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BUILDING RESILIENCE

DURING THE GREAT RECESSION

FINAL REPORT OF THE BUILDING RESILIENCE INITIATIVE
DECEMBER 2011

Building Resilience During the Great Recession

Final Report of the Building Resilience Initiative
December 2011

The Building Resilience Initiative (BRI) is the Seattle philanthropic community's response to the economic downturn. Drawing on our long-term community knowledge and network of resources, The Seattle Foundation united generous individual donors, local foundations and corporations to create the BRI in fall 2008. The focus of this Initiative is to help build the capacity of individuals, organizations and communities to prevent King County residents from falling further into crisis and enable them to emerge more resilient and better equipped to achieve future success.

Building Resilience Initiative Funders (\$20,000 and above)

The Boeing Company, Emerald Fund, JPMorgan Chase, Lawrence True and Linda Brown Foundation, Maren-Swenson Fund, McKibben Merner Family Foundation, Medina Foundation, Microsoft Corporation, The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Safeco Insurance Foundation, Schairer Family Advised Fund, The Seattle Foundation, Starbucks Coffee Company, The Sunny Fund, United Way of King County, and the Washienko/Mathieu Family Fund.

Thank you to all of the generous funders and individual donors who made the Building Resilience Initiative possible.

The Seattle Foundation and several other local funders created the Building Resilience Initiative (BRI) in the fall of 2008 to collectively respond to the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. King County lost 85,000 jobs in this recession, a greater loss by percentage than the “Boeing Bust” in the 1970s. Foreclosures in the county rose from 3,799 in 2007 to 13,695 in 2010.

Two significant and complementary funds were created: a basic needs fund was established at the United Way of King County, while the Building Resilience Initiative focused on increasing the capacity of individuals, organizations and communities to not only weather the economic downturn, but also emerge more resilient and better equipped to achieve future success.

The Seattle Foundation facilitated the three-year Building Resilience Initiative, providing staffing and research on local trends and issues to inform and guide the grantmaking process. The Initiative helped build the assets of families, increase job skills and prevent foreclosures, as well as support service delivery improvements so more clients could be served despite shrinking funds. Between 2008 and 2011, 62 participating funders and donors made direct and aligned grants totaling more than \$4.6 million to 33 organizations. The grants reached into all geographic areas of King County and included a focus on underserved and vulnerable populations such as immigrants and refugees.

MULTIPLE HARDSHIPS CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES

Many individuals and families impacted by the economic downturn, especially those who struggled financially prior to the recession, have multiple hardships and require a variety of resources to help build resilience. For that reason, the Building Resilience Initiative invested in a strategic array of programs and organizations capable of delivering and coordinating the complex mix of services necessary to set someone on a path to economic stability. These investments were categorized into three primary areas:

1. Building the assets and skills of individuals;
2. Building organizational capacity to serve clients effectively; and
3. Building support networks within the community.



Photo courtesy of Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association

RESILIENCE is the ability to recover from adversity and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances.

ECONOMIC SECURITY depends on a family’s ability to both increase household income and to build assets – education and training, business ownership, good credit, and savings.

This report summarizes the work of the Initiative within these core areas and highlights how BRI investments have made a difference in the lives of local people struggling during this very difficult time.

BUILDING INDIVIDUAL ASSETS AND SKILLS

The Building Resilience Initiative’s initial grants were designed to bring assistance quickly to people who had or were about to lose their housing and were facing

The Building Resilience Initiative directly invested a total of **\$2,048,090** in organizations that strengthen the capacity of individuals and families.

EVICITION AND FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

- » Housing Justice Project
- » Solid Ground
- » Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle

EXPANDING SERVICES OF MULTI-SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING CASE MANAGEMENT

- » Asian Counseling and Referral Service
- » Catholic Community Services
- » Chinese Information and Service Center
- » Neighborhood House
- » Hopelink
- » Refugee Women's Alliance
- » YWCA of Seattle-King County-Snohomish County

FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND ASSET BUILDING

- » Express Advantage
- » Seattle-King County Asset Building Collaborative

JOB TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESS

- » African Chamber of Commerce of the Pacific Northwest
- » Solid Ground

additional challenges. Fourteen organizations received funding to help thousands of people in greatest need and least likely to get help, including people of color, English language learners, single-parent families, or individuals or families with disabilities.

The two stories below illustrate the breadth and depth of assistance provided by BRI grants, which opened up long-term pathways for families thrown into crisis by the recession.

The **KING COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION'S HOUSING JUSTICE PROJECT (HJP)** provides free legal help to eligible tenants facing evictions, such as the Carter* family. The Carter family was renting a home in Seattle with a valid lease and had a clean rental history. When the recession hit and their landlord defaulted on his mortgage, a bank stepped in and attempted to evict the family on short notice. An HJP volunteer attorney quickly assessed the issue and determined the bank had not complied with new state and federal foreclosure-related eviction laws. HJP successfully negotiated with the bank so that this family of four was given adequate time to find affordable housing and some funds to cover their relocation costs. Since receiving BRI funding, HJP has provided this kind of eviction relief and legal advocacy to 3,485 low-income King County residents.

Gloria*, a single mother of three small children under the age of three, describes her experience during the recession: "I recently reached out to **CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES** when I was at my wits end and didn't know anything else to do or where to go from here. I was looking for direction and assistance which came in the form of case management.

This assistance was

greatly appreciated being that I was new to being unemployed and had never reached out for assistance before.

"I never realized that these supports were in the community, and without the assistance I would have never known how to access them. Meeting with my case manager in my home on a regular basis made me feel as though things would be OK and the long journey would end soon. Throughout the process I received numerous referrals to programs that were in the community that I was unaware of, received some financial assistance to get through the months that I was short and at the same time gained trust that there are still programs out there that can help.

"I never realized that these supports were in the community, and without the assistance I would have never known how to access them."
- Gloria, single mother of three

*Names changed to protect client privacy

“After updating my resume at a career center and using job listings sent by my case manager, I finally got a job after months of no leads. I took the job. It pays much less than what I was previously making but I am just happy to be back in the working world.”

More than 200 people received similar help through Catholic Community Services’ Access to Success Program.

The Building Resilience Initiative directly invested a total of **\$384,461** in strengthening the organizational capacity of agencies serving individuals and families.

TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS

- » Burst for Prosperity
- » Casa Latina
- » Chinese Information and Service Center
- » Hopelink
- » Refugee Women’s Alliance

INNOVATIVE VOLUNTEER STRATEGIES

- » Habitat for Humanity of Seattle/
South King County

CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

- » HealthPoint
- » North Seattle Community College–
Opportunity Center for Employment
and Education

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO SERVE INDIVIDUALS EFFECTIVELY

Increased demand and decreased donations strain nonprofit capacity. As more and more people turn to nonprofit organizations for help—many for the first time—agencies struggle with tremendous pressure from increased demand and decreased philanthropic and public support. To help build organizational capacity, BRI made grants to groups trying to provide services in more efficient and cost-effective ways, such as through technology improvements, innovative volunteer strategies, or creative partnerships.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY launched a pilot project where low-income people with minimal or no job skills can gain retail, warehouse and janitorial skills at Habitat’s retail store in Seattle’s Industrial District. Habitat provides the internship and job training, while its community partners, such as International Rescue Committee, Neighborhood House and YWCA, refer interns to the site and then provide ongoing case management and job search/placement support. With a grant from BRI, Habitat for Humanity hired an

Americorps/VISTA volunteer to create a detailed training program and manual that will be translated into multiple languages. The goal is to create a structured program where long-term community volunteers can serve as volunteer store managers and help train interns. In the first six months of the program, 47 trainees were served, a majority of whom were English Language Learners.

CASA LATINA is a critical employment and education resource for the growing number of Latino immigrants in King County who are significantly impacted by the economic downturn. A grant from BRI supported the purchase and integration of a database that replaced the former manual system of matching day workers with job opportunities. This database improved customer service and resulted in increased matches with former employers. The grant also supported the launch of a new marketing strategy using social networking to increase the number of potential jobs, particularly in the developing markets of green housekeeping, green gardening, and green construction. Additionally, BRI support will allow



Photo courtesy of Casa Latina

Casa Latina to implement a secure, online job order form to streamline the process and response time for potential employers. By building Casa Latina's capacity to recruit more employers and more efficiently make matches, this one-time investment will have a lasting impact on the organization and the people it serves.

BUILDING SUPPORT NETWORKS

Some of the most valuable and enduring sources of help are families and neighbors helping one another. The support of family, friends, neighbors and faith communities can be as vital as financial support when dealing with adversity. These informal networks of support are often the place people turn to for help and are particularly important during hard times. The Building Resilience Initiative made grants to groups that:

- Created a sense of community and common purpose
- Reduced stress and isolation
- Assisted with food, transportation and other basic needs
- Reinforced motivation to continue a job search or complete an education program

Small grants made a big difference. With very modest Building Resilience grants, organizations created the "social capital" that is a primary component of well-being and strong communities.

SAINT LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH used a \$5,000 grant to develop a community garden on its empty lot. The gardeners fed their own families and donated 3,000 pounds of produce to the Renton Food Bank. The church also hosted community dinners using food from the garden. The volunteers are continuing the project with community partners.

The **NORTHSHORE SENIOR CENTER** received a \$15,000 grant to create Seniors Pulling Together, a supportive and educational program for seniors re-entering the workforce due to the recession. Participants, most of whom had not sought jobs for decades, joined peers in classes and activities on retraining, networking, and job hunting skills.



Photo courtesy of Northshore Senior Center

Building collaborative networks for improved services.

The Building Resilience Initiative also invested in projects that created service delivery and support networks in sustainable ways. For instance, **BURST FOR PROSPERITY** and **CARES WASHINGTON** partnered with a coalition of South King and North Pierce County manufacturers to support their low-income employees. Low-income employees are more vulnerable to unexpected setbacks, such as a car breaking down or child care

The Building Resilience Initiative directly invested a total of **\$204,850** in individual support networks.

- » African Chamber of Commerce of the Pacific Northwest
- » Burst for Prosperity
- » Child Care Resources
- » Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association
- » FamilyWorks
- » HealthPoint Auburn
- » Horn of Africa Services
- » International Drop-In Center
- » Northshore Senior Center
- » Refugee Women's Alliance
- » Sno-Valley Senior Center
- » St. Luke's Episcopal Church
- » Valley Cities Counseling & Consultation
- » Village of Hope

The Building Resilience Initiative directly invested a total of **\$370,913** in community support networks.

- » Burst for Prosperity
- » Center for Ethical Leadership
- » Community Voice Mail
- » Crisis Clinic
- » Express Advantage
- » School's Out Washington
- » Seattle-King County Asset Building Collaborative
- » South King Council of Human Services

challenges, which can lead to decreased work performance or job loss. The “Connect for Success” program matches low-income employees with one-on-one coaching and various community resources to help them not only retain their jobs but also advance to living wage careers. The participating companies are willing to pay for the services because it helps reduce employee turnover costs. As a result, the program pays for itself when fully operational and highlights the power of creative partnerships among businesses and nonprofits.

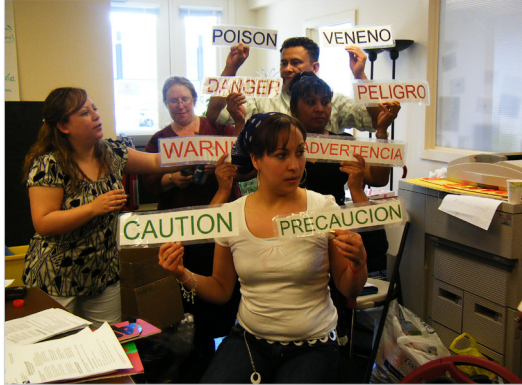


Photo courtesy of Casa Latina

THE LASTING IMPACT OF THE BUILDING RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

The Building Resilience Initiative funding not only supported thousands of vulnerable individuals and families, but it also helped build the capacity of organizations and support networks which will have a lasting impact beyond the initial grants. Although this Initiative has concluded, the participating funders have learned a great deal and will continue to make grants in response to the recession since it is lasting longer than anyone anticipated. Because private philanthropy can never fill the gap left by public sector budget cuts, it will be more important than ever

to pursue partnerships across sectors. In particular, we need to partner with the public sector to ensure that those most in need continue to receive critical services. Building a truly healthy community is only possible when we all play our part.

To learn more about how you can get involved, please contact INFO@SEATTLEFOUNDATION.ORG, or talk with your Philanthropic Advisor at The Seattle Foundation.



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1200 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1300, Seattle, WA 98101
TEL (206) 622-2294 FAX (206) 622-7673
www.seattlefoundation.org