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The Fairmount Initiative Quarterly Progress Report: People and Places: Understanding the Processes, Outcomes and Impacts of Interventions of the Fairmount Corridor

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The Fairmount Initiative

PEOPLE AND PLACE: Understanding the Processes, Outcomes and Impacts of Interventions of the Fairmount Corridor Initiative

The Boston Foundation's Goals in Boston's Fairmount Corridor



The Boston Foundation has contracted with the Center for Social Policy as an analytical and evaluation partner for a five year period, December 1, 2010 to November 30, 2015, to maximize effectiveness and create alignment among its people and place based efforts in Boston's Fairmount commuter rail corridor. The geographic area, encompassing Fairmount neighborhoods which are home to approximately 88,000 residents, extends for 9.2 miles from the Newmarket Transit Station in the north to the Readville Transit Station in the south.

The Boston Foundation's Fairmount Initiative Goals:

- Sustainable, Positive Community Change in Boston's Fairmount Corridor encompassing transit-oriented development, housing, economic development, employment and a healthy environment
- Family Asset Development and Family Efficacy for those living and working in the Corridor
- Increased Community Capacity in Corridor neighborhoods
- Alignment across all the Foundation's key priority areas, including health, safety and education

Four People and Place-Based Initiatives funded by the Boston Foundation are the focus of the Center's work

The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership's Family Self-Sufficiency Program <http://www.mbhp.org/pages.asp?p=184&c=22>

The Family Independence Initiative <http://www.fiinet.org/initiatives.html>

Boston LISC's Resilient Communities/Resilient Families Initiative http://www.bostonlisc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75&Itemid=95

Fairmount/Indigo Community Development Corporation (CDC) Collaborative <http://www.bostonfoundation.org/Content.aspx?ID=16864>

A Quarterly Progress Report for Period from July 1 through September 30 , 2011

Prepared for The Boston Foundation

Prepared by Donna Haig Friedman, Ph.D, Director, Center for Social Policy
October 31, 2011

THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL POLICY EVALUATION, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ANALYTICAL ROLE

Since December 2010, the Center has been working to develop holistic evaluation criteria for all four of these initiatives. Much work to date has been focused on understanding and supporting each initiative's existing goals and programs, gathering baseline data and crystallizing evaluation questions/processes.

Evaluation Role:

- Establishing a framework and baseline for setting program goals and measuring change over time at household and neighborhood levels
- Providing immediate feedback for quality improvement uses
- Monitoring progress

Technical Assistance Role:

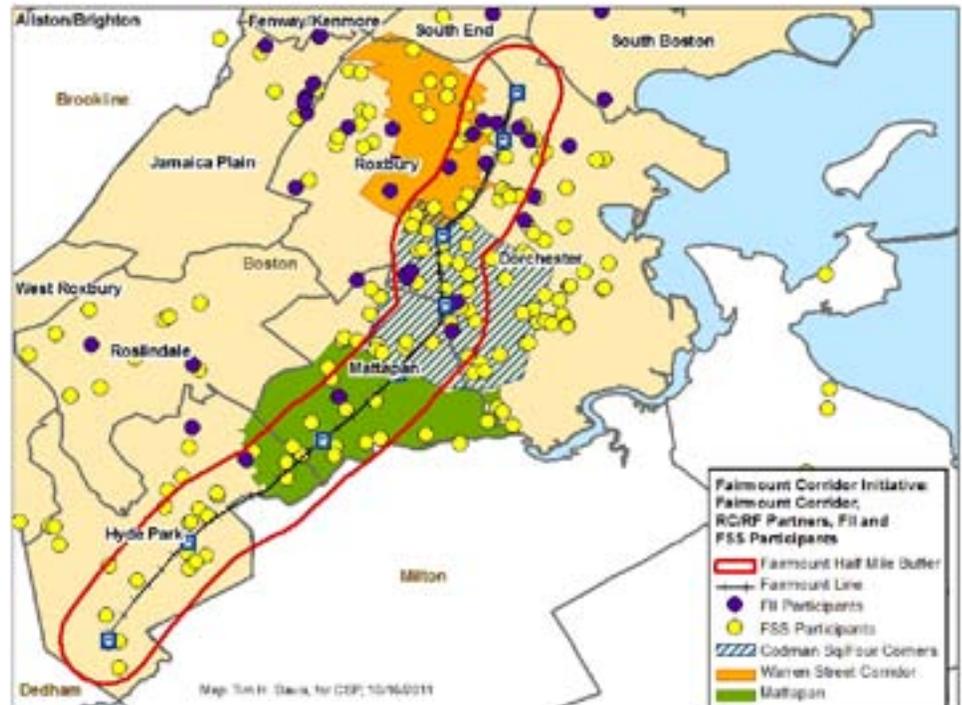
- Assisting with creation of data collection tools and processes, including participant reporting systems
- Assisting with data analysis processes
- Identifying success measurement indicators and processes for monitoring progress

Data Partner

- Providing Corridor-wide and neighborhood-level data: baseline and annually thereafter
- Providing local data at neighborhood, program and/or household levels: baseline and every quarter or six months thereafter (as data become available)

Facilitation Partner:

- Facilitating a consensus building and decision making process on a Collective Theory of Change and a small set of Success Indicators for assessing the collective impact of the four separate TBF-funded initiatives in the Corridor



The detail to follow in this report provides an overview of each of the four initiatives, its progress over the past quarter, from *July 1, 2011 through September 30, 2011*, as well as the Center's completed and upcoming evaluative and analytical work.

The LONG TERM GOALS, as delineated in The Boston Foundation's Outcome plan with the Center for Social Policy, provide a structure for the content to follow.

GOAL: INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTIONS ALONG THE FAIRMOUNT CORRIDOR ARE MEETING OR EXCEEDING GOALS

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership's Family Self-Sufficiency Program is....

<http://www.mbhp.org/pages.asp?p=184&c=22>

Boston Foundation Grant Award Period: July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2015

A highly under-utilized HUD-funded Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) that links Section 8 rental assistance with case management to assist tenants working toward financial independence.

How it works:

- As earnings increase, an escrow amount is calculated based on the difference between the starting and increased income.
- When the participant successfully completes the program, he or she receives the escrowed money.

Specific program objectives:

- Increase the numbers of FSS participants from 200 to 500 by the end of a five year period
- Improve participation retention (50% retention rate in the past)
- Target more heavily those families who live in Boston's Fairmont Corridor
- Create new ways for families to remain connected, including peer to peer support

MBHP Family Self-Sufficiency Program Goal Advancement and Programmatic Updates

Center for Social Policy Activity Update

Expanded enrollment of families within the Corridor: 31% of 256 Family Self-Sufficiency participants live in the Fairmount Corridor; same as last quarter

Family-level progress (*n*=135, 58% response rate- same as last quarter):

	Dec. 2010 –June 2011	July–Sept. 2011
Economic Advancement Activities		
Engaged in asset development activities (completing a credit class, paying off credit card, completing a homebuyer course, opening a bank account)	33%	46%
Increased income or found employment	8%	24%
Attended educational class or training	33%	24%
Completed a degree or certificate	6.5%	4%
Community Engagement Activities	Dec.–June 2011	July–Sept. 2011
Parent/Child-related		
Children's activities	66%	61%
Attended parent/teacher association	26 %	23%

- 1. COMPLETED JUNE 30, 2011– First Evaluation Report (July 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011)** This report provided baseline information on: household characteristics, age, race, ethnicity, disability status, educational attainment, income and assets, loans and credit, as well as priority needs; and progress as reported by participants in quarterly updates on changes in household composition, income (including assets, loans, credit), education, and community involvement.
- 2. CLOSE TO COMPLETION – Refine Data Collection Systems and Protocols**

continued on page 4

MBHP Family Self-Sufficiency Program Goal Advancement and Programmatic Updates			Center for Social Policy Activity Update
Community Engagement Activities	Dec.–June 2011	July–Sept. 2011	
Civic or political engagement / contributing to the community			<p>3. IN PROGRESS – Face to face interviews with those who have dropped out of the program in the past 12 months to understand the barriers to participation. Interviews to be completed by the end of February 2012.</p> <p>4. IN PROGRESS – Develop consistency in evaluations with Compass Working Capital and with Family Independence Initiative</p> <p>5. IN PROGRESS – Face to face interviews with most recent cohort of FSS graduates to follow-up on the impacts of the program in their lives, including their use of escrow funds. Interviews to be completed by the end of February 2012.</p>
Voted in an election	38 %	15%	
Volunteered for a non-profit organization	15 %	19%	
Attended community meeting or forum	12.5 %	10%	
Attended neighborhood association meeting	11 %	14%	
Volunteered on a political campaign	7 %	2%	
Attended a political event	6.5 %	5%	
Mutual aid			
Participated in activities with friends or neighbors that assist each other	18 %	13%	
Participated in a social club	6.5 %	13%	
Organized mutual aid activities/services	4 %	9%	
Faith-oriented			
Attended religious services	42 %	43%	
Served in leadership position or organized events for a religious organization	12 %	6%	

Programmatic progress:

- To increase retention and family progress, a peer to peer support model has begun; no change in retention rates (remains at 50%)
- To increase recruitment, MBHP has
 - Executed Memoranda Of Understandings (MOUs) with seven Community Development Corporations in Corridor
 - Recruited participants throughout the period at four different community events, yielding 17 applications and 4 new enrollments
- Quarterly reporting has been enhanced to document small steps of progress

Programmatic focus for the next quarter:

- MBHP is in the process of identifying all MBHP Section 8 families living within the Fairmont Corridor who are not currently enrolled into FSS and plans to do this in a systematic manner to further focus targeting efforts

Family Independence Initiative (FII)

<http://www.fiinet.org/initiatives.html>

Boston Foundation Grant Award Period: December 1, 2010 through June 30, 2012

This innovative model of family economic advancement, created by Maurice Lim Miller, views Family Choice, Family Control and Social Connectedness as central to families' moving out of poverty.

How FII works:

- Families recruit each other to create a cohort for support and accountability for a two year period; monthly meetings as a cohort with the FII advisor; extensive data collection is required of families for which they are paid (up to \$600 every 3 months)
- FII Fellows and Ripple families: a second stage of participation

Goal Advancement and Programmatic Updates

FII enrolled 72 ripple families between June – September 2011

The 72 families are self-organized in 8 new cohorts; 15 of the 72 families live in the Fairmount Corridor

Goal advancement For Individual Families:

- The initial 35 households had a 13% income increase and 225% increase in savings from June 2010 to May 2011
- The 35 households reported receiving, on average, \$107 a month in subsidies as of May 2011, compared to an average of \$111 at enrollment in June 2010
- 25% of the 70 children in these families improved their grades and 20% improved their attendance

Families reported increased activities in: health maintenance, credit improvements, helping others, after school enhancement, health changes/improvements, adult classes/trainings/workshops, school attendance, connections, community meetings, regularly saving, grade improvements, new jobs, and leading activities.

Center for Social Policy Activity Update

- **COMPLETED – Report on first eight stories of change.** Prepared a report with the analysis of first eight stories of change. Presented the analysis of these stories at a Center Retreat in September 2011. Included these analyses in a presentation to the National LISC's Institute for Comprehensive Community Development, October 18, 2011.
- **COMPLETED – New Quarterly Interview Process is being implemented**
 - Redesigned the collection of stories using audio to enable FII advisors to record the interviews with each FII family each quarter.
 - Created a CSP-FII DropBox to access the audio interviews collected each month.
 - These interview/spoken word data will provide a longitudinal record of family change efforts, including the role and impact of social networks and the policy and practice barriers families encounter in their journeys out of poverty; families' ideas regarding solutions will be a centerpiece in the policy ideas which emerge from the Center's work on the Fairmount Initiative.
- **ON GOING – Support and Responsiveness to FII**
 - Helped FII map new families' residences
 - Elaborated a draft of an online Survey to collect data every six months on changes in FII families' perceptions/activities in the following areas: familiarity with and level of involvement with Fairmount initiatives, use of transportation and social networks.
- **IN PROGRESS:** Will be collaborating with FII national evaluators to share data and co-produce learnings from the FII experiences.

Boston LISC's Resilient Communities/Resilient Families

http://www.bostonlisc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75&Itemid=95

Boston Foundation Grant Award Period: July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2013

This relational organizing, community-driven, community change approach was launched in Boston in February 2011, with convening agencies in the Codman Square/Four Corners, Mattapan, and Warren Areas. Modeled upon an approach that has been implemented by the national LISC in other locations across the country, this People and Place initiative is characterized by:

- Community-led, funder-supported partnerships
- Coordination of family focused resources and quality of life investments (physical infrastructure, family income and wealth, local economic activity, access to quality education, development of healthy environment and lifestyles)
- Neighbor-to-neighbor connections that lead to action planning implemented by community residents, employers, activist organizations, nonprofits and others.

Goal Advancement and Programmatic Updates

Center for Social Policy Activity Update

All three communities have begun participatory planning processes close to the targeted timelines:

- Creation of Steering Committees
- Launching of neighbor to neighbor conversations (Mattapan), with target of 100 + interviews to be completed by November 15, 2011
- Community assessment questionnaires (Codman Square/Four Corners)
- Early action grants

Note: the Center's evaluation, technical assistance and data partnership included Codman Square and Mattapan.

- **COMPLETED – Initial Meetings with Fairmount Corridor RC/RF Partners — Mattapan and Codman Square — resulting in comprehensive workplans for the evaluation, TA and data partnership.** Identification of program success measures will be defined as part of neighborhood planning process. Initial data collection priorities and tools are in development.
- **IN PROGRESS – Assist Codman Square/Four Corners in Conducting Neighborhood/Resident Assessment of community assets, issues and priorities.** Assisted in design of Assessment instrument and sampling plan; questionnaire has been distributed to over 2000 households; coding guide for analysis of responses has been drafted. CSP will be carrying out the analysis.
- **IN PROGRESS – Finalize baseline data for RC/RF Partner Areas.** Created a data dictionary, in accordance with established practices for national LISC Sustainable Community partners. Maps/data tables have been developed and distributed to each of the communities on basic demographics and some initial indicators of interest for the Corridor as a whole and for each community (e.g., children, race, ethnicity, median income, distressed properties, housing affordability, movers, presence of nonprofits). Final baseline will be aligned with the baseline for the Fairmount Corridor as a whole and will use an asset mapping frame.
- **IN PROGRESS – Assist RC/RF Mattapan United in including FSS participants in neighborhood planning process and community building events.** Facilitated connections between RC/RF convening agencies and FII and FSS teams; included measures of alignment between these separate initiatives in the FII and FSS data collection protocols.
- **IN PROGRESS – Assist with soundness of one on one data collection and analysis processes.** Met with central Mattapan United planning team to advise on one-on-one community conversations and plan for participatory analysis of conversation results to take place between December 1, 2011 – January 7, 2012. CSP has been asked to take this role with the Warren area community as well.
- **IN PROGRESS – Drafted feedback form** for use by RC/RF, as tool for analyzing extent and scope of participation, including diversity and geographic reach.
- **IN PROGRESS – Assess viability of using the NCCS/Urban Institute's Community Platform.** Initial planning with Tom Pollack re: the feasibility of using this tool for local and evaluation purposes.

Fairmount/Indigo CDC Collaborative (FCC)

<http://www.bostonfoundation.org/Content.aspx?ID=16864>

Boston Foundation Grant Award Period: July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2015

Motivated by a collective desire to address transit and other inequities in the neighborhoods surrounding the Fairmount/Indigo line, Codman Square NDC/Greater Four Corners Coalition, Dorchester Bay EDC, Mattapan CDC, Southwest Boston CDC have collaborated over a six year period to significantly improve the quality of life in this Corridor. Their holistic goals include transit equity, housing affordability, access to employment, healthy environments, civic engagement and expansion of green, open spaces.

Goal Advancement and Programmatic Updates	Center for Social Policy Activity Update
<p>The FCC is a HUD-Partnership for Sustainable Communities Brownfields Pilot, 1 of only 5 in U.S.</p> <p>Dorchester Bay EDC's Quincy Heights won a HUD CHOICE Neighborhoods \$20.5M award, presented by HUD secretary Shaun Donovan and Sen. John Kerry. It is one of 5 awards in the whole U.S. It provides \$12.5M for Quincy Heights, a 129-unit preservation redevelopment on Quincy St. and over \$7M for local resident services and other priority projects in the surrounding area.</p> <p>Due in large part to the FCC, 4 new transit stations are due to open in 2012-2013: Four Corners/Geneva, Newmarket, Talbot Avenue, and Blue Hill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FCC continues to monitor the upgrading of the Fairmount Line and reported the completion of upgrades at two stops (Uphams Corner & Morton St). Construction is underway at three stops (Newmarket, Four Corners & Talbot Av) and design is near completion for Blue Hill/Cumming Highway. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 50% of the construction workers are minority, women and/or local residents at two of the stations ▪ Housing and commercial development: 4 completed projects within the Corridor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total of 198 units of housing • 31,750 square feet of commercial space • 28 foreclosed homes (about 90 units of ownership and rental housing) back on line <p>FCC secured about \$180,000 in technical assistance from the federal EPA under the federal Sustainable Communities (inter-agency) Partnership; the technical assistance advanced the design of one mixed use project, advanced the community process and conceptualization of another project and developed a database of public and privately owned properties in the Corridor that may have some level of environmental contamination.</p> <p>The Fairmount Greenway Concept Plan was completed and is being presented to City agency directors to begin the process of implementing/constructing the Greenway.</p> <p>Twenty (20) new jobs have been created in commercial space that has been developed by FCC members in the last year.</p> <p>The FCC is part of two important regional sustainability demonstration programs: Great Neighborhood Initiative (of the Mass. Smart Growth Alliance) and the Greater Boston Sustainable Communities Consortium (managed by Metropolitan Area Planning Council). These participations will provide both continued high visibility for FCC and new resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COMPLETED – Analysis of Census Geographies to clarify Corridor Boundaries (for purposes of analysis and evaluation) ▪ COMPLETED – Corridor Demographic Snapshot (including 2010 Census data) ▪ IN PROGRESS – Analyze Employment and Commuter Data to Inform FCC Economic Development Planning Process ▪ IN PROGRESS – In response to CSP recommendation, TBF convened a conversation among FCC, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Great Neighborhood Initiative and Boston Indicators Project to strengthen coordination, communication and data sharing among major corridor-wide initiatives. ▪ IN PROGRESS – Focus on FCC and its role in the emerging Theory of Change for the overall Corridor Initiative. FCC members agreed that organizing and advocacy could and should become a part of the overall Theory of Change. In addition, FCC staff expressed interest in having CSP provide some technical assistance on organizational development, a request on which CSP will be following up.

GOALS: INTERVENTIONS ALONG THE FAIRMOUNT CORRIDOR ARE ALIGNED

THE SEPARATE INITIATIVES ARE WORKING COLLECTIVELY TO GENERATE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES AND THE FAIRMOUNT NEIGHBORHOODS.

A central goal for the Boston Foundation is to maximize collective impact of the four separate initiatives by achieving alignment among all of its investments in the Fairmount Corridor. Steps in this process include (1) facilitating development of a collective theory of change (TOC) in collaboration with the four separate initiatives, (2) identifying measureable objectives flowing from the TOC and (3) identifying a final set of relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators that will be used to measure progress in meeting objectives.

Center for Social Policy Activity and Goal Advancement Update

Development of the TOC, and the indicators by which the change process and outcomes will be measured, has involved an iterative process that surfaces elements of the implicit TOC, or “theory in use,” held by the organizations that are part of the Initiative; presents them graphically and narratively; then, shares the emerging TOC with the organizations for discussion and refinement. Repeat steps 1 and 2, with sharper focus each round.

Progress on development of TOC and consensus on success indicators:

1. **COMPLETED: Process began April 25, 2011:** Convening of partner organizations (50 persons in attendance) to share with each other the nature of their work and the ways in which they seek to have an impact (process step 1). The presentations by participants and small group discussions provided: i) information on what each organization perceived the “levers for change” to be, where they could take action and influence outcomes, and ii) what types of indicators they tracked or were interested in tracking.
2. **COMPLETED: First iteration of model for TOC** – CSP created a TOC document and a graphical representation of change, which focused in particular on: Networks as the mechanism by which change efforts are funneled and amplified; and Place as more than “background,” but a set of structural resources that networks could both access and engage in advocacy to improve
 - a. To advance thinking (process step 2), we first shared this model with Geeta Pradhan (May 23) and made refinements to it. We then shared it with representatives from the organizations (June 30), using a detailed “theory of change worksheet” that we created to guide the discussion toward specific indicators.
3. **COMPLETED: Second iteration of TOC model:** Distilling these inputs, we created a revised TOC document (process step 1) with a detailed table of indicators for both the mechanisms and outcomes of change, focused on networks, leaderships arising from networks, structural resources, and a range of desired outcomes. We worked with Melissa Jones from RC/RF (Aug 1) who had sent a proposed model and potential set of indicators for the TOC.
4. **IN PROGRESS: Distribution and individualized discussions of revised TOC work-in-progress document with the four organizations** (Aug 15) and solicited comments on its usefulness and relevance. From late August through early October 2011, members of the CSP team met individually with each organization (process step 2 again), to clarify how the TOC captured the work of each organization and what specific indicators were most meaningful. In particular, the meetings focused on:
 - a. Data each organization already collected, areas where they could see when something was not working and could make course corrections (suggesting indicators that are useful to track and learn from)
 - b. What they wished they knew more about (new indicators or indicators used by other organizations), and the time horizon over which indicators would show change (i.e., seeking changes to track at a quarterly frequency, which linked to longer term outcomes)
 - c. The CSP team then compared notes about areas of overlapping indicators.

IN PROGRESS: Next Step--propose a set of indicators, with explanations of how to collect data on each and what each reveals about ongoing change, at a gathering of representatives from the organizations (targeted for January 2012). Based on agreements at this meeting, the tracking of indicators of change and regular reporting on them will begin.

OTHER NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS

1. U.S. Department of HUD invited a full proposal from UMass Boston for its Sustainable Communities Research Grant Program; our proposal, written in collaboration with TBF's Leo Quigley and Geeta Pradhan, was submitted on July 21, 2011, with letters of support from The Governor's Office, TBF, National LISC, Boston LISC, the city of Boston, the EPA and MassDOT.

Although not ultimately selected for funding in this round, our team was one of only 27 research teams from across the U.S. invited to submit a full proposal, selected from a highly competitive pool of hundreds of pre-applications, according to the HUD program officer, National Housing Conference, September 28, 2011.

2. The Center's evaluation of the Fairmount Initiative was featured at an October 18, 2011 convening of the National LISC's Institute for Comprehensive Community Development in Boston.
3. The Center's evaluation of the Fairmount Initiative was selected as one of only six university-community partnerships highlighted in a two-session October 5 and 12 webinar, sponsored by the **Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU)**.

Evaluation of the Center for Social Policy's work on the Fairmount Initiative

As an evaluator, CSP is committed to a participative and transparent approach that engages partner organizations in co-creating a meaningful and useful evaluation process. CSP worked with a third party, the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) of the Center for Collaborative Leadership at UMass Boston, to solicit feedback from the four organizations about their hopes and concerns about the proposed alignment and about the role of CSP in brokering and tracking that alignment. We worked with a team of five Emerging Leaders, who are mid-career professionals studying leadership and who come from a wide range of local organizations (including Mass. Department of Transportation, Genzyme, EMC, SBLLI, and Mass. AFL-CIO). The team developed a qualitative data collection process (interview protocol) and a quantitative instrument for future data collection (online survey).

Members of the ELP team met at each of the four partner organizations and TBF in May, interviewing one to four representatives (together), to get a "baseline" of expectations, hopes, and concerns about the newly forming partnership. The online survey will be used for ongoing follow-up with the organizations, beginning in 2012, and recurring twice a year or annually. The data will allow CSP to adjust its course, exploit opportunities, and address concerns. The interviews were summarized by the ELP team, and all comments remained anonymous. This approach allowed CSP to capture candid comments to guide our work. The interviews surfaced:

- Areas where the partner organizations *are hopeful* about what the alignment and CSP can provide for them – i.e., opportunities to pursue: Some examples of the organizations' hopes include their curiosity about what other organizations are doing and interest in discovering more, their interest in having CSP and the other organizations help them probe why certain types of change efforts do not have either a high awareness or a high impact, and their enthusiasm to have data drive policy changes.
- Areas where the partner organizations *have concerns* – i.e., areas for CSP to pay special attention to: Some examples of their concerns include their wish not to have an evaluation process that judges them but rather one that informs and guides them, their desire for regular ongoing feedback rather than a "surprise" at the end, and their hope that CSP will remain attentive to the particular data needs of each organization as well as the quest for shared indicators.

The Center is using the results of this learning process to engage the organizations in generating both particular and shared indicators of change, in a participatory way that signals a collaborative evaluation rather than an arms-length judgment.