

Opportunities for State Government and Philanthropy to Collaborate on Complex Challenges

July 2024

Numerous state government agencies lead efforts to address complex issues presenting daily challenges for many North Carolinians. Many philanthropic organizations are similarly focused on these issues in their work to enhance quality of life and well-being in the communities they support. In this Monthly Connect, representatives of state government and philanthropy shared the work their organizations are leading to tackle challenges related to complex issues, including child care and early education, affordable housing, rural communities' access to public and private grants, and workforce development.

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

Speakers

Emily Adair, Grants Program Director, Hometown Strong, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Faith Belcher, Director of Program Administration, State Employees' Credit Union Foundation

Marilyn Chism, Director of Programs, Golden LEAF Foundation

Samantha Cole, Child Care Business Liaison, NC Department of Commerce

Juli Kim (moderator), Philanthropy Liaison, NC Office of Strategic Partnerships

Key Takeaways

Speakers shared the following insights underlying successful cross-sector partnerships that have leveraged each partner's resources to maximize impact.

- 1. State government and philanthropy can partner in different ways.** Speakers described ways that state agencies and philanthropy engage with each other directly (e.g., meeting to discuss challenges of mutual interest; co-funding projects) and indirectly (e.g., supporting an intermediary partner such as a nonprofit service provider or a municipality).
- 2. State government and philanthropy oversee complementary and mutually beneficial resources.** Speakers discussed the value of state agencies' expertise; the broad geographic scope of government; philanthropies' deep connection to local communities; and philanthropies' flexibility to address funding gaps where public funds are not available.
- 3. Understanding operational differences between the two sectors is a key element of partnership.** Speakers discussed the reasons that state government and philanthropy approach risk and accountability differently; ways those different approaches inform how the sectors leverage each other's resources for greater impact; and the opportunities for both sectors to be more flexible.
- 4. Just as there are many differences among state agencies, foundations vary in their funding priorities, strategies, and geographic scope.** Speakers highlighted that for any given opportunity, a state agency could potentially leverage resources of more than one philanthropic partner. Conversely, philanthropy may support a single project that aligns with multiple state priorities.
- 5. Successful state government-philanthropy partnerships are often based on relationships that have developed over time.** Speakers described the importance of getting to know potential partners

before there's a need, establishing communication channels, and building trust so that partnerships can occur when opportunities arise.

- 6. State government and philanthropy can collaborate to build or enhance systems that address residents' basic needs.** Speakers discussed the responsibility of state government to provide certain basic resources and services to all residents statewide and the opportunity for philanthropy to align its investments without supplanting or duplicating government services. Speakers also discussed how the two sectors can pursue innovative but sustainable solutions to complex challenges.

Resources

Descriptions are in alphabetical order and paraphrased from active links as of July 25, 2024. Links are organized by agency/organization.

AdvanceNC

AdvanceNC is a collaborative group of community colleges, universities, workforce development boards, and workforce partners in Central North Carolina engaging with employer stakeholders to support the development of a robust talent pipeline serving the regional manufacturing community.

Golden LEAF Foundation

The Golden LEAF Foundation was established in 1999 to administer a portion of the funds North Carolina received through the Master Settlement Agreement with cigarette manufacturers. Golden LEAF'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. For almost 25 years, the nonprofit has partnered with the state and with local governments and other foundations in pursuit of this mission.

Hometown Strong

Hometown Strong is an initiative dedicated to supporting the rural counties of North Carolina by providing resources and support to improve the quality of life for residents. Hometown Strong focuses on economic development, education, healthcare, and community engagement.

- **Rural Grant Program**: Hometown Strong provides direct, free-of-charge grantwriting support to rural towns, counties, and regions to increase federal funding for projects within North Carolina, offering a comprehensive approach to long-term financial planning through grant strategies that leverage federal, state, and private funds.

NC Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP)

OSP develops, launches, and enhances partnerships between state government and North Carolina's research and philanthropic sectors. This includes elevating state government's internal capacity to use and generate evidence in its policies and programs. As part of this work, OSP has created resources about cross-sector partnerships. If you have questions about OSP or are interested in connecting with the team, email partnerships@osbm.nc.gov.

- **Highlights (monthly e-news and resources)**: Includes information about OSP, examples of state government-research partnerships, state government-philanthropy partnerships, impacts of the work, and features many university, college, philanthropy, and state government partners. [Subscribe to Highlights](#).

- **[North Carolina Project Portal](#)**: OSP created the NC Project Portal to share opportunities for partnering with state agencies on their research needs and for people to express interest in pursuing those opportunities.
- **[Philanthropy Liaison](#)**: The Philanthropy Liaison builds, strengthens, and institutionalizes relationships between state government and the philanthropic sector in North Carolina to educate each sector about the other, connect and foster relationships and partnerships, and collaborate on projects of shared interest across the state. Read more about the Philanthropy Liaison role [here](#). The following links are to resources developed by the Philanthropy Liaison related to state government and philanthropy engagement and partnership.
 - [Philanthropy 101 for State Government: What State Government Should Know about Charitable Foundations \(May 2024\)](#)
 - [What Philanthropy Wants Working in Partnership with State Government \(April 2024\)](#)
 - [The Many Roles of Philanthropy in Government-Philanthropy Partnerships \(August 2021\)](#)
- **[Monthly Connect](#)**: A series of panel discussions on topics relevant to partnerships among state government, research organizations including colleges and universities, philanthropy, and others. [Sign up](#) for OSP Highlights (e-news and resources) and Monthly Connect invitations. Monthly Connect sessions are open to anyone and OSP shares widely the recordings and relevant resources from each session.

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

NC Commerce works closely with local, regional, national, and international organizations to propel economic, community, and workforce development for the state to improve economic well-being and quality of life for all North Carolinians.

- **[Child Care Business Liaison](#)**: Funded by Invest Early NC in partnership with the NC Department of Commerce and the NC Department of Health and Human Services, the Child Care Business Liaison role was created under the state's economic development plan to help address the insufficient supply of high quality and affordable childcare in North Carolina. The Liaison works with businesses, local communities, and philanthropic organizations to research child care access solutions that could scale to serve communities in North Carolina, supports innovations like NC Tri-Share, and works with employers interested in investing in child care access solutions for their workers and communities.

State Employees' Credit Union Foundation ([SECU Foundation](#))

The SECU Foundation promotes local and community development by primarily funding high impact projects in the areas of housing, education, healthcare and human services.