

The Many Roles of Philanthropy in Government-Philanthropy Partnerships

August 2021

In this North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) Monthly Connect, speakers shared specific examples of government-philanthropy partnerships, insights 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. In addition, OSP shared initial results from its recent survey of philanthropy, and speakers offered their reactions to the data.

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

Speakers

- **Joy Vermillion Heinsohn (moderator)**, Philanthropy Liaison, OSP
- **Curtis Holloman**, Executive Director, The Foundation for a Healthy High Point
- **Jasmine McGhee**, Special Deputy Attorney General and Director of Public Protection Section, NC Department of Justice
- **Tara Scholtz**, Senior Program Officer, Community Foundation of Western North Carolina

Key Takeaways

- State government and philanthropy often collaborate to pilot strategies at the local level reflecting mutual interests that state agencies can support and expand statewide. These cross-sector partnerships are particularly important in communities that have fewer resources.
- Philanthropy can nimbly support smaller scale initiatives that fall outside of traditional state grant funding opportunities (e.g., convenings, meetings). But philanthropies have certain legal parameters governing the ways they can partner, particularly regarding advocacy.
- In addition to providing financial support, philanthropy may serve other roles in partnerships with state government, including:
 - Convenor and facilitator: As a neutral organization, philanthropy may serve as relationship and information brokers between state agencies and local community groups.
 - Thought partner: Foundation staff often develop expertise related to their funding interests and priorities and so may serve as sources of information and sounding boards for ideas.
- Philanthropy may also collaborate with state government on research by funding research projects, engaging as thought partners to develop research questions, and using state agency- or university-led research efforts to inform philanthropic investments, theories of change, or questions for further exploration.
- Advice for initiating government-philanthropy partnerships:
 - Be bold and persistent in outreach to prospective partners.
 - Identify other organizations with common interests that may have philanthropic partners.

- Use networks of existing partners to gain introductions to prospective partners.
- Leverage OSP resources to identify potential partners.

Resources

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

[OSP Philanthropy Survey Summary of Results \(August 2021\)](#)

The North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships administered a survey to philanthropists working in North Carolina to identify the types of resources, events, and information that would facilitate and enhance meaningful learning opportunities and potentially support collaboration with state government. The survey was conducted between July 21 and August 2, 2021 and queried respondents on various issues, including potential learning topics related to state government activities, government-philanthropy partnerships, and experience with and interest in research partnerships.

[Community Foundation of Western North Carolina](#)

The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC) was established in 1978 to build a permanent pool of charitable capital for the 18 counties of Western North Carolina and the Qualla Boundary. In partnership with fundholders, including individuals, families, and corporations, CFWNC awards grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies in the 18-county region.

[The Foundation for a Healthy High Point](#)

The Foundation for a Healthy High Point works with partners to improve conditions that impact the health and wellbeing of Greater High Point residents by focusing investment and community engagement on addressing key social determinants of health, or the non-medical conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age (e.g., education, food insecurity, unemployment, and housing).

[North Carolina Department of Justice \(NC DOJ\)](#)

NC DOJ works to prevent crime, support law enforcement, safeguard consumers, and defend the State, its people, and their constitutional rights. Under the leadership of the Attorney General, NC DOJ can take legal action on behalf of state government agencies and commissions and prosecute certain cases at the request of the local district attorney. NC DOJ also represents the state to uphold criminal convictions in all criminal appeals.