

# State Government and Philanthropy Partnerships: Learning from Three Impactful Collaborations Monthly Connect

August 2023

Working together, state government and philanthropy can leverage their expertise and resources (e.g., relationships and capital) to maximize impact for the people and communities they serve. In this OSP Monthly Connect, speakers representing state government-philanthropy partnerships describe each partnership and how it relates to their shared interests; discuss components of the partnerships, including what each partner brings to the collaboration and how they address challenges; and highlight evidence of successful partnership.

The [Monthly Connect](#) is a series of virtual panel discussions on topics relevant to cross-sector partnerships.

## Speakers

**Stacey Carless**, Executive Director, NC Counts Coalition

**Hazel Edmond**, Rural Economic Development Associate, North Carolina Department of Commerce (Commerce)

**Debra Farrington**, Deputy Secretary/Chief Health Equity Officer, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS)

**Kimberly Kandros**, Manager of Development and Special Projects, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR)

**Candice Kane**, Program Officer, The Cannon Charitable Interests

**Juli Kim (moderator)**, Philanthropy Liaison, OSP

**Ted Lord**, Senior Vice President/General Counsel, Golden LEAF Foundation

## Key Takeaways

Speakers shared the purpose and benefits of their partnerships as well as keys to successful partnerships. Three central themes emerged:

### **1. State government and philanthropy partnerships provide opportunities to leverage public and private resources for maximum benefit to North Carolina communities.**

- Partnerships differ depending in part on the role that state agency and philanthropic partners play and the resources they contribute to the collaboration.
- State agencies often have [data](#), [subject matter expertise](#), or [relationships](#) that can inform how philanthropy direct its resources to critical needs.
- Philanthropy often can help design and fund [organizations or systems](#) that support state agencies' delivery of critical services.

### **2. Consistent, open communication is a core component of successful state government and philanthropy partnerships.** Panelists shared these insights:

- Be intentional; pick up the phone, attend each other's [meetings](#), invite your partner to an event, and share information on potential opportunities.

- Transparent communication builds familiarity, mutual respect, and trust, which are critical to successful partnerships and helpful when challenges arise.

### **3. Speakers encouraged creativity, boldness, and persistence in pursuing partnerships, building on the following starting points for identifying and connecting with potential partners:**

- Explore existing resources. For example, visit state agencies' [news and information webpages](#) , subscribe to state agency and philanthropy [press releases](#) , and search grant repositories.
- Submit requests for information to “Contact Us” pages on [philanthropy websites](#), leverage existing relationships, or call a prospective partner or someone who can connect you to a prospective partner.
- Reach out to the [NC Office of Strategic Partnerships](#). OSP’s core work includes developing, launching, and enhancing cross-sector partnerships. The [Philanthropy Liaison](#) helps facilitate and support state government and philanthropy collaboration. In addition, OSP has developed [numerous resources](#) on partnerships with philanthropy that may be helpful for identifying a partner or initiating a partnership. The resources include print materials and webinar recordings that address topics such as the roles of philanthropy in state government-philanthropy partnerships and government-research partnerships; and how philanthropy can help to catalyze government-research partnerships. Email [partnerships@osbm.nc.gov](mailto:partnerships@osbm.nc.gov) to connect with OSP.

#### Partnership snapshots

[NC Department of Commerce \(NC Commerce\)](#) and [Golden LEAF Foundation](#). These organizations share an interest in rural economic development. Both are engaged in grantmaking to help rural North Carolina communities pursue and develop economic growth and opportunities, though NC Commerce primarily funds municipalities and Golden LEAF primarily funds nonprofits. Working together, they are able to identify and leverage their respective potential investment opportunities for maximum impact.

[NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources \(DNCR\)](#) and [The Cannon Charitable Interests](#). These organizations share an interest in protecting and preserving the state’s cultural and historical sites. They support a common group of nonprofit partners working with cultural and historical sites but provide different resources. Though the state agency provides oversight for cultural and historical sites, support from philanthropic partners is vital to help maintain and expand the sites’ services and attractions for public enjoyment.

[NC Department of Health and Human Services \(NCDHHS\)](#) and [NC Counts Coalition](#). These organizations shared an interest in ensuring equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. When philanthropic organizations approached NCDHHS to offer funding support for vaccine distribution, the department redirected them to the NC Counts Coalition, a statewide nonprofit organization providing NCDHHS with the infrastructure to reach and distribute vaccines to all corners of the state. Serving in an intermediary role, NC Counts used philanthropic funding to support its organizational infrastructure and capacity to distribute NCDHHS funds to community-based organizations able to reach all communities in their service areas. As the bridge between NCDHHS and philanthropy, NC Counts helped align state government and philanthropic resources to address a statewide emergency.

## Resources

*The following resources were shared or elevated during the program. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of information or resources.*

### [Cannon Charitable Interests](#)

The Cannon Charitable Interests (including The Cannon Foundation, the Charles A. Cannon Charitable Trusts, and the Mariam and Robert Hayes Trust) support healthcare, higher education, human services, and community. The foundation funds capital and equipment projects for organizations across North Carolina. The trusts can award grants only to named beneficiaries.

### [Golden LEAF Foundation](#)

Established in 1999, the Golden LEAF Foundation's mission is to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina's rural and tobacco-dependent communities through leadership in grantmaking, collaboration, innovation, and stewardship as an independent and perpetual foundation.

### [NC Counts Coalition](#)

Established in 2018, the NC Counts Coalition is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to building a healthy, just, and equitable North Carolina through cross-sector partnerships (among government, planning and community organizations, service providers, businesses, and others) that advance systemic solutions for communities facing systemic barriers, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low wealth, immigrant, and other communities.

### [NC Department of Commerce \(NC Commerce\)](#)

NC Commerce works with local, regional, national, and international organizations to improve the economic well-being of North Carolinians. The agency publishes data, statistics, information, and reports that are relevant to the state's economy.

### [NC Department of Health and Human Services \(NCDHHS\)](#)

NCDHHS manages the delivery of health- and human-related services for all North Carolinians. The agency works closely with health care professionals, community leaders, and advocacy groups; local, state, and federal entities; and many other stakeholders to make this happen.

- [Healthier Together](#) (Health Equity Action Network) is a public-private partnership to increase the number of individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and from other historically marginalized populations receiving COVID-19 vaccinations across the state of North Carolina. To do that, NCDHHS is building a grassroots mobilization strategy to help overcome centuries of health inequities by investing in state, regional, and community partners.

### [NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources \(DNCR\)](#)

DNCR oversees the state's resources for the arts, history, libraries, and nature. DNCR manages, promotes, and enhances the things that people love about North Carolina – its diverse arts and culture, rich history, and spectacular natural areas. Through its programs, the department enhances education, stimulates economic development, improves public health, expands accessibility, and strengthens community resiliency.

### [North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships \(OSP\)](#)

OSP develops, launches, and enhances partnerships between state agencies and NC's research and philanthropic sectors. As part of this work, OSP has created numerous resources about cross-sector

partnerships. If you have questions about OSP or are interested in connecting, email [partnerships@osbm.nc.gov](mailto:partnerships@osbm.nc.gov).

- The [Philanthropy Liaison](#) works to build, strengthen, and institutionalize relationships between state government and the philanthropic sector in NC. The Philanthropy Liaison webpage includes resources for those interested in philanthropic partnerships.
  - [The Many Roles of Philanthropy in Government-Philanthropy Partnerships Past Monthly Connect \(August 2021\)](#). In this Monthly Connect, speakers shared examples of government-philanthropy partnerships, insight into building successful partnerships and overcoming barriers, and the value of research in partnerships. They described various roles that philanthropy plays in partnerships, including convening, thought-partnering, funding, information-sharing, and technical assistance.
- The [North Carolina Project Portal](#) is a tool for sharing state agency research needs and for people to express interest in partnering on those opportunities.