

RISE Partnership Evaluation Year-in-Review

Over the past year, Equal Measure has been the evaluation partner for the RISE Partnership, a collaborative funding initiative in the Greater Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey region. The evaluation examines to what extent RISE programs help to strengthen evaluation capacity among nonprofit organizations and support the creation of a more vibrant regional nonprofit ecosystem. After a year of evaluation activities, the findings show **participants increasingly value supporting nonprofit evaluation capacity as a means to reach outcomes goals and collaborative funding opportunities.**

Findings are organized by participant “type” – from interviews and meetings with the co-investors and from interviews and focus groups with a subset of RISE participating organizations.

Summary of Evaluation Activities

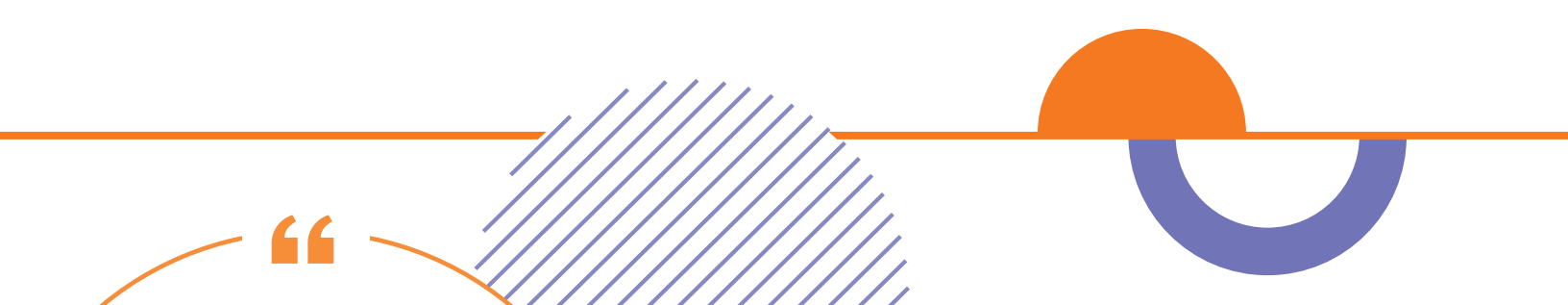
Co-Investor Interviews and Reflection Session | Fall 2019

Interviews with Implementation and Sustainability Cohorts | Winter 2020

Virtual Focus Group with Readiness Cohort | Spring 2020

The findings focus on evaluation activities that occurred prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



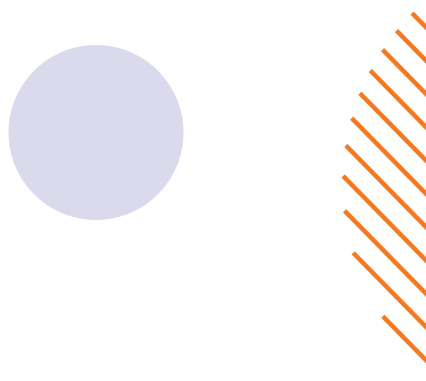


“
[RISE is] working with funders
so funders can understand the
challenges that small nonprofits
are facing ... Hopefully having
more funders understand the
learning curve, the stress we're
under, will be helpful.”

Organization Findings

Over 70 nonprofit organizations are participating in the RISE Partnership. A subset of the organizations participated in interviews and focus groups.

- Among the RISE Partnership training components, participants most value the individualized support from program leaders who tailor one-on-one consultations to address the unique needs of the organizations, driven by community-based priorities.
- Stronger evaluation capacity skills gained through the skills-based training allows organizational leaders to communicate results and stories of program impact more effectively internally as well as to external audiences, including donors, partners, and the public.
- Participants view their colleagues' increased understanding of the rationale for evaluation as an indication of a shifting organizational mindset toward adopting an evaluation culture.

- As a result of the RISE Partnership, participants recognize opportunities for championing change within their own organizations and networks.
 - Participants recognize that the RISE Partnership plays the role of connector, strengthening communication between nonprofits and their philanthropic partners to build a more aligned, resilient, and learning-oriented nonprofit regional infrastructure.
 - The leading motivation for participating in RISE is for participants to “tell [their] story better” to funders to make the argument for sustained funding and shifting the evaluation mindset in the philanthropic sector.
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Co-Investor Findings

Co-investors include: the Barra Foundation, Campbell Soup Company, Horner Foundation, Nelson Foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, PropelNext/Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Scattergood Foundation, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey.

- Co-investors universally agree that the co-investor model aligns with each foundation's values and desired outcomes, has the potential to weave strategies and leverage funding to support evaluation capacity building, and fosters a networked, collaborative approach among regional nonprofits.
- Co-investors consistently articulate that evaluation capacity building is, ultimately, a tool for systems change as it builds individual organizational culture and capacity and supports nonprofits to improve their program effectiveness.

- Nearly all co-investors reflect that the RISE Partnership opens opportunities for collaboration among participating organizations, which increases awareness of their role and responsibility within the ecosystem.
- The majority of co-investors agree that a policy agenda is needed to increase the diversity of leadership in the sector that better reflects the communities being served, but there are still questions on what this policy should include and how to operationalize it through RISE.



[RISE has] given us the confidence to control those conversations a little more, when there are more rigorous evaluation expectations ... [We are] confronting some of [the] problematic things like what [funders are] asking for and what they're evaluating.

Next Steps

Equal Measure will continue its evaluation into fall 2020 and throughout 2021 to learn how the RISE Partnership will strengthen nonprofit evaluation capacity throughout these unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice movements. We will be hosting focus groups with co-investors and members of the Implementation and Sustainability cohorts (Readiness cohort pending) to further gauge how collaborative funding impacts nonprofit resilience and capacity

amidst shifting systemic conditions. We will also be analyzing consultation feedback data to learn how the one-to-one consultation program benefits participants by strengthening their logic models, outcomes measures, and storytelling capabilities. The quotes below illustrate how participants perceive that RISE bolsters connections between the nonprofit and philanthropic communities, supporting their collaboration on major priorities and outcomes in our current climate.

“

[RISE improves] how and what we report. [It] helps prove our point, helps get our point across. Before, we were still able to make the report, but now, it helps us make a stronger report.

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Funders are on the learning journey ...
Can RISE and this program influence the funding community?

Established in 2018, The RISE (Readiness, Implementation, Sustainability for Effectiveness) Partnership supports promising Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey nonprofit organizations. The RISE Partnership Evaluation Funders Learning Community is the first convening supported by a network of funders in the region. The Learning Community is a collaborative effort with the Barra Foundation, Campbell Soup Company, Horner Foundation, Nelson Foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, PropelNext/Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Scattergood Foundation, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. The Partnership provides nonprofits with resources and training to strengthen organizational effectiveness and ensure a greater impact on social, economic, health, and educational conditions in communities, including the effects of racism, intergenerational poverty and trauma.

For more information, visit therisepartnership.org