

## **Mission, Vision, Goals for BEST**

The BEST Nonprofit Capacity Building Program is a collaborative initiative created by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ruth Mott Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Flint, and the United Way of Genesee County to establish a pooled fund to **Build Excellence, Sustainability, and Trust** among nonprofit agencies, funders and technical assistance providers in Flint and Genesee County. BEST is concluding the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a three-year pilot project.

**Mission/Purpose:** To meet current and future community needs by providing strategic capacity building support and technical assistance to strengthen nonprofits, providers and funders serving Flint and Genesee County.

**Vision:** Funders, nonprofits and technical assistance providers will work collaboratively in a learning community. They will demonstrate adaptive capacity individually, within their respective organizations and sub-sectors, and as a collaborative whole system. Benchmarks of excellence will include sustainable organizations whose missions are in alignment with community needs; consultants and other providers whose expertise, diversity and understanding of the local community ensures customized, effective technical assistance; and, funders who work in concert to support integrated, comprehensive support for sustaining critical community needs.

### **Core Values:**

*We believe that healthy nonprofits are critical components of our democratic society, and that internally stable, effective nonprofit organizations are essential to achieving a high quality of life in Flint and Genesee County.*

*We believe that building the long-term capacity of key organizations in the local nonprofit sector is a worthy philanthropic investment that will have a positive, long term impact on the community.*

*We believe that building capacity in people and organizations is most effective when it begins by identifying existing strengths, creating a realistic plan for a preferred future, and then taking the first steps on that journey.*

*We believe that long-term sustainability requires a collaborative relationship between consultants, funders and agencies because together we can accomplish what each group cannot do alone.*

### **Background:**

In early 2002, the four funders formed the Flint Funders Collaborative. The catalyst for collaborating was a mutual concern about two related issues: the quality and focus of local grant programs and the capacity of local nonprofit organizations to achieve their missions and meet critical agency and community needs; and the long term impact, sustainability and effectiveness of local grantmaking initiatives.

In the course of the group's early discussions, it became clear that a collaborative could do jointly what none of the individual funders could do as effectively on its own: The planning group believed that formation of a true collaborative with pooled resources and a targeted funding initiative would allow the four funders – three major regional foundations and the local United Way – to develop new standards for technical assistance, new avenues for accessing and delivering help, and new opportunities for leveraging additional resources for the local community. The past three years has been a journey for individual and organizational members of the Collaborative, local nonprofit agencies, and the consultants and technical assistance providers who have participated in the pilot project.

**Learning, 2002-05:**

Capacity building is much more than offering technical assistance to organizations in crisis or struggling with particular areas of management; it also requires rethinking systems and programs in a new, more comprehensive and integrated fashion. Those delivering services and those supporting technical assistance need to join forces in identifying ways to make organizations capable of dynamic sustainability regardless of changing external or internal forces. To be successful, capacity building must be “place-based:” it must be customized to local realities, including the economic, social, cultural and political dynamics that affect every aspect of daily life. And, all those involved – funders, agencies, providers – must work together.

**Goals and Objectives 2005-07:**

- Demonstrate respect for the contributions that nonprofits make to the community by investing in their capacity to deliver high quality programs and services with long term sustainability.
- Provide integrated, comprehensive capacity building in alignment with agency and community needs.
- Focus on identifying and increasing organizational strengths, rather than just decreasing deficits.
- Develop, implement and evaluate new standards of technical assistance, collaboration and capacity building tools and processes.
- Create a cadre of well-qualified technical assistance providers, supporting the notion that capacity building is ongoing and a valid use of resources.
- Stimulate and support a learning community within and among agencies, consultants and funders to ensure renewal and sustainability over the long term.
- Evaluate, document, and share the learning from the pilot project and subsequent programs on multiple levels.
- Link local partners with regional and national resources of high-quality, capacity-building organizations such as the Alliance for Nonprofit Management and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations.

Finally, the Flint Funders Collaborative will demonstrate the ability of funders to work together over a long period of time, thereby building their own capacity for effective, sustainable, dynamic philanthropy in support of the greater community of Flint and Genesee County.