

Theory of Change: Enhanced organizational and sector capacity leads to improved programs, better outcomes for clients and stronger advocacy efforts.

Program Goal: Build and sustain the quality of services provided by Polk Bros. Foundation grantee organizations and Chicago public schools by supporting local nonprofits that offer specialized training programs, provide technical assistance and foster learning communities.

Proposals submitted to the Foundation should adhere to one of the following strategies:

STRATEGY A

Consulting

Target Population: Polk Bros. Foundation grantees and other area nonprofits whose programs align with the Foundation's guidelines and grantmaking strategies.

Components:

Collaborates with client organizations to identify issues to be addressed.

Offers customized, in-depth consulting projects and implementation plans that clearly articulate processes to resolve organizational concerns.

Can demonstrate buy-in and sustained commitment for the project from the client organization's board and staff to ensure an ongoing partnership and institutional engagement.

Appropriately trains and supervises staff and consultants in strengths-based nonprofit management and governance, and responsive and flexible consulting.

Provides learning opportunities for staff and consultants to continue building knowledge and skills in areas of expertise.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Number of clients served and lengths of engagement, types of projects completed, and information about projects that were initiated but not finished.
- Demonstration of the collaborative process that includes assessment, project development, identification of benchmarks for success, implementation and necessary follow-up support.
- Collection and assessment of evaluation data from client organizations that demonstrates their improved processes and overall impact.
- Collection and assessment of evaluation data from consultants that demonstrates learning and informs processes for consulting projects.
- Type and duration of initial and ongoing training sessions and demonstration of learning for consulting staff and volunteers.

STRATEGY B

Collective Learning-to-Action

Target Population: Polk Bros. Foundation grantees, Chicago public schools and area nonprofits whose programs align with the Foundation's guidelines and grantmaking strategies.

Components:

Offers opportunities for cumulative learning through multi-session seminars addressing specific issue areas or organizational capacity concerns.

Develops peer learning communities that engage multiple participants, including board and staff, from more than five PBF grantees or CPS schools.

Establishes long-term, institutionalized partnerships with learning community organizations.

Provides opportunities for learning communities to develop relationships with other sectors, networks or movements.

Organizes the learning community to develop a unified voice and engage in advocacy efforts to promote effective policies and practices.

Provides individualized technical assistance and/or advanced training for staff at learning community organizations.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Description, number and length of sessions provided.
- Number of participants, including number who attended multiple sessions, and number of organizations, including number with multiple participants.
- Development of peer learning communities, including mechanisms for participant input in program planning.
- Collection and assessment of evaluation data that demonstrates gains in knowledge and/or skills and changes in practice for individual participants.
- Collection and assessment of evaluation data that demonstrates improved practices and policies for learning community organizations.
- Demonstration of specific actions planned or taken by the learning community to improve sector capability and drive advocacy efforts.