



COLLECTIVE IMPACT FELLOWSHIP

Advanced Framework 2020

Summary

The Rider-Pool Foundation was established in 1953 by Leonard Parker and Dorothy Rider Pool to improve the quality of life in the community, to build on the community's strengths and add to its vitality, and to increase the capacity of the community to serve the needs of all its citizens. In its history serving the Lehigh Valley region, The Foundation provided financial and leadership support to education, the arts, social services, and community development initiatives.

Working alongside The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust, the two organizations moved into the late 1990s with a sharpened focus on place-based philanthropy and the social determinants of health as indicators of community well-being at a neighborhood level. After 15 years of discovery, intentional community-focused research, and noted attention turned to the center city of Allentown, The Foundation launched several innovative initiatives, including The Collective Impact Fellowship Program. After meeting an initial goal of training 50 community leaders by 2019, the program continued through the national crisis of COVID-19.

As 2020 ends, The Fellowship stands ready to incorporate an advanced framework for a seventh fellowship cohort. Through cross-sector collaboration with key partners, data that measure and describe needs and assets at a neighborhood level, authentic involvement of the people most affected by disparities in well-being, and the development of a backbone infrastructure to sustain the work after the Fellowship; Cohort 7 will lay the groundwork for community improvement in and around the neighborhoods of Census Tracts 18 and 20. The Fellowship will encourage replication in other areas.

Introduction

The Rider-Pool Collective Impact Fellowship is a place-based professional development training for nonprofit and government leaders in the Lehigh Valley. Established in 2014, its original goal was to increase regional capacity to address complex social issues through cross-sector partnerships by training fifty Fellows over a five-year period.

The Fellowship brings together leaders from a variety of sectors – including health care, education, regional planning, transportation, arts, human and social services and law enforcement – for 150 hours of dedicated training and coaching through a nine-month program. Participants receive in-depth training in leadership, communication and messaging, evaluation methods, and community engagement strategies provided by nationally recognized instructors including directors at nonprofits and think tanks, executive coaches, and higher education faculty. The Fellowship has also evolved to include a Community of Practice component, which are peer-led monthly meetings for Fellows from all cohort years to come together to continue their learning and conversations around issues of collaboration.



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The Fellowship was built on the following shared values and guiding principles:

- Individually, we cannot impact complex social issues and sustain change, but we can when we connect and co-create with cross-sector partners.
- Our partnerships are based on trust, connectivity and the desire to understand each other's perspectives.
- As influencers in our sectors, we must encourage the development of unique system leadership skills that allow for shared power and authority.
- When we design and implement an initiative, there will be a priority placed on equity.
- All work should include those with lived experience.
- Data must drive discovery and help us to continuously learn, adapt, and improve.
- We should only measure what matters.
- We learn from all experiences, no matter what the outcome.
- Neutral entities (e.g.; backbone organization, community quarterback) are important partners in this work.

History

The Rider-Pool Foundation Collective Impact Fellowship developed from the intersection of multiple factors including:

- a forward-thinking Board of Trustees looking for innovative ways to invest in the local community using pro-active, place-based strategies,
- the creation of the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) in Center City Allentown,
- a Foundation-sponsored Social Reconnaissance Report,
- and a region-wide interest in the vision and strategies of collective impact and other cross-sector partnerships.

In 2011, an unprecedented economic boom moved into center city Allentown, catalyzed by the creation of the NIZ, and solidified by the relocation of several leading Lehigh Valley companies. This movement continues to position the downtown as a major business and entertainment hub for the region.

Ensuring long-term success and community-wide benefits of this transformation will largely depend upon significant improvements to quality of life – including housing, health, education, public safety, and jobs – in the neighborhoods surrounding the NIZ. In 2012, The Rider-Pool Foundation conducted a Social Reconnaissance Report that outlined a community profile of current dynamics in the region that could help or hinder a broad health strategy. While the urban core near the NIZ was experiencing a renaissance and commitment from the private sector, the surrounding neighborhoods still faced high rates of poverty, low graduation rates, and high disparities in physical and behavioral health. One of the themes that emerged from the profile was the need for a new kind of leadership that is unbiased, inclusive, ecumenical, and addresses the lack of “system continuity.”



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At the same time, The Rider-Pool Trustees were interested in developing a proactive grantmaking approach that allowed them to strategically invest funds in organizations that impact housing, education, food and nutrition and mental well-being. Over a period of five years, they shifted Rider-Pool's funding model to 100% proactive grant-making.

During these years of development, The Rider-Pool Foundation, along with The Pool Trust in partnership with LVHN, convened conversations with nationally recognized organizations including The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Center for Disease Control, and Purpose Built Communities, while continuously shaping funding toward the social determinants of health. It was then, in 2014, that The Rider-Pool Foundation launched the first Collective Impact Fellowship cohort, and in 2019, reached the intended goal of training 50 fellows in 5 years.

To evaluate The Fellowship, The Foundation used several techniques. Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) is a qualitative evaluation method for complex programs that are likely to produce intended and unintended outcomes. Initiated by CI Fellows and developed by Mary Emery (who provided technical assistance to our evaluation and hosted a Fellowship Community of Practice), REM is an inexpensive, easy-to-administer field evaluation, intended to be directional and formative, not empirical. The process allowed the participants to self-identify "ripples" emanating from the program or intervention work. Ripple Effect Mapping also provided the Fellowship with a solid Theory of Action based on the development of capacity in several key "capitals."

During the fifth year of the Fellowship program, all 50 fellows were invited to a retreat to reflect on the learnings and shape the future direction of this work. Interviews and evaluations from that retreat in December of 2018 show the Fellowship had built stronger connectivity within and between non-profit sectors and with government agencies and demonstrated an increase of information-sharing around complex social issues. These findings were also supported in a 2020 Social Network Analysis.

The Rider-Pool Foundation Trustees were pleased with the success of The Fellowship and elected to continue the program. The sixth cohort of The Fellowship was in place during the COVID-19 crisis. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, new ways to connect, learn, and respond were developed, and the program continued through completion.

The New Framework

Lessons learned through the last six years have led to more innovation. Cohort 7 of The Rider-Pool Foundation Collective Impact Program will launch in November of 2020 with an advanced and modified framework. The Fellowship will expand from a relationship-building, curriculum-based cross-sector leadership development program to include action learning through project design and implementation. The Fellowship Cohort will consist of six alumni of the program, one Allentown-based Fellow from the Center for Disease Control, plus five new Fellows selected with assistance from the returning alumni.



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The Cohort will help design and oversee the following activities:

1. Reviewing, analyzing, visualizing, and communicating quantitative and qualitative data describing Census Tracts 18 and 20.
2. Expanding community engagement with community-based participatory approaches.
3. Using quantitative and qualitative data, work with key stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive neighborhood well-being assessment.
4. Working with community and community partners to create a well-being improvement plan for the neighborhood.
5. Building a platform for a backbone organization that can promote a positive trajectory of growth for the neighborhood.

In order to accomplish these activities, the Fellows will have access to:

- Our world-renown Fellowship faculty for instruction, mentoring, and coaching,
- The Rider-Pool/Pool Trust staff and consultants for support,
- The Leonard Parker Pool Center for Health Analytics for neighborhood level, quantitative data,
- a group of community organizing experts using multi-pronged community engagement strategies to provide community perspectives to the quantitative data,
- several place-based, cross-system collaborations funded by Rider-Pool/Pool Trust and/or involving Fellowship alumni,
- and the continuation of the Fellowship's Community of Practice, where all Collective Impact Fellows will have opportunities to learn from and contribute to this work.

The latest iteration of The Rider-Pool Foundation Collective Impact Fellowship both preserves and extends the ideologies of Leonard Parker and Dorothy Rider Pool to notice and care for the citizens of their community.

The Collective Impact Fellowship

is a program of

The Rider-Pool Foundation

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*The Rider-Pool Foundation's intent is to serve as a means to improve the quality of life in the community,
to build on the community's strengths and add to its vitality,
and to increase the capacity of the community to serve the needs of all its citizens.*