

## Making Out of School Time a Priority:

Grantmakers Help Launch a Groundbreaking Public-Private Partnership

In late 1990s in DC, teen pregnancy was on the rise. Youth crime was up. Youth homicide was up. The city's children and youth needed safer and more constructive ways to spend their time when they were not in school.

While plenty of nonprofits and school-based activities existed at the time, there was no coordinated strategy to ensure that programs were reaching those who needed them—or that they even worked effectively.

To fill this gap, the now-defunct DC Agenda invited leaders from DC government, nonprofits, foundations, schools, business, and families to hammer out possible solutions.

“What people were saying, overwhelmingly, was we needed increased investment in out of school time,” recalled Carmen James Lane, who became involved through her work for the DC Commission for Arts and Humanities and remained a contributor when she became a program officer for the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation.

### Finding New Money

Unable to increase their out of school time investments significantly, local funders recognized the need to attract dollars from local government and national funders. “Without significant public support,” said James Lane, “great nonprofits couldn't really go to scale and serve more children. That was the seed for what was needed: a public-private entity that would leverage local and public dollars and be positioned to leverage national dollars.”

“DC government was very instrumental in creating the **Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation**,” said founding Trust board member Diane Bernstein. “We asked for \$30 or \$40 million and ended up with \$4 million. Before we were even fully functioning, the city had given us marching orders—so many afterschool programs, so many

entrepreneurial programs, and town centers. We had to put out an RFP and get into it very, very quickly.”



Funded by the Wallace Foundation in 2006, “Project My Time” is an initiative of the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation.

### Creating a Shared Strategy

At that time, James Lane said, there was “very little coordination on the out-of-school-time front. Funders were making decisions scattershot, with no sense of where the gaps were. There was not a sense of standards or quality that we should be holding groups to.”

Motivated by the early development of the Trust as a vehicle for strengthening youth development programs, several members of Washington Grantmakers decided to form a **Children, Youth and Families Working Group (CYF)**, headed by James Lane and the Moriah Fund's Rubie Coles. Working within the auspices of Washington Grantmakers and drawing on the resources of several foundations, group members sought to work together to give more strategically to make a greater impact.

“What was exciting about Washington Grantmakers' involvement was the overwhelming interest and energy,” recalled Bernstein.

The embryonic Trust, led in part by DC Agenda's Carrie Thornhill, who James Lane called "the Godmother of the Trust," worked to bring together the best thinkers to collaborate on funding decisions. "Money hit the Trust late in the fiscal year and needed to be pushed out in a short time frame," said James Lane. "They made funders a part of that initial review of grant proposals. CYF helped guide the process for making the very first grants, and that process has been refined by subsequent leaders."

## Saving Summer

One issue that quickly came to light was what kids do during the summer. The Trust examined all city agencies and nonprofits that serve children and youth during the summer, and worked, to better coordinate supply with demand throughout the city. The key questions behind the initiative were "Where are the programs, where are the kids, how much money is needed, and how can we get it done?"

The unique positioning of the Trust as a public-private entity provided access to information at the city agency level that funders wouldn't have otherwise known. The summer feeding program, for example, which made sure low-income children who relied on school meals during the school year continued to eat nutritious lunches during the summer, required such cooperation. "The Trust could bring funders, the city, community leaders, and others together in insider conversations to talk about how to stretch budgets," said James Lane.

The discussions on summer programming led to other valuable collaborations. One was prompted by the police department's report on DC hot spots—locations in the city where crime was particularly high. CYF and a group convened by the Trust worked together to determine what nonprofits were working in or near those hot spots. To no one's surprise, the highest-crime areas were also the neighborhoods with the fewest services. "Funders started asking, 'What can we do? How can we get providers in here?'" recalled James Lane. "That work

really elevated the way we thought and worked strategically."

## National Spotlight on DC

When DC became a candidate for funding from the Wallace Foundation in its efforts to expand its youth development funding to new regions, former Trust Executive Director Greg Roberts and his staff worked hard to sell Wallace on the city. The Trust asked CYF to help leverage national dollars, and sowed the seeds for a partnership over the course of a

decade, in collaboration with funders and the city. The hard work paid off big in 2007 when Wallace awarded the Trust \$8 million over three years, representing the "largest investment in out-of-school time in the District by a national funder ever," James Lane explained. "The Wallace Foundation told us that one of the things their board found most impressive was the way that funders in the District work collaboratively, and how organized and supportive we have

been in building an out-of-school time system here."

## The Power of Collaboration

While the Wallace funding expires next year, the Trust has helped pave the way for vast improvement in out-of-school time services in the District. DC Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee understands the importance of out-of-school time opportunities and wants every public school to provide such programming. "It's great that we're doing this in a school-based way," James Lane said. "As funders, we want to keep the priority on communities. We've seen that the strides we've achieved by providing safe havens in communities have led to a decrease in crime."

Signs show that slowly but surely, conditions for young people in the District are improving, thanks in part to the collaborative efforts of city government, the school system, strong nonprofit organizations, funders, and groups like the Trust that bring them all together. In the midst of tough economic times, continued cooperation is key to ensuring that we put our resources to the best possible use for District youth.

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**—Carmen James Lane,  
Program Officer,  
Meyer Foundation**