



HATTAWAY  
COMMUNICATIONS



FORD  
FOUNDATION



MESSAGE & STORYTELLING GUIDEBOOK

# COMMUNICATING ABOUT COMMUNITY-LED PARTNERSHIPS

MAY 2016

---

# Communicating About Community-Led Partnerships

Over the last seven years, the Obama Administration has been working to disrupt top-down, siloed ways of doing business to transform the Federal Government into a more effective partner for communities. The Administration’s approach has deepened and expanded federal partnerships with communities from coast to coast and increased collaboration across agencies.

This project took an in-depth look at a range of communities across the country that are benefiting from these partnerships. This document outlines the crosscutting insights from that research, highlighting the best practices for successful federal partnerships with communities, the players and principles that make this approach work, a one-minute message for explaining the approach to non-experts, and strategic stories for illustrating the approach in action.

## Table of Contents

Intro & Table of Contents .....	2
Describing Community-Led Partnerships .....	3
Principles & Players Framework .....	4
Developing Strategic Stories .....	11
Sample Stories .....	14

---

# Describing Community-Led Partnerships

These messages about the approach, in two different lengths, are designed to help communicators describe federal place-based initiatives to audiences unfamiliar with this work.

## Elevator Pitch

Community-Led Partnerships are a proven approach to regional revitalization in which local residents' vision for the future leads the way—and government innovators collaborate across agencies to cut red tape, streamline programs and offer hands-on help to craft holistic strategies that make communities great places to live, work and raise a family.

## One-Minute Message

Local residents know what their communities need in order to be great places to live, work and raise a family—and what strengths they can build on. They need partners who listen to their ideas and support them with resources, information and technical expertise.

To deliver results, innovators from across federal agencies are joining forces to disrupt top-down approaches and work side-by-side with community leaders to build customized strategies that directly meet local needs. They're cutting red tape and building relationships so that local leaders know whom to call with questions. They're streamlining programs across agencies and collaborating with nonprofits and the private sector to close funding gaps and craft efficient, targeted solutions. And they're sharing their knowledge about what's working in other communities around the country to help partners hone in on what works.

This hands-on, responsive approach is empowering people across the country to create new jobs and businesses, build vibrant neighborhoods and preserve the special character of their communities.

# Principles & Players Frameworks

These frameworks highlight key principles and players that have helped make federal place-based initiatives successful. These findings are drawn from a study of eight different cities and rural areas across the country and include input from federal practitioners and community leaders at the local, state and federal levels.

## Principles

**Local Leadership:** Capable leaders with a clear vision think strategically about meeting the area's needs, leveraging local assets and targeting resources effectively.

**Community Conversations:** Local stakeholders engage in conversations to define needs, identify assets and inform the development of a strategic plan that addresses local realities.

**Productive Partners:** Partners in business, government, nonprofits, foundations and other organizations contribute resources, coordinate efforts and commit for the long haul.

**Concrete Goals:** A clear vision for improving, revitalizing or rebuilding a targeted area offers specific, achievable goals.

**Evidence-Based Strategies:** A strategic plan informed by research and federal leaders' experience working in partnership with communities identifies the most effective ways to achieve the community's goals and includes an evaluation to assess impact.

**Decisionmaking Structure:** Decisionmakers with clear lines of authority manage the process with support from a central coordinating organization.

**Positive Narrative:** A positive narrative about a place and its people counters negative perceptions, offering residents hope for a better future and faith in their ability to succeed.

**Multiplier Effect:** A successful, high-impact strategy can spark multiple changes in a community, as investments of time, talent and resources create new economic activity, educational opportunity and social benefits.



PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Local Leadership	Capable leaders with a clear vision think strategically about meeting the area's needs, leveraging local assets and targeting resources effectively.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> As Senior Advisor to New Orleans Mayor Mitchell Landrieu, Ashleigh Gardere is responsible for managing a city-wide economic development strategy and leading the city's effort to revitalize the Claiborne Corridor, an area of seven diverse neighborhoods that has struggled to bounce back from Hurricane Katrina. She secured federal funding to survey residents of the Claiborne area, and is developing strategies to address what residents say is their top priority: creating jobs.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> Fresno Mayor Ashleigh Swearengin made downtown revitalization the centerpiece of her campaign, won support throughout the community and developed an ambitious strategy to change the face of downtown Fresno—investing in infrastructure improvements, rallying local businesses to invest in the area and launching a public campaign to attract more foot traffic downtown.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> Democratic Governor Steve Beshear and Republican Congressman Hal Rogers came together to revitalize 54 counties in eastern Kentucky, starting with a Planning Committee to guide a community dialogue at the Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) summit. Their willingness to bridge partisan divides encouraged a diverse range of Kentuckians to support the effort.



PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Community Conversations	Local stakeholders engage in conversations to define needs, identify assets and inform the development of a strategic plan that addresses local realities.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> With grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Federal Highway Administration, the Livable Claiborne Communities Study interviewed residents and convened public meetings to develop a responsive, community-driven strategy.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> Knowing that Fresno had seen failed attempts at revitalization, Mayor Swearengin knew it was important to get community input and ensure the new effort was done right. She convened a series of public conversations to hear local residents' desires for the downtown Fulton Mall area and ensure the public knew what to expect from the revitalization process.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> With the leadership of Governor Steve Beshear and Congressman Hal Rogers, the Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) initiative brought together local leaders to map out strategies to drive the region forward. As word of the initiative spread, 1,700 invested eastern Kentucky residents braved a blizzard to join a planning summit, which highlighted the need for expanded broadband access in the area.
Productive Partnerships	Partners in business, government, nonprofits, foundations and other organizations contribute resources, coordinate efforts and commit for the long haul.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> To create job opportunities for Claiborne residents, Ashleigh Gardere reached out to major New Orleans employers to understand exactly what they were looking for in potential hires. She worked directly with them to build targeted education programs that offered residents the tools they needed to be strong employees. Together, they opened lines of communication between training programs and employers and gave residents a leg up in a streamlined hiring process.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> The federal government's SC2 program brought together experts from 12 agencies to help get Fresno's revitalization effort off the ground. Those experts worked with Fresno to secure grant money and offered advice on best-practices for economic revitalization. They even reached across government silos to build a local agricultural technology showcase that attracted venture capital interest.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> Through the help of the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhood Initiative, Dreama Gentry at Berea College was able to receive expertise from the Harlem Children's Zone and Policy Link—a research institute—and manpower from AmeriCorps to create an educational framework that helped increase the graduation rate at Leslie County High School from 66.5 to 98.3 percent.

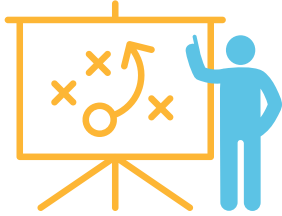
PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Concrete Goals	A clear vision for improving, revitalizing or rebuilding a targeted area offers specific, achievable goals.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> Claiborne Corridor residents sought to create a job training program and helped the city set the goal of creating new job opportunities for 35,000 local residents who were out of work.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> Fresno set the goal of revitalizing its downtown area to fuel economic activity and make Fresno a more attractive place to live and work.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> To facilitate economic opportunity outside the coal industry, eastern Kentucky residents decided to help diversify the local economy by introducing high-speed Internet that could connect residents to work in any industry, anywhere in the world.
Evidence-Based Strategies	A strategic plan informed by research and federal leaders' experience working in partnership with communities identifies the most effective ways to achieve the community's goals and includes an evaluation to assess impact.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> An in-depth study that included demographic and economic data, interviews with community members, focus groups and community discussions helped the city of New Orleans better understand the needs of residents in low income neighborhoods in the city's the Claiborne Corridor. The city used findings from the study to create redevelopment strategies that would have the highest impact for residents.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> SC2 experts from the federal government made the case to get rid of the Fulton Pedestrian Mall by researching other revitalized cities. Commissioning a study of similar areas, they found that of the 189 pedestrian malls in the U.S., 175 had been removed—and all of those cities experienced a form of revitalization within the first four years.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> Dreama Gentry of Berea College used research from Harlem Children's Zone and STRIVE networks to create an evidence-based strategy for improving education in southeast Kentucky. Dreama and her team now use student data gathered by a variety of local partners to better target their resources and create personalized plans that help students succeed in school and their later careers.

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Decisionmaking Structure	Decisionmakers with clear lines of authority manage the process with support from a central coordinating organization.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> Mayor Mitchell Landrieu created the Network of Economic Opportunity to lead the way in creating more economic opportunity for disadvantaged job seekers and businesses along the Claiborne Corridor.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> A California Business Improvement District for downtown Fresno created a formal association of business leaders who agreed to invest in the area for five years. The Downtown Fresno Partnership took the lead in managing the affairs of the Business Improvement District and encouraging people to visit the area, while the mayor's office focused on improving downtown infrastructure.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> Improving a region encompassing 54 counties required a great deal of coordination; SOAR made sure the region was working in the same direction through strategic grantmaking, convening members of the community to talk about their goals and asking community members to pledge to help do the work of improving southeast Kentucky.
Positive Narrative	A positive narrative about a place and its people counters negative perceptions, offering residents hope for a better future and faith in their ability to succeed.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> Former inmates faced stigma when reentering the workforce, and felt left behind by their city. Through training programs such as STRIVE New Orleans, they learned skills and built connections that helped them tell a new story about themselves as capable workers with skills to offer local businesses.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> Fresno was suffering from brain drain and a lack of investment because many saw it as less interesting than cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles. Beautifying Fresno's downtown, cultivating local farmers' markets and organizing events that showcased the area's unique character gave Fresnoans new reasons to appreciate their city. An "I Believe In Fresno" campaign helped deliver a new narrative.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> Coal miners were stymied by the perception that they lacked 21st century job skills. Justin Hall of Bit Source set out to change that narrative by teaching former coal miners how to code—showing that a new set of tools could transform coal miners into software engineers.



PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Multiplier Effect</b>	A successful, high-impact strategy can spark multiple changes in a community, as investments of time, talent and resources create new economic activity, educational opportunity and social benefits.	<b>NEW ORLEANS, LA:</b> The STRIVE job readiness program gave formerly incarcerated Claiborne residents the opportunity to become contributing members of their community who could raise stable families, stimulate the local economy and give back to their neighborhoods.
		<b>FRESNO, CA:</b> Changing the face of downtown through infrastructure and public art grants gave business owners incentive to open new restaurants downtown and keep them open later. Fresnoans responded to the changing landscape by spending more time and money downtown, which generated more business opportunities.
		<b>SOUTHEAST KENTUCKY:</b> By fostering innovative businesses like Bit Source, southeast Kentucky's SOAR initiative helped generate new job opportunities for residents, who gained more stable jobs and money to spend in the local economy. Other SOAR investments like the effort to bring high-speed internet to the region are making it easier for other companies to follow in Bit Source's footsteps and generate more economic growth.

# Players



## Local Leaders

Local leaders launch the effort with support from federal partners, identifying the community's needs and assets, setting clear goals and leading the design of a unique strategic plan.



## Federal Innovators

Federal innovators from across agencies join forces to offer expertise on best practices, highlight successful strategies working in other communities, and help leaders navigate federal resources that best advance locally defined goals—often providing technical assistance or funding that kickstarts the effort and attracts further investment to the area.



## Local Business Owners

Local business owners recognize new opportunities and invest in targeted areas—creating jobs and catalyzing economic activity.



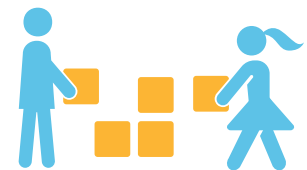
## Local Government Officials

Local government officials bring experience and federal resources to bear—working together to streamline bureaucratic processes and expedite solutions.



## Community Organizations

Foundations, along with nonprofit, faith and community organizations, offer resources, know-how and hands-on help—working to design strategic plans, organize residents and marshal resources to support the cause.



## Local Residents

Local residents contribute their time, talents and energy to build a more vibrant community with a unique character—and feel a sense of pride and accomplishment.

# Developing Strategic Stories

You know that storytelling is a great way to educate, inspire and engage people. But stories that achieve real and meaningful change don't just materialize—they're strategically conceived, creatively executed and attached to measurable outcomes.

## What's Your Focus?

At its heart, the community-led approach is about building deeper relationships with communities, listening to their ideas and offering the hands-on, responsive support that empowers them to build stronger futures. It's about people, and strong storytelling starts there.

Research tells us that putting people in the picture is one of the most powerful storytelling techniques because it creates a human connection that can activate aspirational ideas and emotional reactions. With your audiences' perspective in mind, think about which players should be the face of your work.

To support the solutions you bring to the table, your audiences need to understand how they work. Though your work addresses complex problems, you don't have to explain the whole effort in one story. Focus on the most noticeable and important aspect of the problem—and connect it directly to the most relevant part of the solution.



### TIP

Audiences are more likely to support your cause if they empathize with and respect the people involved. To build this empathy, avoid dry demographic descriptions and emphasize personal attributes. For example, you could translate “government official” to “government innovator” or “low-income people” to “hardworking families.”

Picture the people involved in the work you do and write down qualities that come to mind. Ideally, the audience should see themselves—or people they aspire to be—reflected in the story.



### TIP

Avoid overloading people with too much information. It actually demotivates them.

Stories about people overcoming obstacles and achieving goals can illustrate a complex problem and solution in understandable, human terms—and show that change is possible. Find the best story that creates instant comprehension and emotional connection.

# What's Your Story's Purpose?

Your stories don't need to be for everyone—they are for people who would be interested in your work and have something to contribute to your success. Developing a strategic story starts with understanding where your audience stands.

The questions below can help you ensure that your story has impact—meeting your audiences wherever they currently are and moving them along the path from awareness to action.

## STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

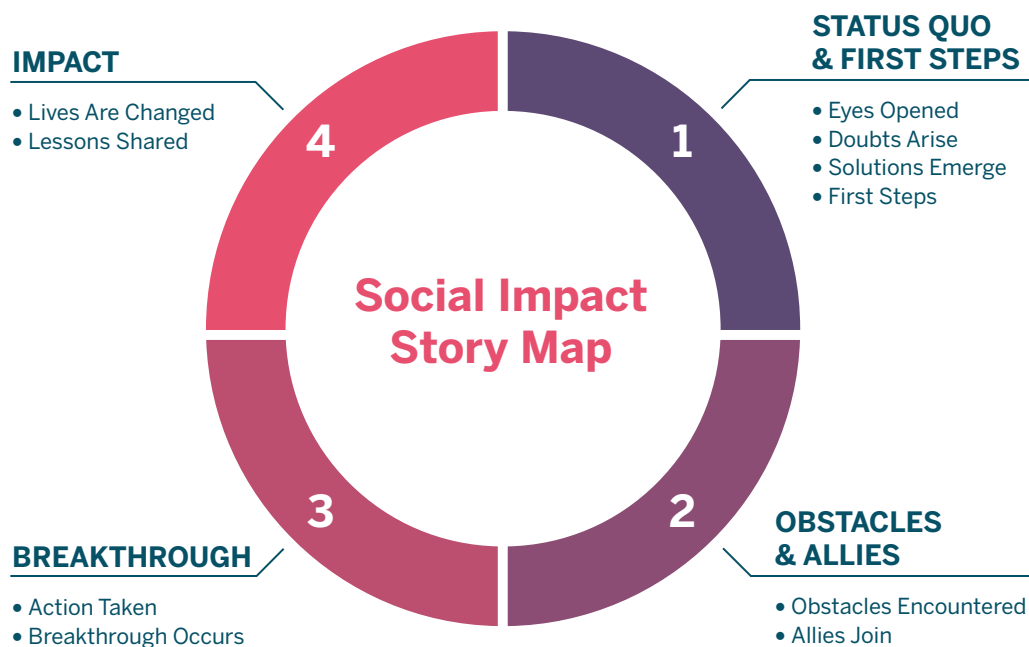
<b>Audience</b>	You will need to determine which audiences need to see your story most. Who is helping to overcome the problem that your story addresses?
<b>Awareness</b>	In order to support your cause, what do your audiences need to be aware of? Is there a surprising fact, idea or statistic that can grab attention and help them see the situation in a new way?
<b>Caring</b>	Why will your audiences care about your cause? What characters may help them connect to the effort?
<b>Understanding</b>	What are the most important ideas your audiences need to understand about the problem and the solution? How can you focus your story on the most relevant details?
<b>Urgency</b>	Why is your audiences' support important now?
<b>Action</b>	What specific actions can your audiences take to support your work?

# Building Your Story

This tool is adapted from the Hero's Journey, a tried and true model used to structure stories that capture people's attention and imagination. It is a "formula" based on research about storytelling in many different cultures. We've adapted it specifically for telling stories about social impact.

The Social Impact Story Map helps you structure your story around key steps that comprise a narrative arc (referred to as the "hero's journey"). There are four sections: (1) Status Quo & First Steps, (2) Obstacles & Allies, (3) Breakthrough, and (4) Impact.

These four sections are broken down further into ten steps that you can use to map out your story from beginning to end. Some stories may cover all the steps, and some may touch on only a few. And that's okay.



# Fresno, CA: Redesigning Infrastructure To Help Businesses Build a Thriving Downtown Economy

Poor city planning and infrastructure had stifled economic activity in downtown Fresno, but when local leaders and federal innovators came together to beautify the area and open old dead ends to traffic, they offered business owners like Craig Scharton new opportunities to build a more vibrant local economy.

Fulton Mall was a flop. The pedestrian mall was designed in the 1960s as a way to bring new life to downtown Fresno. But poor coordination between developers and city planners had left the area a confusing mess of one-way streets, unexpected dead ends and unreliable parking.

That began to change in 2009, with the election of Mayor Ashley Swearengin. Her office began working with national retail planning experts and federal government agencies—including the Department of Transportation (through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER, grant program) and the National Endowment for the Arts (the Our Town initiative)—to study the area’s needs and formulate a downtown revitalization strategy. The plan would open the Fulton Mall to traffic, beautify the area with new public art and in the process offer local businesses the conditions they needed to thrive.

But redesigning the mall was only half the battle. The next step was getting local business excited about the opportunity. That’s where Peeve’s Pub comes in.

Craig Scharton had been working to revitalize Fresno for decades as a city councilman, business owner and former president of the nonprofit California Main Street Alliance—but it wasn’t until the past few years that he began to see those efforts getting any traction. In 2013, he opened Peeve’s Public House & Local Market, serving local beers and a seasonal menu of locally grown food, right on the Fulton Mall.

## Status Quo

## Local Leadership

## First Steps

## Productive Partnerships

## Evidence-Based Strategies & Concrete Goals

## Obstacles Encountered

## Allies Join

- Elements of the story template
- Principles for effective community improvement



## Sample Stories

Craig took the bold step of keeping his restaurant open until 11 p.m., which at the time was something restaurants in downtown Fresno just didn't do. The area tended to clear out after 5.

Peeve's Public House helped change that—and in doing so served as an anchor for future development. Peeve's began attracting customers with, in addition to food and drink, an eclectic set of events including live music, science lectures, art projects and a food entrepreneurs night.

Craig says his goal was to be on the front lines of downtown revitalization, and he succeeded. A new microbrewery, Tioga Sequoia Brewing Company, opened a tasting room down the street from Peeve's and also began hosting Friday night events. A new coffee shop catered to the tech entrepreneurs who started to see Fresno as an affordable place to start a business.

The city helped out with an advertising campaign promoting the potential of downtown Fresno.

Since 2013, the changes downtown have encouraged private businesses to invest \$65 million in the area. Fresno's business development district, a group organized and funded by local business leaders, has brought tens of thousands of people to the area with major events and activities, including downtown music festivals and temporary ice rink.

The city made it easier for people to come downtown; now business owners are making it worth their while to do so.

### Action Taken

### Breakthrough Occurs

### Positive Narrative

### Multiplier Effect

### Impact

# Fresno, CA: Changing a Community's Narrative to Build Momentum for Downtown Investment

When Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin decided that rebuilding downtown was the key to economic revitalization, she drew on the expertise of government innovators like Gretchen Moore to build the community's confidence that change was possible—which helped bring \$65 million of private investment to the area.

When Gretchen Moore first moved to Fresno from her native Ohio, one thing that struck her was how often residents contrasted their city with other places—in ways that were unflattering to Fresno. “A lot of what I heard when I first got here was, ‘Why are you moving to Fresno? We’re not San Francisco, we’re not Los Angeles,’” Moore says. “The city’s basic identity was based on what it was not, and it never stopped to look at what assets made it unique.”

A successful urban planner, Moore came to Fresno through the Strong Cities, Strong Communities program (SC2)—a pilot White House initiative that convened a team of government innovators from across agencies to offer hands-on support to local officials, who wanted to revitalize the city's downtown. Over the years, urban sprawl had pulled commerce to Fresno's suburbs, and the last attempt to revitalize downtown, the 1960s-era Fulton pedestrian mall, had made the area a confusing mess of one-way streets and dead ends that further discouraged residents from venturing into the city. The area had become a ghost town.

When Moore arrived, Mayor Ashley Swearengin connected her with the newly created Downtown Fresno Partnership (DFP), a group of business owners who had committed to invest in the city. As Moore listened these residents, and others, describe their hopes for the city, Moore saw an opportunity to highlight Fresno's strengths and begin to build a positive narrative about their city's potential. To counter the prevailing view that there was no reason to go downtown outside of working hours, she helped the DFP plan and promote community events that would attract people to the city center. She provided direct marketing support for 16 local businesses.

Alongside those efforts, Moore helped Fresno secure federal funding to bring public art downtown, plant trees and other greenery, and reopen the streets to make the area more accessible. To get ideas about building a livelier downtown, she took Mayor Swearengin and leaders from the Downtown Fresno Partnership to Cleveland, a city of similar size and demographics. Through a venture called the Downtown Academy, she helped lay the groundwork for the next generation of engaged and optimistic leaders. The academy teaches young professionals about urban revitalization through seminars in Fresno and through field trips to cities like Santa Monica, Burbank and Pasadena.

## Sample Stories

By the end of her time in Fresno, Moore had organized events that lured 200,000 people downtown and injected at least \$1.2 million to the local economy. Moore sees signs that Fresnoans now view their city in a new light. Instead of comparing themselves to San Francisco or L.A., residents have adopted the phrase “Unapologetically Fresno.”

Moore says the community is coming to think of downtown as the center around which their city revolves. “The neighborhoods are starting to reference where they are in relation to downtown, like: ‘We’re just 10 minutes from downtown!’ That never would have happened ten years ago.”

---

# Fresno, CA: Empowering Local Residents to Reimagine their Communities

An important part of Fresno's comprehensive revitalization plan, the Downtown Fresno Academy opened young leaders' eyes to their city's potential and inspired blogger Veronica Stumpf to construct a positive narrative about what her community had to offer. Stumpf made the case to other young residents that Fresno was somewhere they could build a life.

Veronica Stumpf is a popular Fresno blogger whose family has lived in the area since 1888. For her, Fresno is home. She'd never really thought about leaving.

But many of her classmates felt differently. Upon graduating from Fresno State in 2011, Stumpf watched other graduates leave for careers in San Francisco or L.A. As a former economics major who was just diving into her own career in Fresno real estate, she wanted to understand the dynamics of the local economy: What was driving people away and what changes might persuade them to stay?

That meant sorting out her own feelings about Fresno. She was living in the suburbs, 13 miles north of downtown. She began thinking more and more about how years of urban sprawl had pulled economic activity out of the city center, diluting Fresno's character. She decided that starting a blog would give her an incentive to explore the city that had always been such a big part of her family identity, and also force her to articulate what it was that she loved about the place.

Stumpf first visited the downtown Fulton Mall in 2011. She had come to take photos of historic architecture, but what really struck her was how lifeless the street was.

"It was a Sunday, and completely dead," Stumpf says "Some stores were open, but there were more mannequins than people on the street. That was my first impression. Just empty."

Looking to help turn things around, Stumpf joined the Downtown Academy, a program run by local nonprofit Fresno Leading Young Professionals (FLYP) that gathered 30 young professionals from all across Fresno for monthly trips to different parts of the city. These ventures included on-site lessons about best practices for urban revitalization. The program also featured tours of other small, bustling cities like Santa Monica and Pasadena, and Downtown Academy's leaders facilitated discussions about ways Fresno could replicate their successes.

As she built connections with other young, committed residents, Stumpf began to see how important a positive city narrative was in building a vibrant downtown. To her, that meant not just sketching possibilities for the future but pointing to bright spots in the city as it existed—as well as to important episodes from the past.

## Sample Stories

"I know there was a disconnect," she says. "When people don't know anything about Fresno, they want to move."

Stumpf used her blog, That Fresno Blog, to amplify excitement about the new restaurants, shops and housing complexes that were popping up downtown thanks to federal infrastructure grants. She publicized and documented the art shows, farmers markets and fashion shows that were growing more common.

In short, Stumpf played a significant role in helping to create the buzz that brought more people downtown and began to make the changes in Fresno sustainable. Her blog attracted a cult following of people who appreciated her authentic voice and enthusiasm for the city. With her help, the story Fresnoans told about their city began to shift.

Like many people, Veronica says she has gone from feeling disconnected from the city to fully-immersed in it. After years of spending most of her free time downtown, she quit the suburbs, becoming one of the scores of young Fresno workers who have moved into the urban core. Instead of running from the city's issues, people appear to be genuinely engaged in fixing them, she says.

She has a cohort of friends who have moved downtown, too. "It's an interesting experience for all of us," she says. "Downtown is getting to the point where it's a destination. It's not all there. There isn't a grocery store or a gym in walking distance. But I can help make it the neighborhood that I want it to be. If there's something missing, as a real estate broker I can reach out and talk to them about bringing that in."

---

## Fresno, CA: Streamlining Government Approvals to Support a New Downtown Economy

To support downtown revitalization in Fresno, city officials built productive partnerships with entrepreneurs like Jake Soberal—cutting red tape, streamlining approvals and sharing their logistical expertise—and created a tech incubator that brought new life to Fresno’s economy.

Jake Soberal moved to Fresno with his family as a kid. Like many of his friends, he left town right after high school. People who stuck around, he says, generally had to make a choice—you got to a certain level of your career and either stagnated or departed.

“You leave thinking you’ll never come back, but after going around the country, I decided Fresno was both home and somewhere I cared about,” Soberal says. “I wanted to lead an impactful life in a place that mattered.”

He learned more about the Fresno economy while practicing law for some local businesses. He and his friend Irma Oglin, a technologist in the area, began talking about what lessons Fresno could learn from other cities. Other old agricultural economies, like Portland and Austin, had become hip communities with thriving businesses. Even Silicon Valley had once been an agricultural outpost that was the cheaper alternative to San Francisco. Why couldn’t Fresno go through the same evolution? Along with startup veteran John Dodson, Soberal and Oglin decided on an ambitious goal: to make Fresno a major technology hub in 3 to 5 years.

“If you’re talking with a young person here who wants to be a programmer, there are objections—you can’t learn how to code here, we don’t have the places to work,” Soberal says. “We thought, well let’s defy those objections. We want Fresno to be exactly where you want to build your career.”

They focused on building a self-sustaining business that would bring more private investment to Fresno: Bitwise Industries, a tech hub that supports other local startups by offering affordable and flexible workspaces for companies and individuals, a low-cost training program to cultivate local coding talent, and on-the-ground teams of technologists ready to help local businesses.

Soberal says that Fresno’s government became a genuine partner in the effort. Bitwise’s 8,000-square-foot downtown tech hub was modeled after tech campuses in Silicon Valley, offering coders events like “Beerwise” social nights, a game room, tech workshops and hack-a-thons. As contractors worked on the space, Soberal says that the city’s planning and building departments sent representatives out daily to collaborate on logistics and fast-track approvals.

“The planning and building department is extraordinary,” he says. “There is a commitment to service



## Sample Stories

and successful projects. Rather than sitting back and waiting for us to walk in with plans, they would stop by and just inspect what was ready. That's huge. Now, we're working together in collaboration to get this thing done."

In the two years since opening, Bitwise Industries has helped launch more than 20 new startups and has trained more than 2,500 developers through its Geekwise Academy. Bitwise offshoot Shift3, a customer software developer, now employs more than 100 developers, many of them Geekwise alumni. The company has also expanded to a second, larger location in downtown Fresno with private offices, co-work facilities, an on-site coffee shop, restaurants and retail. Between its two locations, Bitwise now houses more than 100 local tech companies.

Soberal points to a Brookings Institution report that ranked Fresno as the fourth fastest-growing metro area in the U.S. He says there's still a lot of work to do to make Fresno a global tech hub, but looking at Bitwise's rapid growth, he's hopeful: "Now there are companies that are buying their own buildings and starting to grow," he says. "There are other people working to start businesses in downtown Fresno that serve the people we're bringing in. It's working, and we're just two and a half years in. It's an indicator of things to come."

# Pine Ridge Reservation, SD: Matching Government Resources to a Bold, Community-Led Plan to Create Opportunity

After more than a century of conflict and broken promises, the federal government is finding new ways to fill a support role as the Oglala Lakota tribe plots a path toward change—on its own terms.

The Oglala Lakota tribe of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is a community that refuses to give up. Situated in the shadow of South Dakota's Black Hills, where the U.S. Seventh Cavalry once killed dozens men, women and children on the banks of Wounded Knee Creek, the reservation has had to grapple with centuries of exclusion, broken promises and the lack of opportunity that comes with geographic isolation. The community still faces high unemployment and a chronic housing shortage—but local leaders are stepping up to create change on their own terms.

"You have to define for yourself what you want," tribal member Jennifer Irving says. "Don't scale back, don't hold back, because our ancestors didn't hold back. If they believed in something, they went forward without fear."

Irving is a director at the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation in Pine Ridge, an organization of young tribal members who are finding innovative ways to bring opportunity to the reservation.

Thunder Valley grew out of a prayer circle in 2007, in which a group of young people talked about the reservation's challenges and the example set by the Oglala Lakota's historical leader Crazy Horse. "At a time when government was encroaching on our territory, he didn't step out in fear, he stepped out in hope," Irving says. "We carry that principle with us in a lot of the work that we do here at Thunder Valley."

Thunder Valley executive director Nick Tilsen secured funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to launch a regional planning process that brought community members together for hundreds of hours of interviews, discussions and "visioning" sessions. Irving says: "We were asking questions about what you want for your future, what you want for your community. We wanted to hear from not just the typical folks that you see at meetings all the time. So it was going out to different places and saying, 'We want to hear from everybody, so you're all invited.'"

Two main goals that came out of those community conversations were increasing job opportunities and building more housing on the reservation. As things stood, the high costs of transporting building materials and construction companies to the rural area combined with complex land use restrictions had left the reservation with average of one house for every 10 residents. Often, the houses were

## Sample Stories

small, off-the-grid and in need of repair.

With help from tribal leaders, local non-profits and businesses, and state and federal partners, Thunder Valley purchased 34 acres on the reservation and began planning a housing development of 21 single-family homes that would be affordable, energy-efficient and sustainably built. To make that vision a reality, Thunder Valley would train interested young people in design and construction, giving them the opportunity to change the face of their community through a worker-owned construction company.

In January 2015, Thunder Valley brought on 10 community members between the ages of 18 and 26 for classroom and hands-on training in sustainable construction. "We started reaching out to schools and local families to see who is out there that wants to do something different," explains Matt Kull, workforce development program manager for the group. "We had 48 applicants this year, and selected them mostly based on motivation."

By October 2015, the program's first cohort of trainees had finished their training and built a sustainably constructed home to serve as a model for the rest of the development. Since then, Thunder Valley has recruited a second round of trainees and is finding ways to engage the broader community in constructing the new neighborhood.

"This development is really a catalyst to create larger systemic change," Irving says.

And Thunder Valley is thinking beyond housing. The development will include an "empowerment center" that will include local artist live/work spaces, a youth activity center, a farmers market and a community garden. Through a "food sovereignty initiative," young community members are learning to grow their own food, some of which is distributed to the community free of charge.

Thunder Valley has set in motion a wave of revitalization, but it isn't working alone. In partnership with tribal leaders, the organization was able to get the reservation declared a Promise Zone in early 2015, which has brought government innovators into the community to offer hands-on strategic advice and tailor funding programs to Pine Ridge's needs.

Irving says that the key to systematic change is building a system of productive partnerships: "If we just built this here, it wouldn't be enough," she emphasizes, "We can't be the only players in the room."

The Promise Zone is the next stage in a process of bringing together partners to create a bigger movement beyond the 34 acres on which the development sits. "You can't just throw money at something," Irving says. "You really have to have coordinated efforts. And that's what Promise Zone really provides for us—an opportunity to collaborate locally where we didn't really collaborate before."

"It helps us and other nonprofits and the tribe to be able to lay out our plans—and then have the federal agencies work together to figure out how to deploy resources into this community," she says. It's precisely the opposite of a top-down federal effort.

"It can't just be infrastructure," Irving says. "It can't just be education. You really need to build out an entire community, then let that trickle out and create regional change."

# Pine Ridge Reservation, SD: Leveraging Disaster-Recovery Assistance to Build a More Resilient Community

When natural disaster hit the isolated Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Del Brewer, with the support of tribal leadership, built a community-led partnership with federal innovators who could fast-track requests for aid, tailor programs to meet the area's unique circumstances and help build a foundation for long-term resilience.

Del Brewer is a local leader from the Pine Ridge reservation who spent his career working for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. When a storm and severe flooding decimated his community in May 2015, Brewer worked with President John Yellow Bird Steele of Pine Ridge's Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe to assess the damage and write directly to President Obama requesting aid. In August, the President declared Pine Ridge a disaster zone, and help was on the way.

From his 16 years at FEMA, Brewer knew the agency's standard operating procedures wouldn't work on the reservation. Fortunately, a recent change in the law enabled FEMA to work directly with sovereign tribal nations, and Pine Ridge was the first tribal community that wouldn't have to rely on the state as middleman. The agency would have to learn to work with a sovereign nation, building trust and forging relationships. On top of that, many of the homes most severely damaged were off the grid. For families who lived far down a washed-out road or lacked running water, rebuilding wasn't as simple as calling a contractor. More than 300 families were in unlivable conditions, and most would need help relocating while repairs were underway. On a reservation where complex land use rules, geographic isolation and a harsh winter made construction difficult—and a severe housing shortage meant the average home slept 10—there weren't many places to go.

If FEMA took the traditional approach of cutting checks for families to cover the cost of the damage, many repairs wouldn't get done, and the local narrative of a federal government that perpetually falls short of its treaty obligations would continue.

With Brewer's help, FEMA decided to innovate. The agency wouldn't walk away after funding was distributed, but instead would mobilize federal and community partners and commit to working on-site with families to make sure each house was livable. In some cases, that meant major infrastructure overhauls—putting in septic tanks and bringing in power and water lines, for instance. Brewer worked full-time representing the local community, and spoke daily with FEMA's coordinating officer to ensure progress.

Brewer says the project faces daily challenges, but things are moving quickly. Teams worked through the winter to tear down damaged houses and connect new utilities; they are even using microwave

## Sample Stories

technology to heat the ground and help teams build foundations for the new homes.

Other government agencies are essential to the rebuilding effort. The FEMA response has been rolled into a Promise Zones initiative, a ten-year designation that gives the community priority status when applying for federal funding and that has brought in teams of officials from several agencies to assist on a range of projects.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development contributed money for portable homes for displaced families, and the Federal Highway Administration is making \$5 million of road repairs. Del says this responsive, collaborative model is having tremendous impact.

Brewer also worked hard to build a coalition with community partners like Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation and Tribal leadership, who are working together to build a local planning department for the Oglala Sioux Tribe that can coordinate crucial efforts like land use, economic development and building codes.

For Brewer, long-term thinking is the key. He says that “it’s going to take an elaborate, collaborative, coordinated effort” to help Pine Ridge recover from the disaster. The effort, he thinks, will make Pine Ridge a stronger, more resilient community.

# Pine Ridge Reservation, SD: Leveraging Community Conversations to Reimagine Government Support

On a reservation charting a path forward after a series of youth suicides, government innovators like Tom Morris are re-evaluating old assumptions about their role in supporting the community. They're stepping back to listen to local leaders, taking the time to understand the area's unique needs—and acting on what they learn.

In early 2015, healthcare providers near the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota were overwhelmed. The small community was mourning several young people lost to suicide and looking for answers on how to prevent more suicides. The local hospital helped survivors, but didn't have the resources for full-scale prevention efforts. Responsibility fell on school counselors to identify students struggling with suicidal urges and help others process their grief. Only two of the counselors at the 24 local schools were trained mental health professionals.

By the summer, President John Yellow Bird Steele of Pine Ridge's Oglala Lakota Tribe had declared a state of emergency on the reservation, a move that triggered much-needed financial relief. Local leaders secured \$218,000 in emergency federal aid from the Department of Education's Project SERV (School Emergency Response to Violence) to support a community-healing program rooted in Lakota culture. At about the same time, the Obama Administration approved the Pine Ridge community's application to create a Promise Zone, meaning the area would receive hands-on support from innovators across several federal agencies as well as priority status in applications for federal aid.

Tom Morris, a rural health administrator working for the U.S. Department of Health and Human services, was one of the federal workers that the Promise Zone initiative brought to Pine Ridge. His office had a plan: partnering with South Dakota's Avera Health System in order to bring telehealth services into six tribal schools. The idea was that videoconferencing technology could connect students with physicians and other off-site health care providers, in effect bringing a whole new range of health services to the community.

Morris traveled to Pine Ridge in January 2016 with officials from several other government agencies to meet Pine Ridge's school leaders, counselors, local health care professionals and others at a session organized by the Department of Education. But sitting in a circle of chairs in the Pine Ridge High School gym and talking with these leaders, Morris soon realized that his office's telehealth plan needed to change.

The local leaders pointed out that the proposed telehealth sites were overly concentrated in one area of the reservation, putting them out of reach of many residents (who lacked transportation). They



warned that telehealth locations needed special considerations like soundproofing to protect student privacy. And they warned that students would be reluctant to trust providers they hadn't met in person, especially if the remote providers had little or no knowledge of Lakota culture.

Morris says that the community conversations completely changed the way he saw his role. "I had read and learned about Pine Ridge for years and had never had the opportunity to visit," he said. "The first thing I realized after coming back [from Pine Ridge] was that we need to be more inclusive in how we move forward in the planning of the schools and the timeline of the selection."

Morris says talking to local leaders helped inspire new ideas about how to use technology to meet the community's healthcare needs. His team is working with Pine Ridge leaders to mix remote health services with occasional in-person sessions to help Pine Ridge children build relationships with faraway providers. What's more, they are considering ways to use videoconferencing to help parents stay connected with children who are receiving inpatient care off the reservation. The work is at an early stage, but Morris says his main goals are now 1) making his office is responsive to the community throughout the process, and 2) serving as a reliable resource as local officials craft solutions.

"The bottom line is it's got to be community-driven, community-led," he says. "All we have to do is partner with them to reach their goals."

# Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota: Streamlining Government Grants to Fight Hunger

Local leader Bill Pulliam had a goal: that no child on his reservation would have to be hungry. With the help of federal and local government officials, the he helped to expand food-assistance programs—and tailor the programs to residents' needs.

For 40 years, tribal member Bill Pulliam has worked with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), helping to oversee meals and nutrition at local schools. His former role as a food service manager for seven schools across the reservation made Bill a well-known and well-liked member of the Oglala Lakota community. Though he only works at Pine Ridge High School now, Bill still wants to ensure that no child on the reservation goes hungry.

The reservation's high unemployment rate and lack of opportunity means putting food on the table can be tough for many families. Schools therefore play an important role in providing food for students. Federal programs aim to meet these nutritional needs with national guidelines on what can be served at schools—but those guidelines don't always translate for kids in Pine Ridge, especially those who live in dormitories on school days because of the distance on reservations, who crave a home-cooked meal, such as bean soup, skillet bread and lima bean tacos.

Pulliam wanted to provide food to children outside of school hours—but he had to get other people to commit to that goal, too. Serving food after-hours required getting staff to agree to work later and having someone from the BIE present to oversee it. Local residents were willing to work longer hours, but Pulliam still needed to find the money to get the food and pay the staff for their work. The resources that came with being designated a Promise Zone helped Pine Ridge overcome these challenges. Officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture joined the community conversation, and they connected the people of Pine Ridge to their At-Risk Afterschool Meals program, while bringing in other productive partners, such as the Oglala Lakota College, which served as the sponsor that coordinated the supper program.

Because of students' lack of access to food, school meals that stick closely to national guidelines aren't always enough. Pulliam spoke with Sandra Kangas of the South Dakota Department of Education's Child and Adult Nutrition Services, and received permission let students get second helpings at supper, showing flexibility with nutrition plans. Schools let children decide what they need second helpings of, whether it's fruit or a whole tray of food. Then the school can refund the cost of these meals through the state.

The USDA partnered with Pulliam on his goal to serve all the kids on the reservation, and helped him hire buses to shuttle kids in from other schools.

## Sample Stories

"The buses drop them off. We'll feed them. They'll take the kids back," says Bill.

Currently, the program serves 100 to 150 children; it's expected to grow to serve 300 to 350 children.

But serving kids only during the school year wasn't enough for Pulliam.

On January 14, 2016, Bill entered the Pine Ridge High School Gymnasium, which was filled with local leaders, reservation educators and federal innovators from all over the country. They were all gathered, under the aegis of the Promise Zone initiative, to address one question: How can we work side-by-side to make Pine Ridge a better place in general for the kids of the Oglala Lakota tribe?

The issue of food was high on the agenda. In one corner of the gym, Pulliam and other local leaders told federal officials that they wanted to expand the meal program into the summer. Once again, they needed funding, food sources, transportation—and more staff.

Debby Hammack of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service told Pulliam that the grant they were using through the Child and Adult Food Care Program could be flexible: She would work with him to set up a summer program. AmeriCorps said it might be able to supply volunteers who could transport students.

Federal officials showed that they wanted to stay committed to support Pulliam and the work that he is doing, and set up another meeting in May 2016 to work towards making these efforts a reality.

Excited about these efforts, Bill is always still looking to the future. A top goal is to allow children to live at the dormitory seven days a week, to make the provision of food and other social services easier. "Our seven-day dorm, that's the big one right now." His federal and local partners are working with him on that project, too. "We get to keep these kids here seven days a week, then we'll have to feed them seven days a week," he says. "That's the biggest problem right now—money. They're trying to work on that. A lot of people help though. A few from USDA push it."

# Southeast Kentucky: Empowering Local Entrepreneurs to Create 21st-Century Job Opportunities

When community conversations got Kentucky entrepreneurs talking about building a new business that would train former coal miners as coders, government investment offered the help they needed to turn their idea into reality. Now they have self-sustaining business and are creating jobs locally.

In 2010, layoffs were on the rise in southeast Kentucky's coal mining industry, yet more evidence of the sector's long-term decline. And with few opportunities in the area besides mining, community members who went to college often didn't return. Southeast Kentucky didn't seem like a viable place to build a career.

For Pikeville business leaders Charles "Rusty" Justice and M. Lynn Parrish, that was unacceptable.

Justice and Parrish were two of the hundreds of local leaders brought into large-scale community conversations about how to revive Kentucky's faltering economy through the Shaping Our Appalachian Region initiative (SOAR). Led by Governor Steve Beshear and U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers, SOAR sparked economic revitalization by connecting local leaders, highlighting successful job-growth strategies and distributing funds to get it all done.

Through SOAR, Justice and Parrish attended a fact-finding trip to Lexington-based tech incubator Awesome, Inc., where they connected with a local developer, Justin Hall. Looking at the success of Lexington's economy, the three of them agreed that a tech sector was exactly what southeast Kentucky needed. Together, they decided to start Bit Source, a software development company that would draw its workers from an unusual labor pool: The company would teach coal miners how to code. The U.S. Department of Labor and its partner, the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP), loved the idea and offered funding to help get Bit Source off the ground.

Justice, Parrish and Hall set up shop in a converted Coca-Cola plant in the small town of Pikeville, and with EKCEP's help put out a radio ad to attract coal miners interested in learning how to code. Their ad attracted 900 applications for 10 job openings.

For most of the miners, the transition was easier than one might expect.

"Coal miners are engineers—they're very good problem solvers," said Hall, "They just use different tools."

As one Bit Source hire told a local paper, "I think one of the big misconceptions about coal miners is that we're given up on as being intellectually inferior.... When your life depends on the decisions you

make, you don't last long if you don't make good decisions and have a real refined critical thinking process."

For the ten Bit Source hires, the opportunity came at exactly the right time. Some had been just days away from leaving Kentucky—or worse, from declaring bankruptcy. Thanks to EKCEP's support, they weren't just trainees. They had the stability of a full paycheck on day one.

For 22 weeks, they buckled down to learn how to create websites, apps and video games. Through Bit Source, the former miners became full-time developers, and now work with local clientele, including SOAR. Bit Source's leaders hope that they can continue playing a role in Kentucky's revitalization by helping other businesses build websites that will help them connect with the rest of the country and grow their own local businesses.

# Southeast Kentucky: Customizing Education Through Federal and Local Productive Partnerships

As a director in education outreach at Berea College, Dreama Gentry feared that rural Appalachian Kentucky was at a disadvantage, lacking the resources and attention to create robust educational systems for local students. A productive partnership with the local and federal government helped southeast Kentucky find resources beyond funding, by having government work side-by-side with local leaders to customize learning experiences for students and to bring other community members to the table.

Berea College educational outreach expert Dreama Gentry has been working on increasing college readiness in her native Appalachia for two decades. For years, her work has been complicated by the region's lack of education funding. "There are no foundations or corporations whose home fight is in rural Kentucky," Gentry says. Rural areas were often overlooked, she says.

So in 2011, when the Department of Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs program (GEAR UP) solicited proposals for six-year grants and partnerships to improve the lives of children and families, Gentry and her Partners for Education team at Berea College seized the opportunity.

GEAR UP gave Gentry the resources to deploy multiple strategies at the high school level. "With GEAR UP, we provided math teachers with professional development and placed academic specialists in schools to ensure that all students were at grade level," she said.

That same year, the Department of Education also offered Berea College a Promise Neighborhood grant to Gentry and her team continue strengthening education networks in the area.

The Promise Neighborhoods program offered Gentry access to experts she might never have encountered otherwise. She was able to talk to the Harlem Children's Zone about its cradle-to-career approach, and officials from the Education Department came to Kentucky to train the Berea College team on how to modify that basic framework to better fit the distinct needs of the region.

The Promise Neighborhood also connected Gentry's team with partners working on related issues across the region, encouraging them to share data and build complementary programs. Through collaboration, Gentry's team was able to look beyond things like ACT scores, and access data on other issues that can affect a student's performance, such as homelessness, a parent in prison or bullying. The information gave Gentry and her the chance to take a customized approach that met each student's needs.

"Through the Promise Neighborhood grant, we've developed an infrastructure that is aware of students and their needs and data," Gentry says.

In January 2014, the area got even more support. The federal government announced that southeast Kentucky would be the first rural recipient of a Promise Zone designation, which brought in additional federal agencies to look at a community as a whole, and encouraging even more cross-sector partnerships.

Support from the Promise Zone encouraged Berea College's Grow Appalachia program, for instance, to engage with with local churches to help teach residents how to grow food and providing residents with seeds, gardening tools and technical assistance. Grow Appalachia went on to connect some of these local food growers with schools, in order to provide locally-sourced and healthy lunches for students.

The Promise Zone encouraged Gentry to think bigger and find ways to connect her education work to job preparedness efforts.

The federal efforts had connected Gentry's with Jeff Whitehead, head of the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program. Gentry and Whitehead had been working toward similar goals, but in an uncoordinated way. "In discussions, we realized we had never talked about how workforce and education have to go hand-in-hand." Gentry said.

In 2015, Gentry and Whitehead started the Performance Partnership Pilot for Disconnected Youth, a federally funded program that is tracking data on young people who are disconnected from school and full-time work and offering communities a unique opportunity to test innovative, cost-effective, and outcome-focused strategies for improving results for disconnected youth.

Though some of these efforts are new, Gentry is hopeful that these efforts will become self-sustaining as the community starts to improve.

# Southeast Kentucky: Leveraging Community Conversations to Drive Economic Diversity

When residents of southeast Kentucky agreed that broadband Internet would help them build a diverse economy, federal and private partners found funding to help them build one of the nation's fastest broadband networks. Government partners went further, building on that investment through tech-sector job training and telehealth initiatives.

Jared Arnett's experience working with the Southeast Kentucky Chamber of Commerce to diversify the region's economy made him the perfect person to lead the Shaping Our Appalachian Region initiative (SOAR). The first SOAR summit convened members of the community in Pikeville for a conversation on how to improve the region on December 9, 2013. As the scheduled start of the event grew closer, a blizzard raged outside, and Arnett and his team weren't sure anyone would show up.

1,700 people attended. The community showed that they were hungry to make their home better.

According to the attendees, the community's biggest need was for a broadband connection. In the United States, roughly 19 percent of people live in rural areas. But of all Americans who lack access to broadband Internet, almost half of them are in rural areas. Without Internet, rural Americans like the people in southeast Kentucky find doors to information, connectedness and economic diversity closed to them.

An attempt had already been made to get rural Kentucky connected, but the broadband that emerged from that effort was too slow and unreliable, cutting in and out—and it only served some members of the community.

Private and public partners pitched in to change the situation. The federal government gave \$20 million in grants. The state added \$30 million in state bonds, and the Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development office contributed \$30 million. From McCord Capital, they received \$270 million.

Arnett boasts that with these efforts, southeast Kentucky will have a broadband fiber network that has one of the top five of 50 fastest Internet networks.

Getting everyone connected, though, is just the beginning.

The federal government recognized the strides southeast Kentucky was making and designated the region the first rural Promise Zone in 2014.



## Sample Stories

Through the Promise Zone, SOAR brought other partners to the table to help diversify Kentucky's economy, taking advantage of the new broadband. "We're working with our workforce-investment board and workforce agencies to completely transform how we think about workforce development," says Arnett. The Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program has organized classes to teach people how to code. The board's telework program has expanded job opportunities for people who face transportation or other challenges. It has landed telework positions for 200 people by training them how to use the necessary software and then connecting them with employers.

Broadband has clearly produced a multiplier effect, making possible new telehealth programs as well—a venture supported by SOAR and the Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation. Education was another big concern at the SOAR summit. Broadband, of course, opens up many resources on that front, too.

"Before SOAR, I think there was a loss of hope, and a belief that coal was the only thing we could ever be, but we've tried to inspire a lot of action," Arnett says. "One of my strategies is to be a champion for new Appalachia, to be optimistic, tell the story of what we can do, what we can be."

---

# New Orleans, LA: Empowering Community Members to Chart Their Own Path Toward Opportunity

Local government official Ashley Gardere helped convene community conversations in New Orleans' Claiborne Corridor to ensure residents led the way in building a job growth strategy that truly met their needs.

Ashleigh Gardere knows that if you want to revitalize a community, you have to start with the people who live there.

Gardere, a senior advisor to New Orleans Mayor Mitchell Landrieu, learned that lesson while working to revitalize the city's Claiborne Corridor, an area of seven diverse neighborhoods that has struggled to bounce back from Hurricane Katrina.

"You're wasting your time if you don't have robust community engagement," she says. "If the community doesn't feel like they're helping shape policies, those policies won't last."

Gardere and her colleagues started the process by listening to New Orleanians. With funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Transportation, the city engaged residents in a series of in-depth interviews and public meetings. The results were clear: Residents consistently pointed to job growth and opportunity as the top priorities for their neighborhoods.

Gardere reached out to major New Orleans employers in order to solidify a core group of "anchor institutions"—large local organizations like hospitals and airports with a long-term stake in the area. Nestled inside the Claiborne area, New Orleans' medical district in particular had the potential to be a major employer for locals.

But the listening didn't stop there. The city held focus groups and interviews with employers to find out how local agencies could support local businesses—to find out what would make them more likely to expand payrolls—and it hired unemployed community members to survey residents of the Claiborne Corridor. The city also held focus groups with African-American men in the area (who had a 52 percent unemployment rate) and with representatives of local nonprofits and social service agencies, in hopes of understanding the challenges and barriers that were keeping people from employment.

One idea that emerged was creating targeted training programs to prepare commonly excluded groups, like previously incarcerated men, to re-enter the workforce. To make sure the city built an effective program, officials brought together major employers, job seekers and social workers to design a series of targeted job training programs, Job1 and STRIVE New Orleans. The programs were designed to give job seekers the skills and confidence they needed to get jobs at the local hospital

## Sample Stories

and airport, and in the private and government sectors.

Including residents in the process resulted not only in better programs but also in a sense of empowerment that has resonated. “I think residents of New Orleans feel powerful, like their voice matters, that they can influence more than what happens in their neighborhood—but policy as well,” Gardere says. “I think folks are participating in New Orleans in a way that they didn’t pre-Katrina, and have really learned how to organize their voice and advocate successfully for the things that matter to them.”

# Baltimore, MD: Leveraging Partnerships to Open Job Opportunities for Baltimore's Youth

In the wake of the 2015 protests in Baltimore, the White House built a team of innovators from across 20 government agencies to support local leaders' efforts to create job opportunities for the city's youth. Building a partnership with local business owners and community organizations, they met their goal of offering summer jobs to 8,000 young people and found creative ways to amplify their impact along the way.

When unrest broke out in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray, the Obama administration wanted to find a way to help residents foster genuine change in their communities. Baltimore residents faced deeply embedded challenges of crime, poor housing, limited employment opportunities and systemic discrimination. Though the federal government could offer resources, lasting reform wasn't something that could come from Washington.

The White House brought together a team of innovators from across 20 federal agencies. Their task: to find creative ways to leverage federal funding and help Baltimore identify the best strategies to empower its residents. With their support, the city identified short-term goals that might at least chip away at the deep-rooted problems. Their first priority was to improve the odds that young people in Baltimore could land a summer job.

For 30 years, the city's YouthWorks program had offered Baltimore young people job opportunities at schools, parks, senior centers and elsewhere. The smaller Hire One Youth program, begun by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake in 2012, also placed some young workers with private companies. The workforce programs were a proven success at keeping kids in school and preparing them for the workforce, but were too small to meet the community's needs. The city expected to have 5,000 job openings for 2015, but that summer, 8,000 people signed up for the programs. The city committed to finding jobs for every one of them.

To meet that goal, Baltimore engaged local philanthropies and business leaders to help them identify as many local businesses as possible who might have job openings. The federal partners identified relevant federal grant programs, and guided locals through the complex funding applications.

That team effort enabled the city to go above and beyond its goals.

Federal partners traveled to Baltimore weekly to talk with community members and work hands-on with city leadership. That helped them tailor federal aid to the community's needs. The federal team maintained daily contact with City Hall, and did whatever possible to remove roadblocks, flag research

## Sample Stories

on best practices and leverage their knowledge of grant opportunities to bring in as much funding as possible.

With the help of its partners, Baltimore was able to offer all 8,000 jobs, but because of their close working relationships, city leaders and federal innovators found opportunities to expand their impact.

With help from the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and philanthropic funders, the city piloted a program that offered local children three full meals a day at parks, recreation centers, schools and other public facilities. The city tied that program to an existing community policing initiative, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services, by having police officers help distribute the food. That gave community members and police opportunities to interact and rebuild relationships.

Other federal agencies built complementary programs: They forged relationships within Baltimore's growing tech sector, co-hosting training sessions to help low income young people break into the industry. They created art and counseling programs to help young move past violence in the community, and they improved housing standards in low income neighborhoods.

Though Baltimore is still working to increase opportunity in many areas, the city's collaboration with the federal government has helped set reform in motion. The Department of Labor is now offering a grant program to other cities who want to create similar summer employment programs, and it has adopted many lessons learned from Baltimore.

---

# San Antonio, TX: Making Streets Brighter and Safer With Responsive Government

After San Antonio's previous efforts to help Eastside residents ended in disappointment, local officials and activists convened community conversations to identify the area's real needs, and realized that new streetlights would go a long way toward helping residents feel safe in their neighborhoods.

When the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) learned that the city's Eastside had received a Promise Zone designation, officials knew that this was their chance to get their city on its feet.

Residents had become disenchanted with the city's lackluster past efforts at renewal. Politicians had sworn that a new sports center would bring new jobs to the community and serve as an anchor for development, for instance. But the project fell through, adding to a feeling that local government wasn't on the right track.

When the time came for a community conversation about the Promise Zone initiative, officials at SAHA wanted to set things right. At the meetings they convened, they got an earful about neighborhood safety. "The residents complained about the crime and the darkness in the evening," residents said. "They had to make sure they got home by dark because after dark it was too dangerous, and the sidewalks didn't have enough lighting."

Before SAHA could start to effect change, officials knew they had to rebuild their relationship with the community. In order to understand what residents dealt with when they walked through these neighborhoods, they organized an extensive nighttime walk with police.

"We were shocked at how dark it got and the visuals," SAHA said. "As you know, public housing has a lot of single moms and kids, so there's a lot of women having to come out alone after dark."

This hands-on approach yielded fast results. Soon after their walk, the SAHA team spoke with their superiors. The agency made it a priority to fix every broken light, and to install new lights in eastern San Antonio.

Out of that community engagement, local officials have seen a multiplier effect. The change has become self-sustaining as the federal designation period comes to a close. Now SAHA is seeking ways to improve the Eastside's community's design. Residents "wanted it to look like houses, not apartments. They wanted a park on-site, a swimming pool, a senior development. We had several seniors living on the development. They wanted a place of their own. We're building an 80-unit elderly development right on-site."

# San Antonio, TX: Leveraging Partnerships, Expertise and Data to Give Former Inmates a Second Chance in the Job Market

A Department of Justice grant gave San Antonio's housing authority a new chance to tackle crime. More than just money, housing officials like Adrian Lopez got hands-on assistance from federal innovators on evidence-based strategies that transformed the lives of people looking to escape the cycle of prison, probation and re-arrest.

When the Eastside of San Antonio was designated as a Choice Neighborhood in 2012, efforts by the city's housing authority to transform that neighborhood into a thriving one received a major boost. But community meetings revealed that crime was one of the biggest concerns of local residents, and crime prevention was largely outside the scope of the Choice program, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Choice more typically focuses on physical improvements and neighborhood service programs.

Exercising flexibility, the federal government gave the community another boon: a Department of Justice Byrne Grant, which is designed to help with crime prevention and court programs. It was given to the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA), not the typical recipient for a Byrne Grant, which usually goes to law enforcement bodies. Adrian Lopez, an official at the authority, knew he had been given a unique opportunity. The catch was figuring out where to start.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) worked with Lopez and his team to figure out where the money could be most effectively spent. The DOJ took a hands-on approach with their Byrne recipients, inviting them to trainings and convenings where they could connect with people facing similar issues, and receive hands-on assistance from experts. In a trip to Seattle, for instance, Lopez learned about how the city used data and research to address crime strategically.

The grant linked SAHA with experts at Trinity University, the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin. For a year and a half, Lopez worked with the universities to create evidence-based strategies to tackle the crime rates in the community by using data about locations, rates of repeat arrests and information from focus groups with community members.

One of the biggest hurdles was helping people on probation get back on their feet. "They were not only arrested but were getting re-arrested and re-arrested," he says, "And their outlook on life wouldn't be good. No one would hire them, and opportunities for school and other things would be severely damaged."

Next, the DOJ put Adrian in contact with LIFT, who helped Lopez create what became known as the Resurgence Collaborative. It was a productive partnership among 20 community organizations, who

shared the goal of helping people and their families transition from the criminal justice system and back into the Eastside San Antonio community.

Adrian and his team coordinated with probation officers, who would help former inmates with issues of transportation; they would also coordinate with former inmates' employers so the men and women could report for probation check-ins.

Working with people in the criminal justice system wasn't enough, according to the data. Many of these people also faced personal problems with substance abuse and violence. A new strategy the collaborative used was having former inmates in the program check into substance abuse centers.

"One of the partners is a rape crisis center, which is a new addition to the community," Lopez said. "They had never had a presence in that area." Initially, community members scratched their head, unsure of the connection between the Resurgence Collaborative's various endeavors—but data provided the answer. "50 to 60 percent of people in prison are victims of rape—men or women."

Lopez wanted the reforming residents to have a sense of ownership over their community. Some of the jobs that former inmates do include building or painting, which lets them contribute to the improvement of the neighborhood.

At a local press conference, Lopez saw results of the work from the grant and the resulting collaborative. City council members, the mayor, the district judge, district attorney and even the U.S. Congressman for the area were in attendance to support SAHA's efforts. A young man told the story of how the collaborative changed his life.

"This kid had his whole family present because he had been in the negative, but he was given the opportunity to put his name on something that was larger and would be there for a long time," Lopez said of the young man's newfound work. "His whole family was extremely grateful. It could have been the opposite. He could have been with the family because he had gotten in trouble—but we offered him the positive."





THIS REPORT AND THE METHODOLOGIES AND SAMPLES CONTAINED HEREIN ARE THE INTELLECTUAL  
PROPERTY OF HATTAWAY COMMUNICATIONS, INC. COPYRIGHT ©2016.  
HATTAWAY COMMUNICATIONS, INC. PERMITS THE PUBLIC TO SHARE THIS WORK UNDER AN  
ATTRIBUTION-NONCOMMERCIAL-NODERIVATIVES CREATIVE COMMONS 4.0 INTERNATIONAL LICENSE.  
ALL OTHER RIGHTS ARE RESERVED BY HATTAWAY COMMUNICATIONS, INC.