
7. Invite stakeholders to comment and react to the exit announcement.
8. Involve stakeholders in assessing impact on the field.
9. Publicize broadly and particularly to other potential donors, the successes of the project and its actors, and its needs and opportunities.
10. Involve stakeholders in determining their capacity-building needs, and provide support for these opportunities.
11. Signal continued interest and attract donors into the field through partnerships, matching grants, donors' collaborative, and affinity groups.
12. Provide at least three years of support once the exit strategy is announced.
13. Give transition grants. These might include:
  - Grants to disseminate results, research findings or strategies;
  - Grants to help other organizations replicate the model;
  - Grants for sustainability planning;
  - Grants for research recommended as a result of the funded project; or Grants that provide matching funds for investments by new funders.

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<sup>20</sup> Mackinnon, A. & Jaffe, J. (2007). *The effective exit: Managing the end of a funding relationship*. New York: The Ford Foundation. [www.grantcraft.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page](http://www.grantcraft.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page) (last accessed 1/9/14); Petrovich, J. (2011). *Exiting responsibly: Best donor practices in ending field support, a study for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*. <http://www.cof.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/RWJ%20-%20Existing%20in%20Ending%20Field%20Support.pdf> (accessed 3/4/14).

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