



PART THREE

The Impact of the RISE Program

THE FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

The Resilient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Economies (RISE) Program partnered with nonprofits to help strengthen organizational leadership and infrastructure. This series highlights lessons learned about the design and implementation of capacity-building investments and the impact they can have.



Community
Wealth Partners

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Capacity building is successful when it helps nonprofits deliver on their mission.

When capacity building works, nonprofits are better able to serve the people and communities who count on them, even if that connection is not immediate or easy to measure. Small wins matter. They're often the first sign the work is taking hold.

With support from the RISE program, nonprofits took on a range of capacity-building activities: measuring impact, hiring and retaining staff, building and using advisory boards, focusing their strategy, and raising money. In annual surveys, every participant said this investment was valuable, and we followed up with interviews to understand what difference it actually made.

Here are some of their stories. →

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Cornerstone Community Development Corporation

The Cornerstone Community Development Corporation (CCDC) works to help residents in South Dallas break the cycle of poverty through a holistic approach that addresses immediate needs while creating pathways toward long-term self-sufficiency. They joined RISE with a desire to strengthen the way they measured and communicated their impact.

Region: Dallas

Year founded: 1996

Focus areas: Workforce development, entrepreneurship, affordable housing, real estate acquisition, social services, education, and health and wellness

Priority addressed through RISE: Impact measurement

"We've helped thousands of people over the years, but what we hadn't done well was demonstrate how one service often becomes the entry point to a much larger transformation," said Chris L. Simmons, president of CCDC. "Providing someone with a meal can lead to clothing for a job interview, workforce training, stable housing, or other services that ultimately change the trajectory of their life."

Working alongside Corey Davis, founder and creative director of Maven Leadership Collective, a social impact ideas lab that provides respite and fortification for queer and trans innovators and creators of color and allies, CCDC developed new methods for collecting meaningful data, including pre- and post-assessments for students participating in after-school and summer programs. They also learned the importance of pairing quantitative data with compelling personal stories. "Corey helped us understand that funders don't just want to know how many people you served—they want to know how lives are being changed," Simmons said. "The RISE program gave us confidence to intentionally collect those stories and use them alongside data to demonstrate the lasting impact of our work."

Today, those practices have become part of CCDC's organizational culture, strengthening grant applications, informing strategic decisions, and helping the organization tell a more complete story of how it is transforming lives across South Dallas.

Genesis Hopeful Haven

Genesis Hopeful Haven (GHH) is a Miami-based nonprofit that helps youth transition from the foster care system to a purpose-driven adulthood.

When the RISE program began, they were struggling to retain staff, particularly in one position that had functioned like a revolving door.

They chose to focus on talent development to address this with support from Building for Mission, an HR Strategy & Org Development consulting company. With practical guidance from Building for Mission, GHH created a human resources department, a staff evaluation, interview questions, and a step-by-step hiring protocol.

“It doesn’t get much more tangible than that,” Morgan Falk, chief financial officer of GHH, said of their hiring protocol. Ultimately the organization hired two new employees that “we’re really happy with.”

Region: Miami
Year founded: 2014
Focus areas: Workforce development, entrepreneurship, affordable housing, financial health
Priority addressed through RISE: Talent development

Readers 2 Leaders

Readers 2 Leaders works to equip students for success through the power of reading.

Through RISE, they built and launched an advisory board of volunteers who could provide advice, tell the organization’s story, and foster partnerships across the community. The team worked with Alia Mahmoud from Radical Partners, a social impact accelerator, to develop a solid foundation and impact strategy for the advisory board.

“It was good to see the advisory board build substantially over a few months [and gain clarity on questions like] ‘How do you engage with these people? How do you want these meetings to go?’,” said Jin Ae Yoshimune, volunteer and communications manager at Readers 2 Leaders. “It was helpful for Alia to get into the nitty gritty with us and ask specific questions.”

“[Alia] helped us improve our advisory board meeting agendas and have questions that were more than ‘yes’ or ‘no’ but pulling on their expertise and leadership,” said Cassandra Porter, vice president of advancement and engagement at Readers 2 Leaders.

Readers 2 Leaders created a theory of change, values and norms, a robust communications strategy, and impact metrics. After putting these into practice, they saw an increase in participation, volunteerism, and dollars raised after only three bi-annual meetings and they are continuing to refine the group’s purpose and practices.

Yoshimune said, “The members of the advisory board have offered insights that have improved aspects of our programs and fundraising. The advisory board has also helped us make connections to new partners, leading to a pilot program we are trying this summer.”

Region: Dallas
Year founded: 2011
Focus areas: Education
Priority addressed through RISE: Coalitions and networks

Community Justice Project

Community Justice Project (CJP) uses innovative lawyering, research, and art to support organizing for racial justice and human rights across Florida.

When RISE began, they had an ambitious plan. Director of operations Sara Gedeon said, “We were like, ‘Let’s do this huge project where we’re doing impact measurement of the whole operation.’ At first I was overwhelmed.” Corey Davis, founder and creative director of Maven Leadership Collective, guided them to narrow their scope to the internship program. “When we got to a more manageable place, we got to what could take it to the next level,” Gedeon said. “When we brought it into focus, I felt like I was understanding what we were trying to accomplish.”

CJP developed a plan for capturing interns’ stories before beginning the internship program, checking in midway through, and then conducting exit-interviews to understand interns’ experience in the program. They also worked together to clarify their recruitment and interviewing process for interns.

“By using our internship program as the foundation of measuring our impact and reach, we are better able to apply those concepts to our internal systems and programming,” Gedeon said. “We now have the tools to ensure that our work has a greater impact on our partners and the communities we serve, which allows us more space to create stronger and more efficient processes.”

Region: Miami
Year founded: 2014
Focus areas: affordable housing, income inequality, small business capacity building, community stability through efforts to strengthen organizing
Priority addressed through RISE: Impact measurement

Allapattah Collaborative CDC

Rooted in the Allapattah community in Miami, the Allapattah Collaborative Community Development Corporation (ACDC) is building an economy that works for everyone while preserving the neighborhood’s unique cultural heritage.

During the RISE program, they worked with Leah Frazier of Think Three Media, a public relations agency, to rethink their approach to national donor engagement.

ACDC had a key opportunity: they were selected for the 2026 Many Voices, One Nation exhibition, supported by the Smithsonian Institution’s Traveling Exhibition Service and Florida Humanities, for the nation’s 250th anniversary. They worked with Leah to develop a sponsorship package for the year.

This partnership was deeply practical and implementation-focused: “It’s not information I’ll take and mull over,” said Mileyka Burgos-Flores, founder and CEO of ACDC. “We are changing our revenue strategy.”

ACDC says their work with Think Three Media deepened their understanding of philanthropy, expanded their view of how to build more sustainable funding, and provided a more targeted approach to connecting with funders, affirming that “we can showcase ourselves to funders” and helping the organization seek “the right funders who are aligned with our mission.”

Region: Miami
Year founded: 2019
Focus areas: Workforce development, entrepreneurship, income inequality, small business capacity building, financial health
Priority addressed through RISE: Communications



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Your Turn: Questions for Reflection

- How are you understanding the impact of capacity building? What data might you collect? What stories might you gather to bring that data to life?
- Where might your current approach to measurement be overlooking the conditions that make lasting impact possible?
- If you had stronger evidence of capacity-building impact, how might it change the way you invest, evaluate success, or partner with grantees?

Community Wealth Partners works alongside nonprofits and grantmakers to turn bold visions into lasting impact.

We offer strategy consulting, facilitation, and capacity-building support with a focus on shifting power and resources to create more equitable and effective solutions.

Learn more at communitywealth.com.