12th Annual
Nonprofit Public Policy Symposium

September 2023

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Table of Contents

Key Takeaways for Researchers and Nonprofit Leaders

The 12th annual Nonprofit Public Policy Symposium, held on September 22, 2023, consisted of two sessions with six presentations, including commentaries from nonprofits leaders, scholars, and government officials. The first session highlighted the structural barriers nonprofit leaders face on a regular basis in doing their work. Tiana Marrese (University of Pennsylvania) kicked off the presentations by discussing the ways that equitable childcare can help attract and maintain an intrinsically motivated nonprofit workforce. Gretchen Van der Veer (Fair Chance) and Michelle Jackson (Human Services Council) then discussed their experiences with nonprofit coalition-building in New York City and Washington, DC. Lastly, Tamara Keshecki (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Brenda Bushouse (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), and Eric Griffith (Duke University) presented their work evaluating nonprofit participation in COVID-19 relief programs and how the federal government can learn from recent experience to better support nonprofits in the future.

In the second session, presenters took different but overlapping perspectives on how effective partnerships involving nonprofits have looked or could look in the future. First, Andrea Hill (Tennessee Nonprofit Network) and Janet Lo (Shelby County Government) discussed their experiences when the Shelby County government in Tennessee worked to formalize a partnership between the county government and the local nonprofit community. Similarly, the third presentation, by Julia Mahoney, Will Alston, and Ken Seeley (Denver Office of Nonprofit Engagement), outlined nonprofit-focused projects being undertaken by the Denver city government and shed light on how collaboration helps the area's nonprofit and public sectors. Sandwiched between these local case studies, Angela Eikenberry and Nuri Heckler (University of Nebraska at Omaha) described an unrealized partnership in which policymakers free philanthropic wealth from longstanding binds by changing the Rule Against Perpetuities and work with communities from which wealth was extracted, often by exploitative means, to provide reparations.

The symposium included commentary from session leaders Jeff Moore (Independent Sector) and Alan Abramson (George Mason University), as well as from the discussants, Ronda Jackson (KABOOM!) and Heather MacIndoe (University of Massachusetts Boston). Woven throughout the presentations, this commentary helped create connections between topics. One theme that flowed through the symposium was **the need for the federal and other governments to create a formalized structure to enlist expertise on the nonprofit sector.** For example, Abramson explained that most interests have some kind of representation in the federal government (e.g., farmers have the Department of Agriculture, labor has the Department of Labor). Abramson explained that the nonprofit sector is lacking an office, even if it is small, that could be a positive voice for nonprofits and understands the sector's needs. His comments mirror those of others throughout the symposium who reported negative experiences with federal programs developed with little understanding of the nonprofit sector and which were then confusing, frustrating, and ill-designed for nonprofits. For example, Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith pointed out that the Paycheck Protection Program loan application asked nonprofits for the name of its owners , followed by questions about their banking relationships. These parts of the application were not designed for nonprofits, who don't have owners and may not have strong banking relationships, and made completing the application process stressful and confusing. Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith theorize this frustration led to a chilling effect, resulting in fewer nonprofits completing the application process and ultimately receiving aid. If someone in the federal government understood nonprofits and was a voice for their needs, this could have been avoided.

A second theme of the symposium was that t**he nonprofit sector should not shy away from advocating for itself.** Ronda Jackson, in her work with KABOOM!, has seen nonprofits hesitant to work with government funders because government often requires nonprofits to accept underfunded contracts, late payments, and other adverse government practices. KABOOM! also feared entering into advocacy work because they believed the common misconception that nonprofit advocacy could affect their tax status. The experience of KABOOM! echoes the fears and frustrations of nonprofit organizations across the country. As explained by Jackson, though, accepting adverse government policies, such as underfunded contracts, maintains current systems which hurt the sector. Jackson said the nonprofit sector is better off saying "no" rather than accepting contracts that do not deliver the resources necessary to provide quality services. She explained that less-than-quality services hurt communities and reduce public opinion of nonprofits. Advocacy, though, can make a difference. As Gretchen Van der Veer described, in Washington, DC, for example, the Coalition for Nonprofit Equity organized nonprofits' efforts to change policy and, due to their efforts, the city council passed the Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act requiring the DC government to fully fund indirect costs. Building nonprofit coalitions and demanding better treatment can bring about changes and aid nonprofit work across the sector.

The presenters also expressed that **data is an important tool to inform the public and policymakers of the issues facing nonprofits.** When answering questions from symposium participants, Marrese made an appeal – often heard from researchers – for better data. She explained that she cannot answer all her own questions, or those of her audience, about the impact of childcare on nonprofit workforce outcomes because that information is simply not available. This leaves the nonprofit sector without the information and insights it needs to better advocate for its workforce. In Denver, on the other hand, the Office of Nonprofit Engagement has used data to self-assess, better understand how nonprofits perceive the city government, and uncover common issues nonprofits face. This has helped build more productive communication between the government and nonprofit sectors. Data is not only an important tool to highlight current barriers to nonprofit performance but is also an important means through which the sector can reflect on the past and prepare for the future. Eikenberry discussed the central role that gathering data could have in creating the political will for reparations. By exploring past ills and connecting them to current structures of wealth, scholars assert, as explained by Eikenberry, that the movement toward reparations could gain momentum and change public opinion through storytelling. Whether using real-time data to shine a light on the needs of the nonprofit sector or analyzing past data to inform the future, data collection and analysis can play a central role in bolstering the sector and helping nonprofits make a larger positive impact in their communities.

A final takeaway from the symposium is that **everyone benefits when nonprofits partner with researchers, governments, and one another.** Abramson, in his remarks at the beginning of the symposium, acknowledged that collaboration takes time and intentionality, but pointed out the opportunities that exist when relationships and cooperation are fostered. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the arts and culture sector met regularly to share information and updates. Keshecki describes these regular interactions as essential for arts and culture organizations to get out of their silos and help one another access needed resources. Nonprofits face underfunded government contracts, grants that do not account for operating costs, staff burnout due to red tape, and other common frustrations. It is no surprise that in this context nonprofits do not feel they can take on more. Collaboration among nonprofits helped convince the government to find resources that the nonprofits needed to operate. If nonprofits partner with governments, they can develop two-way lines of communication that can ease red tape. By partnering with researchers, nonprofits can discover efficiencies and learn best practices. When partnering with other nonprofits, they can discover ways to better navigate systems and share the burden of advocacy. In the end, collaboration is often worth the cost.

Session 1: Strong Nonprofit Infrastructure

Session Leader: Jeff Moore
Chief Strategy Officer
Independent Sector

Session Outline: Session 1 included three presentations in which the presenters outlined their findings about the gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the current nonprofit infrastructure.

- "Nonprofit Wage Disparity & the Call for Accessible Childcare" by Tiana Marrese (University of Pennsylvania)
- "Nonprofit Power Building to Address Structure Inequities" by Gretchen Van der Veer (Fair Chance) and Michelle Jackson (Human Services Council)
- "Pandemic Relief for Nonprofits – What the Government Needs to Know for Next Time" by Tamara Keshecki (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Brenda Bushouse (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and Eric Griffith (Duke University)
- Discussant – Ronda Jackson (KABOOM!)

Overview

As explained by Ronda Jackson, the discussant for Session 1, the challenges outlined in the three presentations reflect some of the structural barriers nonprofit leaders face on a regular basis in accomplishing their work. The first presentation, by Tiana Marrese, highlighted the central importance of the nonprofit workforce and described the ways that equitable childcare can help attract and maintain an intrinsically motivated nonprofit workforce. Gretchen Van der Veer and Michelle Jackson then discussed their experiences with nonprofit coalition-building in New York City and Washington, DC. They outlined the reasons nonprofits often avoid advocacy and coalition building, improvements their coalitions' advocacy has generated, and lessons learned about how coalitions can advocate for the sector. Lastly, Tamara Keshecki, Brenda Bushouse, and Eric Griffith presented their work evaluating COVID-19 relief programs that helped nonprofits and how the federal government can learn from that experience to better support the nonprofit sector in the future.

Nonprofit Wage Disparity and the Call for Accessible Childcare

Tiana Marrese, a PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania, began her presentation by describing current research on the ways equitable childcare impacts workforce dynamics. According to the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is considered equitable if it requires a reasonable effort (e.g., parents can find availability, care is close to parents' homes or workplaces), is affordable, supports children's development, and meets parents' needs.[1] Research has shown, as explained by Marrese, that when childcare is not equitable across these four dimensions, the labor market outcomes of women and people of color are most impacted.[2] So, policy decisions that improve childcare along the four

[1] Katherine Paschall and Kelly Maxwell, "Defining and Measuring Access to Child Care and Early Education with Families in Mind," OPRE Report (Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021).
[2] Katherine Lim and Mike Zabek, "Women's Labor Force Exits During COVID-19: Differences by Motherhood, Race, and Ethnicity," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, July 20, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-023-09916-w.

equity dimentions can alleviate structural and historical inequalities within the labor market and result in a more robust workforce for everyone.

In addition to its equity implications, the lack of childcare also leads workers to choose jobs that provide parent-friendly benefits, such as flexible hours, instead of selecting workplaces based on their personal preferences, interests, or goals. Marrese's theory is that the lack of equitable child care leads to sector sorting based more on logistics and less on intrinsic motivation. She theorizes that this particularly impacts the nonprofit sector because the nonprofit workforce is especially reliant on people who buy into the mission of an organization and are intrinsically motivated to do the work. If employees are forced to seek employment elsewhere due to childcare logistics, the nonprofit sector will suffer. Public policy makers can, according to her theory, support the nonprofit sector by improving access to childcare and allowing workers to sort along motivational lines.

Marrese then turned to her own analyses. Using a longitudinal dataset that follows individuals throughout their life, Marrese analyzed women's workforce outcomes between 1994 and 2006. She focused on women because in her dataset only women were asked about their childcare provisions. While her results are preliminary, she found that for women who have opted into nonprofit work, those who have childcare earn 14.5% more in hourly earnings than their counterparts who do not have access to childcare. Marrese explained that these initial findings warrant further exploration and speculates that those who can secure childcare differ in important ways from those who cannot. So, she plans to examine the relationship between childcare access and nonprofit wages further.

Nonprofit Power Building to Address Structure Inequities

Following Marrese's presentation, Gretchen Van der Veer and Michelle Jackson began their presentation with a poll. Of those attending the symposium, almost 70% said they were not involved in advocacy, about half of the group said they were involved in a coalition, and roughly 30% felt they were part of a well-functioning coalition. As Jackson reviewed the poll results, she expressed a lack of surprise, explaining that many nonprofit leaders shy away from advocacy activities and that many organizations are not part of a coalition that can effectively organize such efforts. Within this context, she asked participants to reflect on how the sector can build power to tackle common barriers and seek much-needed reforms.

Jackson then began to describe the real and perceived challenges nonprofits face when working with policymakers and government funders. Despite the clear impacts of nonprofits – such as relieving government burden by providing needed services, promoting strong democracy, or being an economic engine – nonprofits are not always the best advocates for themselves. Often, nonprofit leaders feel they do not have enough staff time or resources for advocacy work and fear retaliation from private and government funders, who may consider advocacy work too political. Jackson also explained that nonprofits often believe they are not allowed to engage in advocacy because such activities would impact their tax status. However, this is not true, and nonprofits can engage in nonpartisan public education efforts, although "lobbying," which has a relatively narrow definition, is not supposed to be a substantial part of the activities of charitable nonprofits. Jackson explained that this widespread misconception has been a barrier to improving policies that impact nonprofits.

The Human Services Council of New York (HSC), where Jackson works, decided that disinterest in this kind of activity, or the (mis)perception that it was not allowed, had a real impact not only on nonprofits, but also on the communities they serve. HSC felt it had a duty to engage nonprofit leaders in a way that helped them understand the impact their lack of advocacy had on their communities and on how the public felt about the programs that nonprofits provide. For example, she explained, when nonprofits take an underfunded contract, they are unable to deliver the quality of services that the organization wants to provide. Yet, government funders often expect the nonprofit sector to complete projects without accounting for administrative or indirect costs. She explained that this can lead to cutting corners or not tracking outcomes. When organizations cannot provide services up to their standards, it can lead to lower public opinion, while the red tape associated with government funders can result in a demoralized staff. Jackson explained that the solution to problems like these requires nonprofits to work together to demand more adequate funding and more straightforward government contracting processes.

While the real or perceived barriers to increasing nonprofit advocacy can feel daunting, Jackson expressed her belief that there is hope and evidence that those barriers can be overcome. Her organization, HSC, is a proof-point that nonprofit coalitions can build power for their members. She explained that at HSC, improving outcomes for the nonprofit workforce was the number one issue. After the COVID-19 lockdowns, HSC formed the Just Pay campaign, with the goal of ending "government sanctioned poverty wages." Jackson highlighted the importance of word choice for naming this campaign. HSC made clear that as the predominant funders of nonprofit wages in human services, state and city governments were responsible for adjusting their practices to ensure higher wages. In addition to messaging, HSC organized a rally, got thousands of workers to call their government officials, and spoke about their cause to the media. Jackson explained that the campaign helped the public better understand the issue, engaged nonprofit workers in self-advocacy, and built power for the human services nonprofit sector. Ultimately both the New York State government and the New York City government have both committed funds to improving nonprofit wages, although HSC feels its work is far from over.

Following Jackson's discussion of her experience in New York, Van der Veer described a similar experience with coalition building in Washington, DC. Van der Veer is the CEO of Fair Chance, an organization that works to strengthen community-based nonprofits in the DC area. Fair Chance has worked with about 200 nonprofits since 2002 and has developed an alumni network of organizations that have participated in their programs. Through the alumni network, Van der Veer began to notice a number of barriers that kept coming up in conversations with the group. Often, alumni discussed issues they faced when participating in government funding competitions and difficulties they had in adhering to burdensome requirements. So, on behalf of the network, Van der Veer began attending city council hearings and testifying before the council on issues raised by the network. This is where she discovered the need for coalition building and using data to tell a bigger story than any one organization can tell on its own.

Through conversations with other nonprofit leaders, Van der Veer decided that the sector needed data about nonprofit experience in working with various DC city agencies. Fair Chance took on the task of collecting this information through a survey of their network. What they found is that among nonprofits receiving DC government funding, the indirect cost rates nonprofits received from government did not match the actual costs of completing their projects and that the rates were rather arbitrary. In addition, organizations were not always receiving the rate they were promised. Fair Chance and Van der Veer began to share these results with the city council members and recruited nonprofit leaders to testify. Ultimately, the council passed the Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act in 2021 that required DC agencies to fully fund indirect costs.

However, since the law was passed, Van der Veer has found that their advocacy work was not done. DC government agencies still haven't fully implemented the new law and many contracting grants officers don't even know it exists. DC nonprofits continue to receive solicitations that do not reference the law or follow its precepts. Nevertheless, the experience of getting the Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act passed helped Fair Chance formalize its coalition-building and advocacy efforts. Now, the alumni network, in partnership with Fair Chance, has become the Coalition for Nonprofit Equity. Fair Chance has received funding to hire a part-time consultant to continue the Coalition for Nonprofit Equity's work and the coalition is more organized and energized for future advocacy.

Based on the experiences of Jackson in New York City and Van der Veer in Washington, DC, they identified several lessons about how nonprofits can build power. In particular, nonprofits should:

- Start by saying "no" to underfunded or overly burdensome agreements.
- Join or start a local coalition.
- Learn from and coordinate with national partners (e.g., Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits).
- Enlist local philanthropy to fund coalitions and advocacy work.
- Embrace the sector's power/voice and adopt the three principles of direct action organizing: win concrete improvements in people's lives; make people aware of their own power; and alter the relations of power between people, the government, and other institutions by building strong permanent local, state, and national organizations.
- Use the press to draw attention to their cause.
- Settle in for the long game.

Pandemic Relief for Nonprofits – What the Government Needs to Know for Next Time

Tamara Keshecki then introduced her work with Brenda Bushouse and Eric Griffith on nonprofit arts and culture organizations in New York City. Specifically, their research focused on the experience of these organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns in 2020 and 2021. The shutdowns crushed the arts and culture sector, as theaters, venues, and galleries were shuttered. Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith found that there were many lessons to learn during the pandemic that governments can use to better support the sector in the future.

In describing the context of their study, Keshecki explained that New York City is the epicenter of arts and culture, with over 2,200 nonprofits working in that space before the pandemic. She considers it a very integrated and interdependent ecosystem, in which some of the largest organizations in the world work alongside grassroots organizations and individual artists in every borough of the city. The sector includes both nonprofits and for-profits, employs hundreds of thousands of workers and artists, and was generating over $30 billion in wages before the pandemic. Unfortunately, the vibrancy of the New York arts and culture scene was quickly extinguished when COVID-19 hit the city, with over 200 thousand cases and almost 19 thousand confirmed deaths in the first few months. By the end of March 2020, all arts and cultural organizations had been shuttered, resulting in a median economic impact of 50 thousand dollars per organization. The shutdown, especially for performing arts venues, lasted much longer than originally expected, as it extended into Fall 2021.

Keshecki highlighted two programs from the federal government that were designed to help the arts and culture sector, among other employers: the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL). PPP was a new program that needed to be implemented quickly as employers floundered in the immediate aftermath of COVID-19 lockdowns. It was a forgivable loan program with extensive rules and requirements. As a result of the complicated program and short timelines, organizations had to use considerable staff time to quickly understand and navigate the PPP. The EIDL was an existing program that received additional funding specifically for COVID-19. Both programs were administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA), a relatively small federal agency that had annual spending of less than 50 million dollars before the pandemic. The PPP and EIDL increased the SBA budget by about 600 percent, and the agency did not have the immediate capacity to roll the programs out well.

The experiences of arts and culture organizations in applying for and navigating through these programs motivated Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith to study what went wrong, what worked well, and how the federal government could do better next time. To do so, they used a mixed methods approach. They first surveyed arts and culture nonprofits in New York City, as well as conducted semi-structured interviews. Later in the process, they implemented a second survey about a third program, the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, which was introduced in 2021, over a year after the shutdowns began.

Their first survey about the PPP and EIDL had respondents from organizations of all sizes and across all New York City boroughs. Their sample included nonprofits in the cultural centers, such as Manhattan and the western edge of Brooklyn, which received a lot of PPP loans. However, their sample also included areas throughout Queens and the northern Bronx, for example, where there was a lower density of arts and culture organizations which did not receive many PPP loans, if any. The variety in size, geography, and receipt of the PPP loan provided Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith with a robust sample to better understand a wide variety of experiences.

Griffith then discussed their findings from the first survey. One of the first things they noticed was that of the 88 organizations in their sample that qualified for the round one PPP loan, only 65 accepted the loan. This was an attrition rate of 26 percent. They found that those who had a prior relationship with a bank were more likely to accept the loan. In other words, an established relationship with a lender seemed to play a big role in a successful application.

In both Rounds 1 and 2 of PPP applications, there were a number of barriers that hampered applicants as they applied to the PPP. About half of survey respondents who began the application said that these barriers had either a moderate or a great impact on their application process. The challenges led the research team to seek a better understanding of the barriers and the program deficiencies causing the difficulties. One problem was that there were 92 rule changes, form revisions, updated guidance, or other adjustments by the federal government during the application process. Smaller organizations were especially overwhelmed as they tried to keep up with all the changes. Griffith and his colleagues theorize that the chaos wrought from the dozens of changes was a major impediment and contributed to the attrition from qualifying for the loan to actually receiving the loan.

Another factor that Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith identified was the lack of clarity around loan forgiveness. They found through their survey that the organizations which accepted the PPP loan were extremely confident their loans would be forgiven. This confidence was essential because organizations overwhelmingly reported that if a PPP loan was not forgiven, it would have major impacts on the operation of their organization, including potential closure. The team hypothesized that this fear of not being forgiven may have had a chilling effect. In other words, concerns about forgiveness may have stopped some organizations from applying or completing the application process, adding to the attrition.

Griffith then explained that the amount received through the PPP loan was positively associated with the number of full-time staff, even after controlling for a host of organizational factors. The research team interpreted it as a good sign that the PPP, a paycheck protection program, was providing loans proportional to the number of full-time staff an organization needed to support. In addition, organizations that received PPP loans found them very beneficial. Of the survey respondents who received a loan, 89 percent said the loans were very or extremely beneficial. So, Griffith explained, once the application chaos was navigated, the loans were very helpful to the arts and culture organizations that they surveyed.

Bushouse then concluded the presentation by describing six recommendations regarding what governments should consider in designing future programs. The recommendations were informed by the survey results Griffith described, but also by the interviews, which are ongoing, and the second survey about the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant. The recommendations to better support arts and culture organizations are:

- **<u>Improve the SBA's understanding of how nonprofits operate</u>**. Bushouse explained that the first question on the PPP application asked for the applicant's business owner. However, nonprofits do not have owners so this question is inappropriate for them. This poorly worded question exemplifies SBA's lack of familiarity with nonprofit organizations, and led to avoidable confusion for nonprofits in the application process.
- **<u>Invest in increased government agency capacity.</u>** The pandemic funding increased the SBA's budget by almost 600 percent without any additional funding for administrative infrastructure. Therefore, SBA was not sufficiently staffed to handle the infusion of funding and start up a new program as large as the PPP.
- **<u>Create an administrative structure for managing crises to support the arts and culture ecosystem</u>**. Bushouse pointed out that across the ecosystem, there are a variety of organizations with different tax statuses, budget sizes, and artistic disciplines. She said that alongside large organizations, there are also individual artists that needed support and the ecosystem needs all segments to be vibrant in order to thrive.
- **<u>Include general operating support in government funding programs</u>**. This recommendation echoes the concerns raised by Van der Veer and Jackson in their presentation that nonprofits cannot complete their work with fidelity without operating support.
- **<u>The sector needs grants, not loans.</u>** Bushouse explained that the PPP met the needs of those who received it, but both the PPP and EIDL were loans. Many organizations found the criteria and process for forgiveness confusing. Accepting the loans in this context felt like a risk because not having them forgiven was considered by many organizations to be potentially catastrophic for their organization – leading to a chilling effect that prevented organizations from accessing the support the two programs provided.
- **Continue listening to the arts and culture sector. There is hope!** The Shuttered Venues Operators Grant was created specifically for the Arts and Culture sector, but the rollout was botched. SBA has created a listening group in the wake of the rollout, which created bi-directional communication. Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith's initial research suggests that this sustained communication helped

SBA reach its intended target population and make real-time, needed adjustments. So, there is hope that the federal government is listening and learning.

Session 2: Effective Partnerships

Session Leader: Alan Abramson
Professor, George Mason University
Director, Center on Nonprofits, Philanthropy, and Social Enterprise

Session Outline: Session 2 included three presentations, two of which provided examples of nonprofits partnering with local governments. The third presentation discussed whether people should be able to control charitable resources after their death for an indefinite time period, or if the resources should be required to be released at some point and used in partnership with governments for equitable purposes, such as reparations.

- "Case Study: Government & Nonprofit Sector Partnership Model: The Shelby County (TN) Nonprofit Committee" by Andrea Hill (Tennessee Nonprofit Network), Natalie Jones (Christian Brothers University), Sherry Rout (Tennessee Nonprofit Network), and Janet Lo (Shelby County Government)
- "Forever is a Long Time – Limiting Charitable Trust Perpetuity & Making Reparations" by Angela Eikenberry and Nuri Heckler (University of Nebraska at Omaha)
- "Critical Policy Analysis from the Denver Office of Nonprofit Engagement" by Julia Mahoney, Will Alston, and Ken Seeley (Denver Office of Nonprofit Engagement)
- Discussant – Heather MacIndoe (University of Massachusetts Boston)

Overview

As summarized by Heather MacIndoe, an associate professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, the three presentations all take different but overlapping perspectives on how effective partnerships have looked or could look if policies changed. First, Andrea Hill, Sherry Rout and Janet Lo discussed their experiences when the Shelby County government in Tennessee worked to formalize a partnership between the county government and the local nonprofit community. Similarly, the third presentation, by Julia Mahoney, Will Alston, and Ken Seeley, outlined the process of creating the Denver Office of Nonprofit Engagement and shed light on how partnerships can help both the nonprofit and public sectors work more effectively for their community. Sandwiched between the stories of local partnership building, Angela Eikenberry and Nuri Heckler discussed whether the rule against perpetuities should be applied to charitable giving, which is currently excepted from the rule. In doing so, Eikenberry and Heckler propose an unrealized partnership in which policymakers free wealth from longstanding binds and return it to the communities from which it was extracted, often by exploitative means.

Case Study: Government & Nonprofit Sector Partnership Model: The Shelby County (TN) Nonprofit Committee

To kick off the first presentation, Andrea Hill introduced herself and her colleague, Janet Lo, pointing out that they represent different perspectives, with Hill representing a nonprofit coalition and Lo representing the public sector. Hill explained that their goal was to share how the Shelby County nonprofit community developed a successful partnership with the county government through the

Shelby County Nonprofit Committee. They have found the partnership to be successful in identifying and communicating issues that arise as nonprofits work in their communities.

Hill explained that the original intent of the committee was to provide a common space for nonprofit leaders and county officials to define shared objectives and develop clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each sector. This shared understanding is just one of the best practices that Hill and Lo believe made the Shelby County Nonprofit Committee successful. Another of the best practices was that both sectors, public and nonprofit, need to have mutual respect for the value the other brought and that equity must be central in all decision making. The final best practice was that accountability and transparency had to be a two-way process. Nonprofits are used to reporting to governments, but in order for this committee to be successful, it needed to be clear that both parties had to be accountable to one another.

Lo then began discussing in more detail how Shelby County officials and nonprofit leaders developed shared goals and objectives. The mayor of Shelby County, Mayor Harris, championed the committee in order to make rapid changes that could have lasting, systemic impacts. With that as a starting point, each iteration of the committee is given an 18-month cycle. The first round has completed its 18-month cycle, and the committee is currently in its second round. The first three months of each round focus on determining what problems the community is facing. Nonprofits are grouped by program area into subcommittees and are asked what their top priorities are for improving outcomes in the community, and what are the biggest barriers to achieving their goals. Once each group has selected a top goal, they have three months to brainstorm ways to tackle the issue. After the 6 months of identifying barriers and developing solutions, the committee implements its ideas. For example, human services organizations said their clients needed mental health services and mental health providers said they were having a difficult time connecting with those who needed their services most, even though some were not at capacity. So, the subcommittee's solution was to create a one-stop-shop website in partnership with Mental Health for America that now acts as a central referral system.

The joint leadership structure, Lo continued, is another reason the committee has been able to successfully develop shared goals and objectives. The leadership structure of the committee and each of the subcommittees includes members of both the public and nonprofit sectors. In addition, the committee and subcommittees were designed to include people that reflected the diversity of Shelby County nonprofits, including those that are big and established and new and grassroots.

Hill then discussed how the committee was able to develop clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each participant. This began by ensuring that everyone, from the local nonprofit coalition, to the Shelby County executives, was on board with the goals of the committee. For example, Mayor Harris was unwavering in his belief that the county government could not reach its goals without the nonprofit sector. Mayor Harris also understood the importance of long-term partnership-building with the sector. So, to ensure this work continued, Mayor Harris placed the nonprofit committee under the Division of Community Services, rather than within the mayor's office, where work tends to change with each administration. Mayor Harris was also highly engaged in the committee during the first round. He considered this work important enough to hire a full-time staff to continue the work. Investing in this position indicates that Mayor Harris had clarity about the importance of the committee and its work in the community. Lo explained that having someone in the government, like Mayor Harris, who can advocate for nonprofits is especially important to ensuring that the roles nonprofits play do not go unnoticed.

Lo continued by highlighting the ways that the structure of the committee ensured both mutual respect and equity in decision making. The committee was made up of several program area subcommittees, which allowed the committee as a whole to stay on task, while giving subcommittees autonomy and space to ensure that all voices were heard from across the nonprofit sector. In addition, the inclusion of Momentum Nonprofit Partners (now Tennessee Nonprofit Network), a nonprofit coalition, allowed there to be someone in discussions who could communicate sector-wide issues and represent the voices of nonprofits who could not be in the room. Each organization included in the committee had only one representative, so the voices of smaller organizations were not drowned out by many representatives coming from larger organizations. The underlying assumption that facilitated a common purpose was that both sectors wanted to improve the life of Shelby County residents and working together was the most effective path to do so.

As the nonprofit and public sectors worked together through the committee, information flowed more freely between the two sectors and among nonprofits. This created, as Lo explained, more transparency and improved problem solving. The county also provided the members of the committee with additional training and information that could benefit their work. For example, the Shelby County government hosted workshops on accessing the county land bank and using online language resources. Such activities helped expand the impact of the committee beyond its official projects by building relationships and opening lines of communication.

Hill concluded by presenting several recommendations for other localities that want to develop partnerships between nonprofits and local government:

- Be willing to **adjust** because government-nonprofit partnerships will look different in each community.
- **Identify** an intermediary in the community to act as the initial bridge between the government, nonprofit sector, and community.
- **Establish** the committee structure, goals, funding source(s), a method for tracking and sharing successes, and a feedback process.
- **Engage** with City and County mayors, or local councils and commissions.

Forever is a Long Time – Limiting Charitable Trust Perpetuity & Making Reparations

Nuri Heckler, an assistant professor at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, began the presentation by explaining the rule against perpetuities (RAP). The RAP states that no property can be controlled by an individual for longer than 21 years after their death. Many states have removed or modified the original RAP, but others still have the RAP in their state codes. Charities, however, are generally an exception to the RAP, where it exists. In other words, charities could last forever, and many charities have outlasted their governments. So, Heckler and Eikenberry began to ask why this is and imagine what could be done if charitable resources were free from the stipulations placed upon them by donors decades or even centuries ago.

Heckler highlighted the history behind the RAP. It began with feudalism when an immense amount of wealth was held in the hands of few people in property interests called fiefs. Many of the fiefs were under the control of the monasteries. Henry VIII then broke with the Catholic Church in the 1500's and, in an attempt to seize the land held by monasteries, ended the fiefs and declared that when a citizen dies, all property is forfeited. However, the lords didn't like this and after an uprising, the law was never really followed. Instead, the system of wills was created to pass wealth onto someone else, instead of having continual trusts, as was the case under fiefs. So, after death, an individual was expected to give their resources to someone else, but if the trust was not given away to another person through a will within 21 years, the wealth was forfeited.

Then in the 1600s, Elizabeth I was facing famine, inflation, plagues, and wars. So, she proposed a private public partnership to alleviate suffering and encouraged people to donate to charities. This private public partnership was not designed to disrupt the status quo, as Heckler explained, but to alleviate suffering long enough to go back to normal. Heckler theorizes that this design, by Elizabeth I, helps explain current philanthropy patterns and why there is no government office for nonprofits: the point was to move responsibility away from the government onto charities to deal with problems facing the society. So, the charity exception to the RAP was codified in statute in 1601 and all US states originally adopted it. Therefore, the RAP has not been applied consistently to charities in the US for over 400 years.

Angela Eikenberry, who is also a professor at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, then discussed the ways the charitable exception has been questioned for centuries by prominent thinkers and doers. For example, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Jefferson, and Julius Rosenwald, among others, have questioned the effectiveness of philanthropy at alleviating society's ills and expressed concern about the democratic and equity issues regarding charitable perpetuity that allows wealthy people to project their values onto future generations. In addition, Eikenberry and her colleague found that much of the modern wealth associated with charitable trusts is controlled by white people, mostly on behalf of white male benefactors. Eikenberry and her colleague acknowledge that much of this wealth was extracted through colonization, Native American genocide, African American slavery, and other prejudiced public policies, such as redlining. Although some foundations and universities have been coming to terms with the sources of their wealth, Eikenberry finds their current attempts at remedying this history inadequate.

Scholars have offered suggestions on how to move forward to restrict the influence of perpetual charitable trusts. For instance, as Eikenberry explained, Lechterman has suggested donors be allowed to select the narrowness of their aims and duration of their purposes but require the trust to be reviewed periodically for amendment or dissolution.[3] Other scholars have proposed solutions with similar frameworks, in which the chartable exception to the RAP is maintained but guardrails are introduced. However, Eikenberry highlighted that public officials, who would likely be tasked with oversight of such

[3] Theodore M. Lechterman, "That the Earth Belongs in Usufruct to the Living": Intergenerational Philanthropy and the Problem of Dead-Hand Control," in *Giving in Time: Temporal Considerations in Philanthropy*, ed. Ray Madoff and Benjamin Soskis (Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 93–116.

guardrails, are already overburdened and are often a part of systems that perpetuate inequities along racial and gender lines, among others.

With this criticism in mind, Eikenberry and her colleague have concluded that any proposals seeking to maintain the charitable exception to the RAP, even if there are controls, are not adequate to address long-standing, inequitable systems. Instead, she proposed reinstituting the RAP in states where it no longer effectively exists and ending charitable exceptions. Resources that become untethered as a result of this policy change, Eikenberry suggests, should be put toward reparations to compensate for past and contemporary harms that were perpetrated during the extraction of that wealth. There are many approaches that have been proposed to distribute reparations. For example, Darity and Mullen have suggested creating a national commission to investigate the history of racial injustice in this country, establishing a fund in the federal government, and placing freed charitable wealth into the fund, all to build resources and political will for reparations.[4] Eikenberry adds that foundations and charitable trusts can play a role by helping connect sources of wealth to injustices and build public support for reparations.

Eikenberry concluded her and Heckler's presentation by reiterating that perpetual trusts did not naturally evolve but were deliberately designed to meet the needs of governments, through private-public partnerships, as early as the 1600s. As the charitable exception to the RAP is not inevitable, policy makers and philanthropic leaders could make a different choice that could liberate American philanthropy to redesign itself.

Critical Policy Analysis from the Denver Office of Nonprofit Engagement

Wil Alston, the director of Denver's Office of Nonprofit Engagement, began the final presentation by introducing his fellow presenters: Julia Mahoney, a senior program manager for the Denver City and County governments, and Ken Sealey, a senior advisor to the city and a program evaluator. Alston then laid out their goal for the presentation, to describe their framework for strengthening the local nonprofit sector. Denver's experience is enlightening because government officials have readily acknowledged that partnerships with nonprofits are essential for serving their constituents well. Denver is fertile ground for this partnership initiative because, as Alston explained, the outgoing mayor was a long-time nonprofit executive and the incoming mayor worked at one of the largest foundations in the area before becoming mayor.

Alston then discussed the 2004 origins of his workplace, the Office of Nonprofit Engagement. The city and county governments were discovering the critical role nonprofits play, and the mayor at the time decided he wanted to establish the office to ensure better policies and programs that would bolster the nonprofit sector. Since then, the office has evolved and begun to influence policy with a focus on supporting small nonprofits with a budget under one million dollars. In addition, the office has been able to focus its efforts on BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations.

As explained by Alston, the Denver nonprofit sector consists of about 1,200 nonprofits that are responsible for about 120,000 jobs. They generate about 20 billion dollars in revenue and about 13

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[4] {Citation}

billion in spending. Alston considers this a big contribution to not just the city's but the states' economy. Even with the diversity within the nonprofit sector, nonprofits face many common challenges. These include loss or reduction in programming and hiring and retention difficulties. The nonprofit sector also lacks data for reporting and evaluation.

Mahoney turned the conversation to the research and data collection that the Office of Nonprofit Engagement has undertaken. She reiterated the importance of data collection and analysis to help their office think about the ways they can engage with the nonprofit sector in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Much of their data came from a survey of nonprofits. The survey highlighted issues with the contracting processes, the need for more support for capacity-building, the need for general operating funds, and the perception that the city had a "big dog" mentality that was disruptive to relationships between the public and nonprofit sectors. These survey results led the Denver government to create a nonprofit task force that convened city and nonprofit leaders to develop recommendations on how the city can more thoughtfully work with nonprofits. The task force recommendations will be released later in 2023. In addition to developing survey data, the Office of Nonprofit Engagement has also worked with its partners to create economic impact studies about nonprofits. The office has also examined how many city contracts have gone to nonprofits in order to fully understand the extent to which nonprofits impact the city.

Alongside the data and research work, Mahoney pointed out the ways the Office of Nonprofit Engagement has worked to develop capacity in the nonprofit sector. They are in the process of launching their technical assistance program, contracting with a national company to provide peer-to-peer learning, one-on-one workshop sessions with experts in the field, and educational videos. Mahoney explained they have also started a "Doing Business with the City" workshop, which seeks to strengthen the partnerships and make the process of working together smoother. The workshop includes information about the contracting process.

Mahoney also pointed out that there are some persistent challenges that require solutions from officials higher in city government. One challenge is that the city is lacking a central authority that guides the many touches that the city has with its nonprofit partners. Ideally, they would like the Office of Nonprofit Engagement to be named as that authority and be able to work across city government with all agencies that interact with nonprofits. They would also use the authority to develop and implement citywide policies to bolster nonprofits and build a response process to address issues nonprofits raise.

Sealey then began discussing the partnerships their office has built between city agencies, philanthropy, and the nonprofits in Denver. He explained their office wants to further foster a collaborative environment between these different players and strategize about how best to get them to work together. One step they have taken is to create the Collaborative Impact Fund of Denver. Sealey considers it a response to complaints about the difficult, bureaucratic hoops that nonprofits often have to go through to work with city agencies. So, the Fund's goal was to create a place where nonprofits can find easier access to city resources and where city agencies can find easier ways to fund nonprofits.

The Collaborative Impact Fund of Denver was modeled after mayor's funds from around the US, particularly New York City. Sealey and his colleagues studied the successes and challenges of other funds to ensure they maintained a collaborative fund that would nurture cross-sector relationships. Sealey highlighted the impact of research about older programs, like New York’s, which can be used by cities like Denver to avoid pitfalls and implement their fund more effectively.

As explained by Sealey, an advisory group that was formed within the Commission for Nonprofit Engagement, a division of the city’s Office of Human Rights and Community Partnerships, helps guide the Collaborative Impact Fund. The commission reports to the mayor and makes recommendations about how government-nonprofit relations can be improved. So, the commission created a direct link from the Collaborative Impact Fund to the mayor. As they build this work further, Sealey pointed out the importance of having staff who are focused on the individual organizations and problems that arise, alongside people who are focused on the sector-wide ecosystem.

Themes from the Presentations, Q&A, and Commentary

Overview

Alongside the presentations summarized above, the symposium also included commentary from session leaders Jeff Moore and Alan Abramson, as well as from the discussants, Ronda Jackson and Heather MacIndoe. Woven throughout the presentations, this commentary helped create connections between topics and provided additional insights from the commenters' personal experiences as academics and practitioners. After each session, the discussants led a Q&A session with the presenters that allowed participants to seek further information or ask for clarification. While the Q&A and commentary are not summarized in full, they are included alongside insights from the presentations in the themes discussed below.

The federal government needs a formalized structure to enlist expertise on the nonprofit sector.

In introducing the second session, Abramson explained that most interests have some kind of representation in government. For example, farmers have the Department of Agriculture and labor has the Department of Labor. The nonprofit sector has the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) which serves mostly as a regulatory body. Abramson explained that the nonprofit sector is lacking an office, even if it is small, that represents the sector and is a positive voice that understands the sector and speaks up for its capacities and needs. His comments mirror those of others throughout the symposium who reported negative experiences with federal programs that did not enlist expertise about the nonprofit sector, resulting in processes that were ill-designed for nonprofits.

The presentation by Tamara Keshecki, Brenda Bushouse, and Eric Griffith provided examples of the ways the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) was not equipped to adjust programs to accommodate nonprofits, leading to misunderstandings and barriers for nonprofit organizations trying to access aid during the pandemic. For example, the PPP loan application asked nonprofits for names of their owners, followed by questions about their banking relationships. These parts of the application were not designed for nonprofits that don't have owners and often lack strong relationships with banks, and made completing the application process stressful and confusing. In explaining her experience applying for the PPP loan, Ronda Jackson said, "The process was extremely labor intensive during a time of crisis. It took two people, hundreds of hours of work to complete." Keshecki, Bushouse, and Griffith theorize this added frustration led to a chilling effect, resulting in fewer nonprofits completing the application process and ultimately receiving aid.

The experiences of the Shelby County Nonprofit Committee and Denver's Office of Nonprofit Engagement, on the other hand, highlight the opportunities for improvement that exist when nonprofits have a seat at the table within government. During the Q&A, for example, Janet Lo explained that having a dedicated committee, with government staff, focused on the nonprofit sector provides visibility to the work nonprofits are doing in the community. Lo said she receives questions from council members about the nonprofits in their district, and she is able to provide them with information they otherwise may not have known where to access. As a result, the council members are able to support their local nonprofits and make policies with them in mind. On the federal level, though, there is no equivalent body to bring visibility to the impact of nonprofits.

Jeff Moore pointed out that Independent Sector has a bill, The Nonprofit Stakeholders Engaging and Advancing Together (Nonprofit SEAT) Act of 2023, that has been introduced in the US House of Representatives. The Nonprofit SEAT act does not propose a large bureaucracy or an agency like the SBA but would ensure there is a modest-size office in the executive branch working with other agencies to better support the sector. For example, during COVID-19, staff from a nonprofit office could have worked with SBA to adapt the PPP loan application so that it would not confuse nonprofits and discourage them from applying.

The nonprofit sector cannot shy away from advocating for itself.

Ronda Jackson, in her work with KABOOM!, has seen a hesitancy of nonprofits to work with government funders because it often requires nonprofits to accept underfunded contracts, late payments, and adverse government practices. That is why KABOOM! avoided government contracts for over 20 years. They also feared entering into advocacy work because they did not want to lose their tax status or suffer from mission creep. The experience of KABOOM! echoes the fears and frustrations of nonprofit organizations across the country.

As explained by Jackson, dealing with adverse government policies, such as underfunded contracts, or avoiding government funding altogether maintains current systems and ultimately hurts the sector. Underfunded contracts, for example, result in programs that often do not deliver the quality of services that nonprofits seek to provide. As nonprofits are the ones out in the community, their under-resourced services can lower public opinion of the sector because communities only see the end product, not the underfunded contracts, late payments, or red tape. Jackson says the sector should just say no to government funding rather than accept lower payments from government than their services actually cost.

In addition to refusing underfunded contracts, Jackson also asserts that nonprofits need to engage in advocacy. When they don’t, governments are not held accountable for their practices and communities ultimately suffer as the essential work of nonprofits remains undervalued. One reason that nonprofits shy away from advocacy is the misconception that nonpartisan advocacy work is not allowed under their tax status. Jeff Moore explained that Independent Sector implemented a survey in 2022 that follows a similar one from 2000. After 22 years, the sector is even more likely to believe advocacy is not allowed for nonprofits. Independent Sector also found that there is considerable concern among nonprofits that their boards of directors and funders will think advocacy is too risky in this politically charged environment. So, nonprofits just avoid it. However, Moore urged nonprofit leaders to reflect on their mission and consider the ways they need to speak up – whether convincing foundations to fund advocacy or testifying before legislative bodies – in order to fully pursue the nonprofit’s mission with fidelity.

Jackson and Van der Veer’s presentation highlighted the ways that advocacy can result in policies that bolster the nonprofit sector and ultimately improve service delivery. In Washington, DC, for example, the Coalition for Nonprofit Equity began as a group of nonprofits that were sharing common frustrations about their relationship with government and seeking solutions. Once individual nonprofits realized they were not alone in their frustrations, they organized their efforts to try to change policy. Van der Veer, along with other nonprofit leaders, testified before the city council, collected data, and insisted that the city fund indirect costs. Due to their efforts, the council passed the Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act, which requires the DC government to fully fund nonprofits' indirect costs. Once the act was passed, the Coalition for Nonprofit Equity continued to advocate for the local nonprofit sector and hold the government accountable to nonprofits. This example shows that nonprofits have the power to strengthen the sector when they organize and demand better treatment from the government.

The experience of the Coalition for Nonprofit Equity in Washington, DC also shows the importance of coalitions and associations. Nonprofits are often feeling at-capacity as they try to provide services without sufficient support. Adding extensive advocacy work, which is often not funded by foundations, onto their plate is unrealistic. Coalitions help divide up the responsibility for advocacy across nonprofits, so individual organizations can lend their voice and efforts towards building power without taking on the whole burden. In Shelby County, as another example, the Nonprofit Committee was a government body designed to support nonprofits, and everyone involved benefited from the presence of a coalition. Despite having a direct line to government leaders through the committee, local nonprofits still leaned on Momentum Nonprofit Partners (now the Tennessee Nonprofit Network), a Tennessee-based nonprofit coalition, because it ensured that voices from across the sector were heard. Meanwhile government officials also appreciated Momentum's presence because it organized communication and helped the committee stay on track. Nonprofits have long accepted insufficient resources and dealt with frustrating processes from government partners. But this is impacting the nonprofits' ability to care for communities and public opinion of the sector. Coalitions are an important way for nonprofits to build power and demand better treatment and ensure that their important work does not go unnoticed or undervalued.

Data is an important tool to inform the public and policymakers of the issues facing nonprofits.

When answering questions from symposium attendees, Marrese made an appeal – often heard from researchers – for better data. She explained that she cannot answer all her own questions, or those of her audience, about the impact of childcare on nonprofit workforce outcomes because that information is not available. However, research has shown the importance of that data infrastructure for other sectors, leaving the nonprofit sector without the insights it needs to better advocate for the nonprofit workforce and for potentially career-changing services, like equitable access to childcare. The experience of other presenters highlights why Marrese's appeal for better data is so important: data can tell a story that impacts policy and changes systems.

The Coalition for Nonprofit Equity in Washington, DC began its campaign for nonprofit contracts with DC government to include indirect costs by collecting data. They found that indirect costs were sometimes not covered at all, and when such costs were covered, the amounts were arbitrary. The data created a story that Van der Veer could tell policymakers and help nonprofit leaders communicate. In addition to indirect cost data, Vanderveer also talked about the role of comparative data, which can put the barriers nonprofits face in context. For example, she explained in the Q&A that government social workers were paid roughly $30,000 more than the amount the same governments were reimbursing nonprofits for similar social work positions. Van der Veer used this to powerfully communicate the disadvantages nonprofits face in hiring and retention, both of which are huge barriers to providing quality services to communities.

Data is not only an important tool to highlight the current state of the sector, it is also an important means through which the sector can reflect on the past and prepare for the future. Griffith demonstrated this when he presented his team's survey results about the experience of arts and culture organizations in New York City during the pandemic with PPP loans. Using this information, he and his colleagues were able to aggregate lessons learned about the support nonprofits received during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could be used to better tackle the next crisis. Similarly, Eikenberry discussed the central role that data gathering could have in creating the political will for reparations. Eikenberry explained that by exploring past ills and connecting them to current structures of wealth, the movement toward reparations could gain momentum and change public opinion through storytelling. Whether using real-time data to shine a light on the needs of the nonprofit sector or analyzing past data to inform the future, data collection and analysis can play a central role in bolstering the sector and helping nonprofits make a larger impact in their communities.

Everyone benefits when nonprofits partner with researchers, governments, and one another.

Abramson, in his remarks at the beginning of the symposium, highlighted the opportunities that exist when practitioners, community leaders, and researchers work together. He acknowledged that collaboration takes time and intentionality, but pointed out the ways nonprofit scholars can learn from those who are working on-the-ground and how nonprofit leaders can use the analyses and data from researchers to improve their practices or advocate for better policies. Throughout the presentations, the potential impact of collaboration was a common theme.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, arts and culture organizations met regularly to share information and updates. Keshecki describes this regular contact as essential for these organizations to get out of their silos – whether it was by discipline or organizational size – to help one another access pandemic-related resources. In addition, the relationships built within the arts and culture sector also benefitted the local government, because they could use the network to access resources nonprofits had that governments needed. Collaboration within the arts and culture sector helped build lines of communication between the sector and outside stakeholders.

In Denver, the Office of Nonprofit Engagement has experienced the tension inherent in collaborations between sectors, as well as the opportunities that the work provides. The office is part of the city government but is also deeply rooted in and committed to the work of nonprofit organizations. Alston explained in the Q&A that this position puts them in between the sectors – nonprofit and government – at times. They have navigated this by providing nonprofits with technical assistance to help them navigate city systems, while also advocating for better practices to the government on behalf of nonprofits. In this way, their relationship with both allows the office to provide real-time help, while also working toward bigger, system-wide changes. One such change was the creation of the Collaborative Impact Fund, which was a true collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and government. The fund was created to provide practitioners with funding that had less red tape involved, as well as a way for city officials to provide resources in areas that are priorities for the government. The fund was also developed using best practices gathered by researchers about other similar funds.

Whether through information-sharing sessions, formalized advocacy efforts, or practitioner-researcher partnerships, collaboration within and between nonprofits, government agencies, scholars, and other stakeholders allows all those involved to better problem solve and tackle big, important issues. Nonprofits face underfunded government contracts, grants that do not account for operating costs, staff burnout due to red tape, and other common frustrations. It is no surprise that in these circumstances nonprofits do not feel they can take on more. By partnering with researchers, though, they can discover efficiencies and learn best practices. When partnering with other nonprofits, they can discover new avenues of funding or ways to better navigate systems. They can also distribute the costs of advocacy, so no one organization is bogged down. If they partner with governments, nonprofits can develop two-way lines of communication that can ease some of the time-consuming processes that nonprofits face. In the end, collaboration is often worth the cost. Above all, the communities served by nonprofits benefit as barriers are removed and best practices are uncovered through cross-sector relationships and cooperation.