

# Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW

---

Sponsored Supplement to *SSIR*  
**The Road to Scale Runs Through Public Systems**  
By Patrick T. McCarthy

Stanford Social Innovation Review  
Spring 2014

Copyright © 2014 by Leland Stanford Jr. University  
All Rights Reserved

**Long-term investment to strengthen grantees.** One of the ways that NHCF helps nonprofits increase their impact is by making long-term investments in building grantee infrastructure. Grantees need consistent, multiyear support in order to build strong leadership, effective operations, community partnerships, and the

*One of the ways that New Hampshire Charitable Foundation helps nonprofits increase their impact is by making long-term investments in building grantee infrastructure.*

other pieces of infrastructure necessary to scale up impact. This is especially important in the many rural areas of our state, where scaling up programs is more challenging.

An example of how we help New Hampshire nonprofits scale up their impact is our five-year investment in early childhood development. We provided grantees with multiyear funding, built their evaluation capacity, and supported their coming together to establish shared goals and strategies and to learn from each other. This community-driven collaborative has substantially increased the number of young children in northern New Hampshire receiving developmental screening to identify critical needs, from 0 percent to 14 percent. The collaborative's goal is to reach 100 percent. In another case, we provided three years of flexible support while a grantee worked to complete an evaluation and draft a business plan to expand operations. The grantee is now positioned to seek national funding to grow.

We also leverage federal dollars to build nonprofit infrastructure in New Hampshire and increase resources for areas where the foundation has invested deeply. In the past three years, NHCF helped New Hampshire secure \$52 million in federal grants by directly funding grant writers, providing a required state match, or funding collaboration and collective action that attracted multiyear federal grants in areas like substance use, housing redevelopment, and children's behavioral health.

**Supporting promising and proven programs.** Our foundation supports proven programs wherever possible, but we will also support promising programs when they are a better fit with local needs and capacities. We intentionally work along a con-

tinuum to advance evidence-based practice in our state.

We do so in two ways. First, we fund the development and evaluation of promising local approaches to issues we care about. When a high school program to prevent substance abuse showed promising results and a strong fit with our strategy, we funded

implementation in New Hampshire schools and simultaneously co-funded a formal evaluation with state and federal partners.

The second way we advance practice is by bringing knowledge to grantees about how to implement proven programs. We fund a local

Center for Excellence that provides grantees with technical assistance to ensure fidelity to evidence-based models or to adapt models without compromising effectiveness, as they did when New Hampshire communities adopted a proven coalition model to reduce youth violence and addiction.

**The Path Ahead**

Place-based funders like NHCF are a ready-made network for disseminating knowledge about what works and advancing proven practices about how to scale up. We have in-depth knowledge of grantees and the communities they serve that can inform successful efforts to scale up. Looking ahead, we need more accessible co-funding arrangements with national funders that will create a more robust pipeline of scalable initiatives. Philanthropy has a real opportunity, but we need to work together in new ways to create a network for change. ✨

**TWO GRANTMAKERS, TWO APPROACHES TO SCALE**

# The Road to Scale Runs Through Public Systems

By Patrick T. McCarthy

**T**wenty years ago, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched an initiative aimed at tackling a persistent problem in the juvenile justice system: Too many young people who came into contact with the system were being confined unnecessarily in secure detention. Building on research showing that such confinement leads to significantly worse outcomes for youths, the foundation set out to help local agencies implement alternatives to detention.

Today the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) is being implemented in more than 200 counties in 39 states and the

Patrick T. McCarthy is president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.



District of Columbia. One in four US youths lives in a participating community. The use of secure confinement in these communities has dropped 43 percent, and there has been no decrease in public safety. Although JDAI has not been implemented in every community in the country, the approach, tools, and lessons learned have been shared broadly, and other juvenile justice leaders are taking action on their own.

JDAI is one example of a philanthropic initiative that has dramatically scaled up its impact over time. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's pioneering work, the opportunities provided by the US government's Social Innovation Fund, and the hard work of legions of social entrepreneurs mean that many proven programs now are

reaching more people who need them. It's an impressive, energizing story. But we still have a long way to go before we can say we've solved the problem of how to scale up human services programs effectively.

### **From Program Replication to True Scale**

Replicating proven programs with fidelity is both critical and tough to do right, but we should be careful not to confuse program expansion with achieving population-level scale. Achieving that scale means attaining a meaningful, measurable result for a specific population. Supporting a particular evidence-based program or model to expand reach, grow in size, and capture a greater percentage of market share may be a necessary part of the path toward a large scale. But we shouldn't declare victory until, for instance, all children in Baltimore enter school ready to learn, or all youths between the ages of 18 and 24 in Maine are connected to school or work, or all children in the United States read proficiently by the end of third grade.

To reach these types of ambitious goals, the road to scale inevitably will run through public systems. And decades of experience tell us that a bad system will trump a good program—every time, all the time. Whether programs focus on youths involved in the juvenile justice system, students in public schools, families in the child welfare system, or young mothers receiving public health services, even the greatest programs cannot succeed in a lasting way if they depend on dysfunctional systems. Programs can sink or swim, depending on how systems handle issues from intake, eligibility, and case planning to the selection and compensation of private providers. Similarly, policy decisions that determine program priorities, budget allocations, or staffing levels can accelerate or impede progress toward greater scale.

### **The JDAl Story**

In developing the JDAl strategy, the Casey Foundation noted the many ways that the juvenile justice system could trump any programmatic intervention we could mount in communities, so we decided to start with changing the system itself. JDAl works directly with the local agencies responsible for juvenile detention. We help them in such critical areas as adopting

screening tools and processes for objectively assessing risk and making admission decisions; implementing case processing reforms to minimize unnecessary delays; collecting and using data to track the young people's progress; and developing effective non-secure alternatives in the community. A common thread in the JDAl approach is strong collaborations among the important actors in the system, including the courts, probation officers, prosecutors, defenders, and community groups.

The results speak for themselves. In addition to reductions in confinement in the targeted communities, we're beginning to see the national needle moving, too. In 1997, almost 28,000 young people were in detention. In 2011, only 19,000 were in detention. Recent federal data indicate that both the number and rate of young people confined have decreased by more than 40 percent nationwide since the mid-1990s, when this issue first became a priority for the Casey

resources are used rather than requiring new dollars, so there are no savings to be had by downsizing or dropping JDAl from the budget. In fact, by preventing unnecessary secure detention, communities have been able to close facilities or avoid building new ones, and the resources saved can be reinvested to expand alternatives to detention. Ending JDAl could actually cost jurisdictions money.

### **Following the Evidence**

Of course, not every outcome we want to change is best achieved by working directly with a public system in this way. But few programs are not at risk of being trumped by bad systems.

In addition, just as public systems can affect what programs are able to achieve, so too can effective programs influence public systems. Innovative approaches can function as proof points and help build evidence for new ways of serving a public system's

## *Replicating proven programs with fidelity is critical and tough to do right, but we should not confuse program expansion with achieving population-level scale.*

Foundation and others, notably the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Although many factors have influenced this trend, this is genuinely a population-level shift that would have been hard to imagine just 20 years ago, when youths were being described as "super-predators" and mass incarceration was at its peak.

With JDAl's strategy of working directly with the public system to reform core functions, inappropriate detention is prevented for every youth who comes into contact with the system in that community. In other words, we move the needle—achieve scale—for an important outcome in a targeted population.

The strategy of directly engaging the public system also helps ensure that JDAl implementation won't be sloughed off in the next change of leadership or budget crisis, events that can derail even the strongest programs. The goal of JDAl is to advance fundamental system reforms so they become deeply rooted and cannot easily be removed or reversed. In addition, the program changes how existing

clients. As we glean more information from evaluations of proven programs, we can see common principles of effective service delivery that can guide changes in public systems in areas from case processing to procurement criteria for contracted services. Given that these systems serve whole populations, it is incumbent on all of us who care about those populations to help public systems follow the evidence.

Twenty years is a long time to stick with a single program, especially for a foundation. At the Casey Foundation, we have stuck with JDAl for a variety of reasons, including its evidence of effectiveness and the fact that we've found cost-effective ways to help an accelerating number of communities adopt the program. But for any foundation that is focused on tough, pivotal problems, the most important reason to stay the course with a program like JDAl is that it is moving the needle for whole populations in community after community, state after state. That's scale, and it's something we can't achieve through program replication alone. ✨