

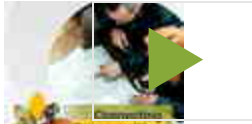
[Watch] The Power of Place: Building Inclusive Economies Through Collaboration

By Fed Communities Staff

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CONNECTING COMMUNITIES®

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The Power of Place: Building Inclusive Economies Thru

From the northeast corner of Maine to west central Texas, leaders are partnering with regional Reserve Banks—and each other—in unique ways to help ensure that local economies work better for everyone. What does it take to work across sectors and collaborate effectively to help change a local economy?

Local leaders who participated in three Fed-supported place-based initiatives, **Working Places**

(<https://www.bostonfed.org/workingplaces.aspx>) (Boston), **Advance Together**

(<https://www.dallasfed.org/cd/at>) (Dallas), and **Southern Cities Economic Inclusion**

Initiative ([https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-](https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2022/05/26/initiative-focuses-on-economic-inclusive)

[update/2022/05/26/initiative-focuses-on-economic-inclusive](https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2022/05/26/initiative-focuses-on-economic-inclusive)) (Atlanta), discussed during a panel what economic challenges each initiative took on and how they partnered with Federal Reserve Banks' community development departments to address them. They also shared results of this work.

During this Connecting Communities webinar, gain perspectives on what's needed to build sustainable and impactful collaborations. Learn more about how different sectors can contribute to and benefit from engaging in place-based initiatives, and strategies for navigating common roadblocks to achieve long-term results.

Related materials

- **Southern Cities Economic Inclusion Initiative Round One Report Out** (<https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2025/01/14/southern-cities-economic-inclusion-initiative-round-one-report-out>)
- **Working Places at 10: Leaders in 3 Working Cities reflect on successes, lessons learned** (<https://www.bostonfed.org/workingplaces/news/2024/working-places-at-10-boston-fed-working-cities-lawrence-springfield-east-hartford.aspx>)

Speakers

- **Colleen Dawicki**, director, regional and community outreach, **Federal Reserve Bank of Boston** (<https://www.bostonfed.org/>)
- **Kat Everett**, city councilor and social entrepreneur, **City of Haverhill** (<https://www.cityofhaverhill.com/>)
- **Tim Kelly**, mayor, **City of Chattanooga** (<https://chattanooga.gov/government/mayors-office>)
- **Amelia Reeves**, chief partnerships officer, **Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas** (<https://wfswct.org/>)
- **Sydney Diavua**, assistant vice president, community development, **Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis** (<https://www.stlouisfed.org/>), *moderator*

TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Diavua

Good afternoon and welcome to **Connecting Communities** (<https://fedcommunities.org/connecting-communities/>). Thank you for joining us for today's webinar, The Power of Place, Building Inclusive Economies Through Collaboration. I'm Sydney Diavua, Assistant Vice President of Community Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and I will serve as your moderator for today's session.

Before we get started, let's move to slide three where we can take care of a few housekeeping items. The views expressed during this session are those of the presenters and are intended for informational purposes. They do not necessarily represent the views of Fed Communities or the Federal Reserve System. Microphones have been muted. Please use the Q&A feature throughout the session to submit questions. We promise to get to as many of them as possible during the Q&A portion of this presentation.

Let's keep the conversation going and engage with us on X, formerly known as Twitter, using the hashtag [#connectingcommunities](https://twitter.com/hashtag/ConnectingCommunities) (<https://twitter.com/hashtag/ConnectingCommunities>) and visit FedCommunities.org for a variety of community development articles, resources and data across the Federal Reserve system. And finally, this session will be recorded, and the presentation, video, and podcast will be available on FedCommunities.org within two weeks of this event.

I would now like to turn the presentation over to my **Boston Fed** (<https://www.bostonfed.org/>) colleague, Colleen Dawicki. She is Director of the **Working Places** (<https://www.bostonfed.org/workingplaces.aspx>) team, supporting leaders in smaller cities and rural areas, working to build more inclusive economies through the Working Cities Challenge and the Working Places Learning Network. Colleen, the floor is yours.

Colleen Dawicki

Thank you so much, Sydney. Starting my video here. And thanks to everyone for joining us today. We're really excited to have this conversation. And like Sydney shared, my views are my own and not necessarily those of the Boston Fed or the Federal Reserve System. So I'm really excited for this because it represents a long-time aspiration for those of us at the **Atlanta** (<http://atlantafed.org/>), **Boston** (<https://www.bostonfed.org/Home.aspx>), and **Dallas** (<https://www.dallasfed.org/>) Feds. What we'd love to do today is to illustrate that despite our different state contexts, regional contexts, strategies, tactics, and of course, our accents, our local partners who are doing place-based collaborative work have so much in common when it comes to building vibrant communities that work for everyone.

I think many on this webinar recognize that working on a local level is where it's at, and we're eager to learn together from these three local leaders who have so much to teach us when it comes to building partnerships across sectors and doing that critical work of changing policies, practices and mindsets so everyone can participate and prosper in their local economy. We hope you'll leave the webinar energized about your own ability and opportunity to gather with local leaders in new and different ways, build on the assets of your own local community and help more of your neighbors thrive. First slide, please.

So community development teams at our respective Federal Reserve banks have been supporting place-based initiatives for over 10 years now. And as you'll see in this slide, we do this by aligning our bank's research data and convening power along with economic opportunities that are defined and pursued by local cross-sector leadership teams. While each of the place-based initiatives reflects our own regional context, you'll notice in the following slides that this all has a great deal in common. All of our banks are mobilizing multi-year flexible funding that's provided by external partners. Note that none of the Federal Reserve banks do provide funding for this work. We all provide technical assistance to help teams do things like navigate challenges, test, evaluate and sharpen your strategies, and we connect teams with their peers to build networks, knowledge and skills. Finally, we're all supporting local teams who are working towards an economic goal that's aligned with the Federal Reserve System's mandate of maximizing employment. Next slide, please.

Today you'll hear from participants from across these initiatives share more about what it takes to do this work on the ground. And as a way of introduction, we'll take a look at each of these Federal Reserve initiatives that these panelists represent as I share more about who you'll hear from today. So we'll go to the next slide, which is featuring the Atlanta Fed's **[Southern Cities Economic Initiative](https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2025/01/14/southern-cities-economic-inclusion-initiative-round-one-report-out)** (<https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2025/01/14/southern-cities-economic-inclusion-initiative-round-one-report-out>). And today we've got **[Mayor Tim Kelly](https://chattanooga.gov/government/mayors-office)** (<https://chattanooga.gov/government/mayors-office>). He's going to speak about his city's participation in SCEI, which is led by a partnership with the Atlanta Fed. And as you'll see in this slide, this effort has supported 15 cities and is currently accepting applications for another round. Mayor Kelly and Chattanooga's team used SCEI to inform and implement elements of their One Chattanooga Plan, which outlines the strategic direction, key priorities, values and initiatives that define a vision of community where all Chattanoogaans can thrive and prosper as well as the practical steps needed to achieve it. Next slide.

So representing the Dallas Fed's **[Advance Together](https://www.dallasfed.org/cd/at)** (<https://www.dallasfed.org/cd/at>) initiative is Amelia Reeves, and in her role with her community's **[local workforce board](https://wfswct.org/)** (<https://wfswct.org/>), Amelia runs the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance that's a participant in the Advance Together's pilot round, which was launched in 2020.

Based in Abilene, Texas, this is a coalition of manufacturers, local school districts, higher ed partners, economic development actors and government organizations, working to increase regional employment in advanced manufacturing careers.

And last slide represents the Boston Fed's **Working Cities Challenge** (<https://www.bostonfed.org/community-development/supporting-growth-in-smaller-industrial-cities/working-cities-challenge.aspx>). And today we've got Kat Everett, who participated in our second round in Massachusetts, which ran from 2016 to 2019. As you'll see in this slide, the WCC started in 2013 with a focus on smaller post-industrial cities in Southern New England and has since featured an adaptation for rural regions in Vermont and Maine. Kat was on the Mount Washington Alliance team in **Haverhill, Mass** (<https://www.cityofhaverhill.com/>), which focused on improving economic outcomes for residents in a particular city neighborhood by building resident leadership and improving physical conditions. And that included creating third places where people could build social capital and then connect that to economic opportunity.

If you're curious to learn more about these initiatives, there's lots to read on our websites, and I invite you to connect with your region's community development team to follow up. But now to the panelists, I'm so grateful to each of you for sharing your time and wisdom, and we'll hand it back to Sydney to get us started.

Sydney Diavua

Thanks so much, Colleen. As our panelists are joining us on screen, we've got a polling question to help us learn a little bit about you all as participants and what drew you to this webinar. You'll see the poll appear on the screen. How would you describe your community's efforts to collaborate across sectors on an economic goal? A, not started. B, early stages, we're just getting something off the ground. C, off and running, we have key partners at the table and an area of Focus. D, established, our collaboration has achieved tangible results. Or E, ebbing, we have a collaborative, but our energy or purpose is hard to sustain. And so as you all are filling out that poll, I invite our panelists to come onto screen. Mayor Kelly, Kat, Amelia, thank you so much for joining us today.

Mayor Kelly

Hey, there. Thank you. I'm not able to start my video. Oh, here we go. Yes, how are you? Thank you. It's an honor to be with you today.

Sydney Diavua

Wonderful, wonderful. And so as we go into the conversation, I invite you all to tell us a little bit about yourselves and your initiatives, anything that we've learned through Colleen's presentation. But I really want to hone in on what's happening around collaboration. You all are doing such interesting work in these initiatives in your communities, and you're engaged at such a high level in these collaboratives. So Mayor Kelly, I'll start with you. Can you tell us a little bit more about the work you're leading in Chattanooga? And then what's your biggest piece of advice for someone who's trying to run a collaborative across multiple sectors, organizations and priorities?

Mayor Kelly

Sure. Thank you, Sydney. So again, I came to the mayor's office through the business world. I was an entrepreneur myself and a business person, former chairman of our community foundation. Spent a lot of time on various boards around Chattanooga, including the Chamber of Commerce, and I'm kind of an armchair economist. I'd never held public office before, but was convinced that our main project in Chattanooga needed to be about closing these really wide and pernicious gaps in net worth and wealth between, again, the haves and the have-nots, really. We talk a lot about opportunity and the service of prosperity. And thawing out our labor force participation rate. So to your point about the Fed pursuing full employment, again, particularly in the current political moment, we were always looking at this from a very utilitarian economic perspective. This is a problem that affects everybody. And so that's what the One Chattanooga Plan really revolves around.

And so when we had the chance to participate in Southern Cities for Economic Inclusion, we jumped at it. It exactly really describes the core of what our plan is trying to do. And that plan has seven pillars and 11 values, everything from early childhood to closing gaps in public health, but specifically really focusing on

workforce development and skills acquisition to help address these longstanding disparities. So in terms of the necessary elements, again, you have to have trust. You have to have built up trust in the community and have those relationships, so that when you begin to work, again, government tends to dive into these programs, and they'll sit on a shelf, or they just become programs that blow away. And it's hard to get people to realize that you mean it this time and that you're serious about the work. But I think we've earned the right in Chattanooga, and we have made quite a lot of progress since we began roughly four years ago.

Sydney Diavua

Thank you. And it's interesting that you cited your experience in different sectors because I know that's a lot of what happens as a part of these collaboratives is bringing people from different sectors and different perspectives together to accomplish that goal. And I really appreciate opportunity and the service of prosperity, how you all are looking at it. You mentioned workforce development, and so, Amelia, I'm going to come to you because that is a lot of what your initiative is focused on as well. So tell us a little bit about the work you're doing as well as your biggest piece of advice for those who are engaging in these cross-sector collaboratives.

Amelia Reeves

Yes, thank you, Sydney. We are out here in West Central Texas, and as a workforce board, we cover 19 counties. 18 of those 19 counties are very small and remote, less than a couple of thousand people in the majority of those counties. And so we have unique challenges in that way as both the workforce board, with our workforce development initiatives as well as how we're supporting across sectors, especially with our employers.

Our mission is to help sustain a healthy regional economy in West Central Texas, and so one of the ways that we have addressed that is supporting alliances or collaboratives like the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance that was established back in 2016. And through that effort, in the developing stages, that group of manufacturers, as they came together, realized that although they set this goal of increasing opportunities and good paying manufacturing jobs across our region, it

wasn't as simple as flipping a switch and making a job or the whole if they build it, they will come mentality.

It's not that simple anywhere. And it's definitely not that simple in a rural area where you're facing challenges like brain drain and people going to the bigger cities, lack of resources and lack of access to sometimes education and training and what it takes to get into those jobs. And so we were really thrilled to have the opportunity to join in the Advance Together Initiative when that launched back in 2019-2020 time period. And so through that, we learned a lot as an organization, both with the BCMA and as our workforce board. And at this point we are happy to say that we've seen a lot of improvement toward that North Star goal in our manufacturing sector. But what is most exciting to myself is that we're now able to take those lessons and those successes and establish other collaboratives and partnerships in different industries and around different systemic problems that we face that are affecting our economy.

And so to answer your specific question about the biggest piece of advice I would have at this point is along the lines of trust, but it's listen, listen, listen all the time and listen some more. And then our tagline for the last three or four years is, how do we lead from the middle? And as a collaborative effort, we talk a lot about shared leadership, but as that convener and intermediary, it was really important for us to find a balance of both being able to galvanize leaders across both the private sector and our education partners and our community leaders and galvanize them around this initiative and this problem and what we want to do, but then stepping back and setting an ecosystem where we allow that collaborative and the group to really take charge and lead.

And so it's definitely not as simple as it sounds, but it's something that we're constantly working towards is how do we maintain that middle stage as a backbone and ensure that both the industry partners who are trying to solve these problems, which directly impacts our economy, have enough buy-in and see those outcomes, but also how our community members, the people that we're trying to support and engage with, are also feeling that they are directly involved in the leadership of this work.

Sydney Diavua

That's helpful, Amelia. And so, one, that's really exciting to hear that you all have been able to even start taking those lessons and applying it to other sectors and seeing what you could do with other industries, but it's helpful. We have trust, we have to listen and listen some more. Kat, what about you? Tell us a little bit more about your work, and what's your biggest piece of advice?

Kat Everett

Sure. So I am very fortunate to be able to be a city councilor in the area in which the initiative started with the Mount Washington Alliance. So the Mount Washington neighborhood is a specific subset of the city in which we found that as data was going across the board in the city, that things were elevating, the median income was going up, in this particular neighborhood, things were actually decreasing. And so we really focused our initiative in on this one particular neighborhood, the Mount Washington neighborhood. And the focus was on filling the economic gaps. Trust was damaged. This area of the city was isolated, historically underserved and overlooked, not just on a city level, but also on a regional level as well.

So one of the things that I was fortunate enough to be able to continue on through the Mount Washington Alliance and then beyond that is cultivating a cultural community, hailing an art space called COCO Brown, which focuses on building the local economy, both socially and tilling the ground for positive economic development and growth. And so I feel like the advice that I would give in regard to cross-sector work and some of the experiences I've dealt with, this is I think started in 2015. So it's iterated the work and what it has looked like on the ground level.

The thing that I think that is most important is that people are really clear about their vision and their why. So for us at COCO Brown, that was moving the lever on the closing that gender wealth disparity gap and really cultivating a sense of belonging so that people wanted to not just stay in Haverhill but see themselves starting a family, starting a business, and really rooting in place. That was an intentional place-making effort. And then making sure that every person at the table is also clear on their interest in the shared result. So making sure that there's buy-in from everyone that comes to the table on what the shared result will be, and what's the skin of the game for them as well. So that's the biggest piece of advice that I would offer.

Sydney Diavua

That's helpful. And so being clear on the why, everyone has to understand the why for the work that you're doing, but also their why for being a part of that table. And so you have all come from different perspectives on bringing different sectors, partners together around collaborating for economic development projects. And I heard a lot of this work has been going on 10 years, 9 years, it's been ongoing for a while. So how do you gather and keep these cross-sector leaders together over the course of this work? How do you keep everyone engaged? Mayor Kelly?

Mayor Kelly

I figured it was coming. Well, look, over-communicate. I think you just have to make sure your team is engaged and mission focused. For us, it really helped to have a plan coming into office, which politicians generally don't like because they don't like being held accountable. But when you write it all down and that becomes your North Star, it makes it easier. It makes it easier to hire, it makes it easier to get everybody refocused on the work. And this is there in black and white for everybody to read and for us, it is our North Star, and it's not changing as long as I'm here. And Chattanooga has the great good fortune, as a lot of cities on the call do, of having a very strong culture of private-public partnership and philanthropic partnership. So it is just about routine communication and again, I think missional focus.

Sydney Diavua

What about you, Amelia?

Amelia Reeves

Yes, I again would echo Mayor Kelly. The regular communication and maintaining that alignment on the shared goals, especially across the different sectors, was vital for our work with the manufacturers. And that alliance, in the early days, they completed root cause analysis, they created a logic model, all of those steps to make that plan. But something we learned based on some missteps early on is that once that plan was developed and those activities or actions were taking place, some of the sectors, say higher ed for example, who weren't directly involved in those initial actions became

more and more disconnected. And so we realized that we have to regularly communicate, but communicate how every action leads back to that North Star goal to maintain their buy-in and involvement even through the times that they might not be directly impacted and/or directly involved with the work.

Sydney Diavua

So it seems like making sure to not only communicate, but communicating those metrics that impact, having that communication and saying, “Here’s how we’ve made progress over time and how we’re getting towards those metrics that we’ve designed together.”

Amelia Reeves

Yes. Why is every step important, and how is that impact being made? Yes.

Sydney Diavua

What about you, Kat? How does your group stay together over time?

Kat Everett

Sure. So the way that folks came together, I would say that local leaders came and went as necessary, and relevant engagement occurred. So we gathered folks with the helpful guidance of the Boston Fed continually asking us who else is needed to be at the table. Every time we came together, we were consistently assessing who else needs to be there. And then executive directors, CEOs and faith leaders involved who were long-term may have stayed the entire initial process during the Working Cities Challenge who have since retired and moved on to other sectors.

And most importantly, new leaders were identified. As more residents got involved, that brought together community needs and the local landscape change that required new leadership and additional partners to come to the forefront. And so that’s how I would say that our initiative has ebbed and flowed since then. So the times and the residents demand what the needs are going to be and respond to that. And we did have quite a bit of retirement actually. I think there was at least four folks from prominent 20, 30-year careers that retired. And so it did leave some space for new folks to come

in, and I think that it flowed very organically with the times and what was needed. So that was our approach.

Sydney Diavua

That's interesting. You mentioned that you had, what, four leaders retire? And so we did have a question come in already that says, "How do you sustain this work across the leadership transitions and partners?" Mayor Kelly and Amelia, did you all also experience some leaders who transitioned? How did you all sustain the work when those individuals left?

Tim Kelly

We did. And again, somebody's got to carry the baton. In my case, it has to be me, but in different settings in different areas, I think this is where redundancy helps and having a lot of folks at the table who all have skin in the game, because somebody's got to keep it rolling. We had a couple of key people go. And I will say the Atlanta Fed, it helps to have that convening partner who's missionally focused on that, and one person moves along and the next person sort of fills in. And the program was really good about keeping us focused in that regard.

Amelia Reeves

Same here. We talk a lot about organizational buy-in versus individual buy-in. And although obviously the leaders themselves are necessary and wonderful to have at the table, but how even in the early days are we ensuring that the organization as a whole is bought in to help with transitions like that? Most of the businesses and organizations across sector are small, and so there's not that many people. And so another issue that is similar that we run into is the leader might transition to a new role, or five more roles are added to their plate at their organization. And so ensuring that, back to that goal alignment, everything is in place to where either turnover happens, advancement happens, that they still see their place at the table.

Sydney Diavua

So Kat, I'm going to come back to you for this next question because you mentioned a lot of different stakeholder groups who are taking part in the work you're leading. And so really interested in what other community actors play a role in shaping your approach to the work, and specifically what's been the role of resident leaders?

Kat Everett

Sure. That expands on that. So thinking of the questions that you just asked, I kept thinking deepening relationship and expanding opportunities. And so I spoke a little bit about being able to represent the area in which this initiative started. So at that time, I was a community leader. At this time I'm a city councilor, and it's our first time having ward-based representation. So I think the times have changed, the residents have led that change. And so for Haverhill, we were actually on the verge of being sued. And so the residents pushed for that change towards a ward-based representation, and that led to the shift that happened. And I am honored to be able to be in that seat to be able to represent the neighborhood in which I've been advocating for because this work for me is hard work, and it's hard work.

And so I think that putting residents at the forefront, creating small groups at the time with Mount Washington Alliance of just coming together, elevating resident voice, telling people that you can go to city council, that you can go to school committee, and you can have public participation. Bringing groups of parents in so they can practice that skill of being in front of speaking their truths to power. Collaborating on community forums like we had to do after the public execution of George Floyd, where again, residents were coming, stepping in, speaking their truths to power, saying, "This is what we need, this is what we're looking for, these are the things that we feel we can control at the local level." And really that there's a lot of power in which you can control at the local level and not to get swept up into what might be happening at the national level, but really leaning into that local landscape has been very important.

And so that's the way that that pipeline has happened, where we saw local leaders elevating. And since then, they've been having more space to come into their sense of leadership, and that continues on. So it's something that we're really proud of. And with the folks that retired, I do have to say for one of them, two of them, they were

able to lean into their retirement and actually maintain local presence. And so the relationships might look different, but they're just deepened. They may not be at the forefront, but they're still involved.

Sydney Diavua

Good to hear there's an evolution of their participation. Amelia, what does it look like? What are some other community actors who play a role in your work?

Amelia Reeves

Yes. One thing that we recognized early on that we needed to focus on is hearing from the voice of the rural community, especially in our small towns across our region. And we did all the things we could think of at first to hear what they were saying, from surveys to focus groups to interview and all the things, which gave us a lot of great feedback. But the biggest difference I feel like we made was when we made room for more people from the community to sit at the table where the decisions were being made. And we had a collective understanding at some point along this journey, not just us at the workforce board or our community partner, but a collective understanding and belief that without every community voice or without the people that we were attempting to reach at the table and actually making decisions and impacting the decisions of the actions that we were taking, we wouldn't make any progress whatsoever. And so we made that shift, and that was actually the turning point, I feel like, in our work.

Sydney Diavua

I'm going to take a moment to come back to our audience and to get some more perspectives on what's bringing you to this conversation and also what we should know and lean into here. And so now that we've started to unpack some of the lessons that we're learning about collaboration and working through public-private partnerships, I've got another polling question for the audience.

You'll see that poll appear on the screen now. You can see it's up. In your community. What presents the biggest obstacle to collaborating across sectors to achieve a long-term economic goal? Is it A, agreeing on a shared purpose or goal. B, developing the

trusting relationships needed to undertake shared work. C, insufficient funding to support this way of working or competing priorities and limited bandwidth amongst the local partners. Or D, the absence of collaborative infrastructure. So that's dedicated staffing or backbone support.

So we're going to see what our audience is saying. What's one of their challenges? And so it looks like for about 42% of the audience, it's insufficient funding to support this way of working or limited bandwidth amongst partners. And it looks like the absence of collaborative infrastructure and a dedicated staffing and backbone came in second. Does this resonate with the three of you all? Did you all encounter any of these same obstacles?

Amelia Reeves

Yes, I'll jump in here. The last two, they just went off my screen, so I won't try to repeat them. Thank you. The absence of infrastructure for the collaborative and insufficient funding specifically to support this way of working, the collective impact, has been a big barrier to sustaining this type of work, or our work especially. And so very much resonate with that. The Big Country Manufacturing Alliance has had many discussions. They're actually in a point of transition at the moment, growth, but transition at the same time in trying to identify what that looks like moving forward with limited resources. And so knowing that how it was set up for the last eight years was very beneficial, but how do we move forward?

Mayor Kelly

I would echo what Amelia said. Again, on the one hand, priorities are very, very important. And every mayor has different priorities. Personally, again, I came to the real conclusion, conviction really, that this was the economic mobility. And thankfully this came out of the foundation work I did here. So a lot of our foundations have the same lens, that economic mobility was at the core of so many of our problems. So you have to make it a priority rather than, again, I think a lot of the problems that we deal with are really downstream of this problem, where if we were able to really focus on this problem, it would solve a lot of other problems.

And so the absence of that infrastructure is also very important. And in doing this work, I have opened a can of worms on the workforce development side, which I know Amelia can probably relate to and Kat as well. And I'm on the state workforce development board. And I've realized that we've got a lot of work to do to build a system both at the federal and state level that really works better for everybody. But it's exciting because I think we do have the potential to do that.

Kat Everett

So my answer is a little different. For our initiative, it was really developing the trusting relationships needed to undertake the shared work. So for us, it wasn't if you fund it and you build it, they will come. And I would say I think Mayor Kelly had mentioned there was a lot of connectivity already. For us, this was new. This cross-sectoral work was very new for our area, and folks were not necessarily accustomed to doing things. I'm a grassroots community engagement person at heart, so always doing grassroots community engagement and organizing. And so if you've ever been to a grassroots community organizing meeting, they take time.

And so some of the efficiency came into play a lot, like as residents' voice increase, some of the things tended to take longer, and sometimes that was a bit of an issue in just establishing trust and making sure that there were spaces. We were very fortunate to bring in, I believe this gentleman's name was Bill Traynor, to help us establish some frameworks and some practices to make it a little bit more flat so that we could endure the meeting space to be able to bring in all voices. For the neighborhood, again, it was a very underrepresented, so we were not having elected officials coming in. That was a new thing that we established.

And so creating that space of having the elected officials as they came in understand that it would be respectful to the residents if you stayed the entire meeting instead of getting up and leaving because you have five other meetings. For example, one of the little things that we had to work on with establishing trust. So for us, that was really the greatest barrier to overcome. And I feel like it's something that set the groundwork for what we are still dealing with as a city now that we do have, as I keep mentioning, this ward-based representation. But it's a microcosm of that, really being able to work together across the sectors, across the city for the good of the entire city and making

sure that all neighborhoods are elevated, not just certain neighborhoods. I feel like that really laid the groundwork for our entire city and where we are now.

Sydney Diavua

So I'm going to come to a question that often vexes communities, especially when you're doing work around workforce development or economic development and especially in these types of collaborations. And so it can be challenging to engage the private sector as a long-term partner in this work. So tell me a little bit more about what did this look like in your work, how did you get the private sector to the table, how did you encourage them to stay to the table? Mayor Kelly, I'll start with you.

Mayor Kelly

Well, in our case, with our Builders Blueprint Program, we really didn't have to rely too much on them. Again, I have good relationships, having come from the private sector. We certainly didn't face any opposition. In our case, the program was really about breaking down barriers, bonding requirements and so on so that we could actually just have more contractors participate in bids and participate in the market in an effort to both reduce our costs from the city perspective and increase our supplier diversity base. So we really haven't had a lot of trouble there. They welcomed our efforts with open arms.

Sydney Diavua

Wonderful. Amelia, what about you? What did that look like with the manufacturing sector?

Amelia Reeves

So the BCMA and the manufacturing sector, it did look different than probably a lot of collective impact where it started with private sector. It started with this group of manufacturers who came together, more or less, on their own and said, "We have a problem." And they're all, not all, the majority of them in our region are small to mid-size. And so individually they recognized that they couldn't make much impact on the workforce talent pipeline alone, and so they wanted to come together and see if

joining forces could make some bigger impact. And so as far as getting them engaged, we were lucky in that sense, if you look at it like that. But I will say keeping them engaged is definitely the challenge.

And one thing that we did early on with our work is to talk a lot about why they needed to engage with other sectors, especially in education. When we did our initial root cause and identified our key strategies early on, one of them was simply awareness of manufacturing jobs. And starting at a young age, that students, young people across the region and their parents aren't aware of the quality jobs and career pathways in manufacturing, especially advanced manufacturing, and that it's changed over the years. It's not always the hot and dirty jobs of the past. And so because of that and because then one of our main strategies was focused in the education world, we did a lot of work on thinking about how they viewed that relationship and how they viewed that connection.

We talked about, and on the education side, too, this is not a charity relationship. It's not just about philanthropic needs or tax write-offs for businesses when they're giving their time in school. That's all great, and we all hope that everyone's doing work because of the good of the people, but we know that ROI is important, and we spend a lot of time teaching education, how to speak industry's language and industry, how to change their view of education into their future workforce, into a strategy for talent pipeline development. And we've seen a lot of forward movement because of that and more longstanding relationships between our businesses and our education partners.

Sydney Diavua

So it seems like there was some bridge building, but also some translating you all did on how do you speak each other's language and coming together and then identifying long-term partnership. So all three of you all, as Colleen shared, are coming to this webinar today as participants in different Federal Reserve place-based initiatives. So can you talk a little bit more about how being involved in a Federal Reserve initiative helped you or your work, your group, think differently about how you're improving people's opportunities to participate in the local economy, or any value that you all derived from participating in those three initiatives, SCEI, Advance Together and the Working Cities? What about you, Amelia?

Amelia Reeves

I can't speak highly enough of the team in Dallas. Wonderful team that supported us for the last several years. And just as for myself and as our collaborative, the connection to resources they were able to provide, one thing we talk about a lot in rural areas is that it's an access problem for leaders as well. We simply either don't have the time because we're doing so many things or don't have the connections in the right places, I guess, to learn about more opportunities or have access to more funding or things like that. And so through the Advance Together Initiative, we were able to not only be made more aware of our resources and connections, but also connected to other people doing similar work and being able to learn from them and find places that did look a lot like us that we were able to walk beside on this journey.

Sydney Diavua

What about you, Kat? What was the relationship like? What was some of the value you found with the Boston Fed?

Kat Everett

Sure. So my coming into the Mount Washington Alliance was wearing two hats. One was as an anchor institute. My father's church, he was a Pentecostal bishop in the ministry for 55 years in the city of Haverhill, and so that was the first hat that I wore. And the second hat was as a local community leader with a very, very, very, very small nonprofit. And so I framed that to say I was coming in a very different positionality than some of the other folks that were coming in from the other cross sectors. And so for me, the support of the Boston Fed, the training from the Boston Fed, the summits to be able to connect with other local leaders that are doing work in their cities was absolutely invaluable. It's something that I still reflect on. I have all of my notes from every forum and every summit that I've ever attended since 2015 with this group.

And literally when I say it's like manna from heaven, I'm not exaggerating. It's been such valuable information, such valuable support, resources, network that I would not have had access to otherwise. And so I just want to elevate the voice of the little people to say what it really means to have the cross-sector work and being able to

come in. One of the most salient moments for me was when I was able to bring a resident who I'd been mentoring for four years to one of the trainings in New York. And we had this moment after where she was like, "Everything that we talk about with the systems and why you have to have systems change and what the systems are, it was the moment of connectivity that I wouldn't have been able to access without that support." So it's truly been invaluable, and it remains invaluable. The support continues, and it's something that I'm eternally grateful for.

Sydney Diavua

Excellent. Mayor Kelly, what about you and the Atlanta Fed?

Mayor Kelly

Well, as I've said, as Kat said, I couldn't have said it better. I couldn't have dreamed up a better program if I had tried. Again, having written my One Chattanooga Plan based on my work in the foundation world, studying economic mobility and working with various nonprofit partners, knocking on doors and talking to voters, when the program came along, it was just as though they had read my mind. And the work across Southern cities is, I think, especially difficult because the gaps are especially aggravated, and we have the most difficult history.

And so, listen, I hope the program continue. I've told them I've done everything I can to continue to support it and will continue to do that because I think it's a critical, critical convening ... Again, if the Fed comes up and Charlie Van Dyke, who's on the call, knows they can come up and talk to us about capital absorption or any one of these issues, and everybody in the community is going to perk up and come to the table and listen and take them seriously because the level of credibility there is really beyond anybody else that I could possibly bring to the table.

Sydney Diavua

So I want to turn the conversation back again to our audience. We've got some questions rolling in, but if you have not already submitted your question, please use the Q&A function. We're going to try to get to as many questions as possible because we know there's a lot of interest in how this work happens and how you can apply it

to your own community. And so I'm going to go to our speakers. Our first question is, how do you know when you're making progress, and how are you tracking info on outcomes? And so this is maybe the least glamorous part, but such an important part. How do you know and how are you tracking info on outcomes?

Mayor Kelly

Who's up?

Sydney Diavua

Mayor Kelly, if you'd like to jump in here.

Mayor Kelly

Well, I can. In our case, we are just tracking cohorts. We started this program, and it was very conjectural to begin with. I think we had five folks in the original program, and I think we've got now a waiting list in the following cohort of 20. So again, that's what it boils down to. But you do need metrics to track. And again, ultimately this should affect ... One of the things that I learned participating in the program, and I hope this isn't the case everywhere, but our efforts at supplier diversity really hadn't been effective at all. And again, that's where it will show up. We need a supplier base that looks more like our entire community, and eventually that will be the ultimate KPI.

Amelia Reeves

For us, we track specifically with our manufacturing work, because like I said earlier, we identified a lot of areas to focus on early on in that pathway of a person, and so working with education. So we tracked individual activities such as work-based learning was a key activity for us. So how many students were we able to place in manufacturing internships? What were the outcomes of those internships? What were those outcomes a year or two years down the road? Also working with our higher ed partners to track enrollment, retention and completion in our manufacturing programs in our region. And then they, in turn, track employment placement from those programs. And then overall, our North Star goal is increasing the job opportunities,

and so we're on track there. I think we hit 6% growth last year after four years, and our goal is 10% over 10 years.

So I will call out, because of the data question, is something we struggle with a lot is data sharing across sectors at the state level in Texas, at least. And I'm not familiar as much with all other states, but I imagine it's an issue in a lot of places, where the workforce higher ed and K-12 systems aren't seamlessly able to share data. And therefore if you're working on a program or an initiative like ours where you're starting with a person at the age of 14, we can track them to college, but then they change numbers or change whatever, how you track them, and you can't track the same person through the whole process. And it's something that the state is working on right now and we're working on at a regional level, but it's a very big challenge. So if anyone has solutions, always happy to hear those.

Sydney Diavua

I wonder if the others have any solutions. I did have that question on what kind of infrastructure do you have to collect all of that data. Kat, how do you track outcomes?

Kat Everett

Well, for us, it's on relationship development. So the collaborative of the Mount Washington Alliance doesn't exist, but the work continues in several different other aspects within the neighborhood. And so while we might not all be best friends, those relationships that were established are important to moving the needle in the neighborhood, and that's what matters. And so I can't speak highly enough about the private sector. The partner from Joe Fantini from Fantini Bakery, who has continued to show up and support everyone's iteration of the work within the neighborhood to try to strengthen and lift the needle there. As well as, like I said, in the political landscape, if we're hosting a meeting in the Mount Washington neighborhood, elected officials will come. So those are tangible changes that have happened based on relationship and trust that didn't exist before. So that's been our largest measure from where my nonprofit sits, looking towards the fragmentation that had happened in that neighborhood and really looking to establish trust. And so that's what we continue to develop is the relationships and measure those, quality of the impact.

Sydney Diavua

Quality of the impact, that's important. So we have another question from the audience. If you had a magic wand and could fix or solve any funding issues related to your collaborative work, what would you change?

Kat Everett

I can start for that, if you want me to. So like I said, the work has continued in iterations, and our very initial idea was to have a hub. So I think if any of us came into some substantiated amount of money, we would still try to have a hub to centralize some of those services, because there's still certain parts that we're missing within the neighborhood. So we do have Keith Boucher with the MakeIT Haverhill who's working on workforce development ESL and resume support with us. It's artists, culture, entrepreneurship support, but there are certain other things that are missing within the neighborhood still, it's still very underserved. So I think for any of us, if there was a magic wand, we would say, "Let's have a one stop. And how do we fund that and have it sustainable?"

Amelia Reeves

I love everything that Kat said and agree with that. In addition to that, going back to the infrastructure piece, if that was simply taken care of, that there was funding for infrastructure, whether it's staffing for the convener or the backbone or whatever operational things, the things that aren't fun to fund in funders' perspective. I shouldn't say that word so many times in a row, but that would be my magic wand to take that problem off the table so we could then focus directly on the work and the impact.

Mayor Kelly

There are a lot of things. Again, it would be great to have more funding and to have more staff to be able to focus on this full-time, very frankly, again, because I do think it's very central to the work. But there are a lot of other programs, and again, we're making progress, but we could accelerate things with more resources, for sure.

Sydney Diavua

So the next question is, are any of you working with community development financial institutions, so CDFIs or other financial institutions in your communities? And how are you working with them?

Mayor Kelly

I can jump in. We have Pathway Lending was a key CDFI for us that helped us to provide grants to help. In this case, we had contractors who needed to meet bonding requirements, and so they were actually quite instrumental in helping.

Sydney Diavua

Any others?

Kat Everett

We do. Developed a relationship with a CDFI. They just changed the name, so I'm going to forget the name of what they're called now. It used to be MCCI, but I think they may be Nectar now, they've just rebranded. But Haverhill was historically underrepresented in the numbers of folks that were applying for the low-interest, high-risk grants for their businesses, and we're still underrepresented. It's a tough nut to crack in regard to cultivating relationship development, but we work closely with them to whenever they're doing events, to try to make sure again, that we bring in local voice and that we are able to get them to Haverhill as often as possible to try to cultivate relationships. When you're part of a regional area where you're on par with size but new to the game, it's sometimes hard to get in, but we try to get back in there and push the regional perspective, and they've really been very helpful in that regards.

Sydney Diavua

I see we only have a few minutes left, and I just want to give one final question to all of you all as panelists. And as you think about what you're doing and how your work has really transitioned and transformed over the collaboration and bringing partners together, I want to take you back to where you started and take it back to, what are the preconditions needed to start this kind of work? And what needs to be true before

leaders contemplate undertaking an initiative like yours? So final thoughts, what's needed to get started?

Mayor Kelly

Go ahead.

Amelia Reeves

And this might be a super simple answer, but an identified need or gap or problem to address that is shared amongst your group. I think sometimes we fall in, or maybe I'll just speak for myself, sometimes we fall into a trap of maybe putting a problem on another sector or group that is not the problem that needs to be solved or not the need that needs to be addressed first. And so I would say identifying that shared gap or shared goal is imperative.

Sydney Diavua

That's helpful.

Mayor Kelly

I would echo that and just say it really helps to have a specific measurable goal. In this case, we knew what the problem was, and again, it's easy in work like this to, as you say, just hold hands and sing Kumbaya, as it were. But you really need to break it down and find something that you can move and change and measure, and that is key. I would also say, though, that again, you've got to have the trust, and you've got to have the desire and the focus to fix it.

Kat Everett

Mayor Kelly just took the words out my mouth. Trust and/or respect, I think, are key. So I've been very fortunate to be able to consult with many different cross-sector collaboratives since this initiative, and I think it is paramount that the relationship development component with the team happens first, that there is a sense of understanding. The capacity to be able to share differences and work together across those differences is key.

Sydney Diavua

I think that relates a little bit to where we started with there has to be trust, you have to listen, and there also has to be a clear why on why you're doing this, why everyone's coming to the table and establishing these partnerships. Any final thoughts from our panelists for our group? Any words to leave the group with?

Mayor Kelly

I would just say-

Kat Everett

To continue the work.

Mayor Kelly

Well, sorry, go ahead, Kat.

Kat Everett

No, no. Just to continue the work. So I hope if you're someone from the philanthropic space, that you're going to continue to fund work like this. And if you're a focus on the ground level doing the work, that you stay encouraged and just continue the work.

Mayor Kelly

I would just say, again, I was just in Nashville talking to the governor of Tennessee with other mayors from around the state, and the work is the work is the work. We get hung up on words and acronyms, and it's unfortunate that we're in the situation we're in. But if you peel the onion and present the work in another way, again, the quest for full employment at the Fed is a great way to look at this. We need an economy that works for everybody and that need not be controversial or divisive, and I don't think it is. So we've got to continue dedicated to the work.

Sydney Diavua

Amelia, last words.

Amelia Reeves

I don't think I could say it any better than the two of them.

Sydney Diavua

Wonderful. Well, I want to say thank you to our speakers. Thank you for joining us today. Thank you for providing insightful information and engaging the audience. And to our attendees, thank you for your participation. Thank you for spending your valuable time with us today.

Before we end the session, we do have a few requests. Please complete the survey. We'll send it to you immediately after today's event so we can improve and continue to bring you timely and relevant topics.

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