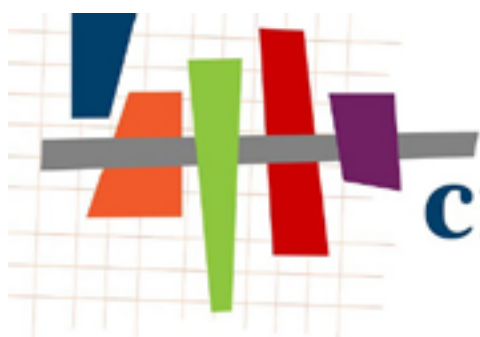


YMCA Lighthouse Project & The Heinz Endowments: *A Case Story*



creative youth

DEVELOPMENT

This publication is part of a series of tools created to enable deeper connections between creative youth development program leaders and funders:

- [Building Funding Pathways: A Strategy Towards Expanding Funding for the Creative Youth Development Field](#)
- [Mapping Skill to Will: Approaches to Funding Creative Youth Development in the United States](#)
- [BAYCAT & The Golden State Warriors: A Case Story](#)
- [Memphis Music Initiative & ELMA Philanthropies: A Case Story](#)
- [The San Diego Creative Youth Development Network & The Clare Rose Foundation: A Case Story](#)
- [YMCA Lighthouse Project & The Heinz Endowments: A Case Story](#)

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The National Creative Youth Development Partnership is a collaborative effort by youth and adult field leaders committed to the CYD values of Racial Equity & Social Justice, Youth Voice and Leadership, and Collective Action in and with the community.

www.CreativeYouthDevelopment.org



Dedicated to the development of thriving communities and a more just world, Creative Generation works to inspire, connect, and amplify the work of young creatives who catalyze social transformation and those who are committed to cultivating their creative capabilities.

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Introduction

In 2019, the Creative Youth Development (CYD) National Partnership engaged in a project to better understand the funding landscape of their field. To illustrate their findings, researchers connected with funders and CYD program leaders in four settings to better understand the dynamics of their partnerships.

The following is a case story showcasing a partnership between a large, regional foundation and a local CYD program within a large youth-serving institution, demonstrating the *high skill-low will* traits of the funder. For a glossary of terms, please see the last page of this publication.

Key Partners

As with most creative youth development initiatives, there is a complex web of individuals and organizations who collaborate to make it happen. For this case story, we will examine the relationship between the two key players:

- The Heinz Endowments
- YMCA Pittsburgh – Lighthouse Project

Big Takeaways

Through an examination of several examples across the country, numerous themes emerged to provide guidance to both funders and CYD leaders to enable strong partnerships. For this case story, the following themes are illuminated:

- Open Communication and shared learning create powerful bonds
- Balancing the power dynamic is essential to growth

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Recognize and acknowledge a willingness to partner and an openness to good ideas – this will help balance the seemingly unequal power dynamic.

”

What's the Story?

The Lighthouse Project began organically, working with teenage students in media arts and music, originally in a local high school. Eventually, the program found its way to the YMCA and began to grow. As part of the YMCA, the program was eligible for funding through the Heinz Endowments, a large, regional funder – in fact, they were the only request to the arts/culture portfolio of the foundation from the Y. Not only that, but this was a very rare request focused on the intersection of the arts and youth development.

Though the initial grant request was unsuccessful, staff from the foundation took an interest in the work of the program and invited its leaders to take part in several professional development opportunities: peer-to-peer learning cohort, educational site visits to other cities, and conference

attendance. As a result, both the CYD programs developed and matured, and the grantmaking portfolio innovated to meet the needs of the field.

As the Lighthouse Project was developing into its current form, it became an example of contemporary practice at the intersection of out-of-school time programming and arts/culture. Similarly, the Foundation experienced a staff transition and continued to build on the long history of investment in arts and culture, by more explicitly articulating and growing its investment in informal learning spaces which empower youth to present their ideas through creative forms.

As a result of this partnership between funder and program, both feel that they have grown and developed on equal ground; equalizing the typically impeding power dynamics between funder and fundee. Mutually reinforcing learning opportunities and professional development has shaped both their program design and investment frameworks. Open communication and a free exchange of ideas about innovating current structures allowed for both to grow simultaneously. Today, as collaborators, both are able to experiment and speculate about community-based work and envision tangible changes that can result in a strong infrastructure to support Pittsburgh's creative youth.

“

Sharing knowledge between funders and program partners helps facilitate good working relationships – you are in this together. Papers from the foundation helps program wrestle with big ideas. Program reports help funders understand the reality of implementation. Together, you can solve big problems and propose big ideas.

”

Glossary of Terms

Creative Youth Development — *A recent term for a longstanding theory of practice that integrates creative skill-building, inquiry, and expression with positive youth development principles, fueling young people's imaginations and building critical learning and life skills.*

High Skill/High Will (Field Builders) — *This category of funders actively funds and supports CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs and identifies as part of the CYD landscape of their community or funding region.*

Low Skill/High Will (Potential Stars) — *This category of funders actively funds or seeks to fund CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs, but struggles with aligning those investments to existing strategic priorities.*

High Skill/Low Will (Reluctant Allies) — *This category of funder actively funds and supports CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs, but does not see themselves as part of the CYD ecosystem.*

Low Skill/Low Will (Potential Stars) — *This category of funders does not currently fund CYD organizations or programs nor is currently knowledgeable about CYD as a field of practice. They do, however, demonstrate potential based on their strategic funding priorities.*

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