

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF

# Foundation Liaison

PARTNERING FOR A BETTER MICHIGAN



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## Foundation-Government Liaison Offices

WHY AND HOW: LESSONS FROM THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF FOUNDATION LIAISON IN MICHIGAN

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## ABOUT MICHIGAN'S

# Governor's Office of Foundation Liaison

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Created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders, the Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) currently operates with the support of the governor and is located in the administration's offices. The Foundation Liaison is a cabinet-level position and helps to identify and broker innovative funding partnerships and strategic collaborations between the executive branch of state government and foundations to encourage programs or policy reforms that would improve the lives of all Michigan children, families and residents.

Learn more at [michiganfoundations.org/ofl](https://michiganfoundations.org/ofl)

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF

## Foundation Liaison

PARTNERING FOR A BETTER MICHIGAN

## REPORT PREPARED BY

# Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy

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The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University was established in 1992 with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Our mission is to be a global leader in helping individuals and organizations understand, strengthen, and advance philanthropy, resulting in a smart, adaptive sector that helps create strong, inclusive communities.

We put research to work with and for professionals across the country and the world. Through professional education offerings; research, evaluation, and consulting services; and bold thinking to advance the field, we support a philanthropic ecosystem defined by effective philanthropy, strong nonprofits, and informed community change.

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# Introduction

Now celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Governor’s Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) in Michigan is one of the oldest and most successful efforts to bring government and private philanthropic resources together to achieve better outcomes for people in communities, particularly those most marginalized. Founded with leadership from foundation executives and the strong support of the governor, OFL has continued to be effective in aligning resources across three gubernatorial administrations of different political parties.

The OFL provides a structure for coordination within and across government and philanthropy, helping to develop shared priorities that then lead to co-investments in innovative and equitable approaches to addressing community needs.

While there are different models in different states, the success and longevity of Michigan’s office have led to many requests for information on how to start and operate a liaison office. The goal of this document is to share learnings about the key considerations in starting and operating a liaison office successfully. This document is based on the multi-year evaluation of the OFL, along with interviews with its founders and of leaders of similar offices in other states and regions.

## Why a Liaison Office?

First, why have a liaison office? The Governor’s Office of Foundation Liaison was initiated by Michigan-based foundation executives David Egner, then president of the Hudson-Webber Foundation (who now leads the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation) and the late David Campbell, then president of the McGregor Fund. They were seeking to better coordinate requests for support from state offices and agencies, as well as ways to better align their work with state-level priorities. Leaders of other liaison offices note that the office provides a focal point for promoting public-private partnership, which might also include businesses. The benefits for government and philanthropy are summarized in Table 1.

Liaison offices can also play a role in elevating the voices of nonprofit service providers to inform government and philanthropy about the on-the-ground issues in communities.

**TABLE 1. BENEFITS OF A LIAISON OFFICE**

GOVERNMENT	PHILANTHROPY
Identify priorities that are likely to be shared by philanthropy.	Coordination and prioritization of requests from executive branch.
Help coordinate within and across state government departments and agencies working on the same issues.	Help coordinate foundations working on the same issue.
Provide feedback from nonprofits on government and foundation programs.	Provide feedback from nonprofits on government and foundation programs.
Learn about philanthropic sector — what they can and cannot do.	Learn about government sector — what they can and cannot do.
Reduce time wasted on pursuing opportunities that are unlikely to come to fruition.	Reduce time wasted on pursuing opportunities that are unlikely to come to fruition.
Provide feedback and share learning from nonprofits with government.	Provide feedback and share learning from nonprofits with philanthropy.
Promote sustainability by involving partners.	Promote sustainability by involving partners.

# History of the OFL in Michigan

The formation of the Governor's Office of Foundation Liaison in Michigan began in late 2002 and early 2003. Pinpointing the start is rough because like many "innovations" OFL started abstractly first, as a "what if" idea in the minds of visionaries and then became concrete through committees and partnerships. According to one early promoter, philanthropic leaders landed on the liaison model as they considered the economic status of Michigan and the role foundations might play in rebuilding the state's economy. Recalling a model used in Detroit during former Mayor Dennis Archer's administration to create strategic partnerships between government and philanthropy, Egner and Campbell — both Detroit foundation leaders — spearheaded a conversation about creating a similar model at the state level in the office of the newly elected governor, Jennifer Granholm. Crucially, from the beginning these foundation leaders were intent on making the office be non-partisan. While the then-current governor was a Democrat, the need for coordination and alignment was nonpartisan. A partnership was formed in early 2003 between the governor's office and the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF), supported by a group of philanthropic funders and guided by an Advisory Board of both philanthropic and governmental representatives.

From its inception, the mission of the OFL has been to identify and broker strategic partnerships between the state and foundations to effect system and policy reform in the strategic areas of: P-20 education (including early childhood), economic and workforce development, health, and land use — with an emphasis on safety net issues and equity — that would improve the lives of Michigan's families and communities.

## Structuring the Office

As the office took shape, the three parties — the foundation leaders, the governor's deputy chief of staff and the president of CMF — considered the best way to structure the office. Because of the interest in ensuring a nonpartisan office, it was quickly determined that having CMF be the fiscal sponsor for the office made the most sense. However, to ensure close ties with the governor, the physical location of the office was in the executive offices.

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## CASE STUDY: MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS SECTORS

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The summer of 2008 was especially difficult for many in Michigan. The recession had resulted in economic devastation for families throughout the state. As Karen Aldridge-Eason, the director of the Governor's Office of Foundation Liaison described it, "The economy was shifting and lots of people were being laid off and losing jobs for the first time." Outside of Department of Human Services (DHS) offices across Michigan, hundreds of people lined up to battle the sweltering summer heat, waiting to apply for food stamps and other benefits to carry their families through the economic crisis. The stress on the DHS system had reached a breaking point and something had to change. Then-Governor Jennifer Granholm directed the Michigan DHS and her key policy director to come up with an improved online process for determining eligibility for benefits within six months.

This crisis jump started what would eventually become the Michigan Benefits Access Initiative (MBAI), a technology and community outreach strategy for connecting Michigan's most vulnerable families to government benefits, of which — at the time — an estimated \$930 million a year went unclaimed. MBAI grew to represent an unusual public/private partnership between government, foundations and the nonprofit sector that went far beyond Granholm's original vision.

By 2013, approximately five years after its initiation, an online web portal was put in place for individuals to easily apply for and access multiple benefits with just one application. The outreach strategy flipped the DHS model for accessing benefits; instead of requiring clients come to them, they are more and more meeting clients where they are. Through MBAI outreach activities, community organizations that already work with needy families play a key role in connecting them to benefits. OFL was instrumental in bringing together the right partners at the right time to help Michigan families during a crisis.

To get the office moving quickly with expert staff, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation entered into a loaned executive agreement with the state, with one of their program directors, Karen Aldridge-Eason, assigned to the office. By the time the governor “made her first executive cuts to the 2003 state budget, Karen began her job as the first foundation liaison” (Mott Foundation Report, 2008, p. 22).

In a fairly short timeframe, memorandums of understanding (MOUs) among the three entities — the governor’s office, CMF and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation — were put in place. These MOUs have provided the legal framework for the OFL over the past 20 years, with minimal changes. (See Appendix A for copies of the MOUs.)

A key organizational feature of the office is the Foundation Liaison Advisory Committee (FLAC). The FLAC is comprised of the governor’s lead policy advisor, the president of the Council of Michigan Foundations, the president of the Michigan Nonprofit Association and representatives of foundations, primarily those who provide financial support for the office. The committee meets three to four times per year to discuss the priorities for the office, get updates from each other and help to make connections. The meetings also provide a regular opportunity to get briefings from state agency leaders and hear from experts on topics of mutual interest. The committee invites other foundation leaders to an annual meeting with the governor for an early look at the administration’s policy agenda and budget priorities for the year.

## Choosing a Model

Michigan’s model of an independent organization for the OFL was intentionally designed from the beginning to be nonpartisan. With a concentration of large private endowed foundations in the state and the impetus for the office coming from philanthropy, the emphasis was on having a stable office that could work with foundations from different ideological backgrounds as well as with state leadership of either party. Philanthropy provides the financial support for the office, but the liaison staff are housed with the governor’s policy team, providing access to key decisionmakers. This structure serves to help balance power between the governmental and philanthropic partners, keeping the foundation partners involved through the FLAC. There are downsides to this arrangement. Although the office has continued to work across administrations, how closely it has been embraced by the executive team has varied. The liaison staff must also fundraise from their foundation partners to support the office, taking time away from project work and constantly proving its impact to secure funding.

The model of the office being part of state government, as is the case in California, provides insider status and access to information. In California, the work of the office is funded by state government, with philanthropic support only for the actual projects. With the continual emergence of new foundations and fast-moving technology businesses, this model may match the culture. It also means the office is tied to that administration, with the associated perceived partisanship and lack of commitment to long-term survival. (This was the case with a New Mexico office that never made it past one term.) It remains to be seen if the external consulting partners can provide the long-term capacity and continue the work in a new administration.

## OTHER MODELS

In California, the role of coordinating partnerships is held by a Senior Advisor on Social Innovation, who advises the governor on partnership opportunities aligned with his agenda. The advisor works with a consulting firm who is contracted to carry out the day-to-day work of managing the partnerships. Leveraging private sector dollars, from both businesses and foundations, in support of projects that provide a public benefit is the main goal of the advisor and consulting team. Kathleen Kelly Janus, who served in the Senior Advisor role until 2021, reported that 27 major public-private partnership brokered by the office leveraged \$1.34 billion in public funding to raise \$3.9 billion from corporate and philanthropic partners in 2019-20.

North Carolina’s Philanthropy Liaison is part of the Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP). The OSP is part of the Office of State Budget and Management; it works to build partnerships between state government and North Carolina’s research and philanthropic sectors. One major focus is on increasing the state’s internal capacity to use and generate evidence in its policy and programmatic functions. The Philanthropy Liaison role began in 2021 and so far has a strong focus on educating each sector about the other.

# What a Liaison Office Does

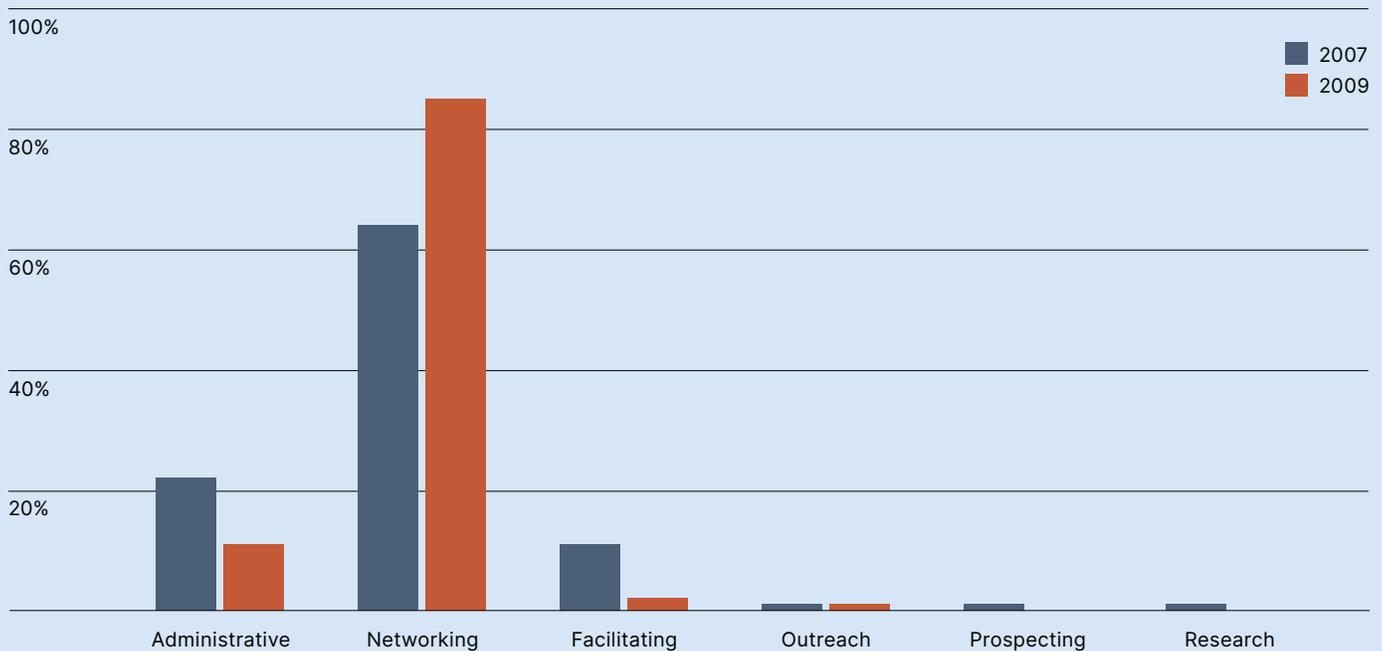
It is sometimes difficult to understand what it is that a liaison office actually does on a daily basis.

The OFL had an evaluation component built into it from the beginning. Every year, the specific evaluation activities are determined based on the current needs for information. In the early years, the evaluation focused on documenting the work of the OFL staff. The OFL was a new structure, in Michigan and nationally; the evaluation served to describe the work of the organization so that all partners could understand its role. The staff recorded what tasks they did over several weeks to help constituents understand its work. These tasks were put into broad categories by the evaluator. (See Figure 1.)

- Networking included things such as phone calls and meetings to learn about the interests of different parties, passing along information, making sure people know about meetings, etc.
- Facilitation included tasks such as actively bringing interested parties together by scheduling meetings and suggesting ways of approaching an issue.
- Outreach tasks focused on connecting with new parties.

Over the ensuing two years, networking came to become nearly two-thirds of the role, while outreach, prospecting and research became smaller components of the work as the office became more well-known and established. Stakeholders say the work changed from being part of large meetings to more coaching and smaller meetings, often around particular opportunities. OFL staff say they initially spent a lot of time building a network of foundations and government agencies, and were then able to use that network to quickly connect the right people to opportunities.

FIGURE 1. PERCENT OFL STAFF TIME ON INITIAL ACTIVITIES 2007 AND 2009



In the next phase of the evaluation, surveys and interviews with both state government and foundation leaders were conducted to understand how they saw the work of the office. In the 2007 evaluation, for example, two-thirds of stakeholders used the office to get information about priorities and emerging partnerships. In the 2023 survey, while over half of respondents used the office this way, the greatest use of the office (71%) reported was in attending various forums and exchanges held by the office. (See Table 2.) With a new gubernatorial administration and the COVID-19 pandemic during this time frame, the OFL used these mechanisms to keep stakeholders abreast.

In terms of building the actual partnerships, stakeholders described the role the office played for them. (See Table 3.)

**TABLE 2. PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS STRONGLY AGREEING OR AGREEING WITH SURVEY STATEMENTS ABOUT USE OF OFL, 2007 AND 2023**

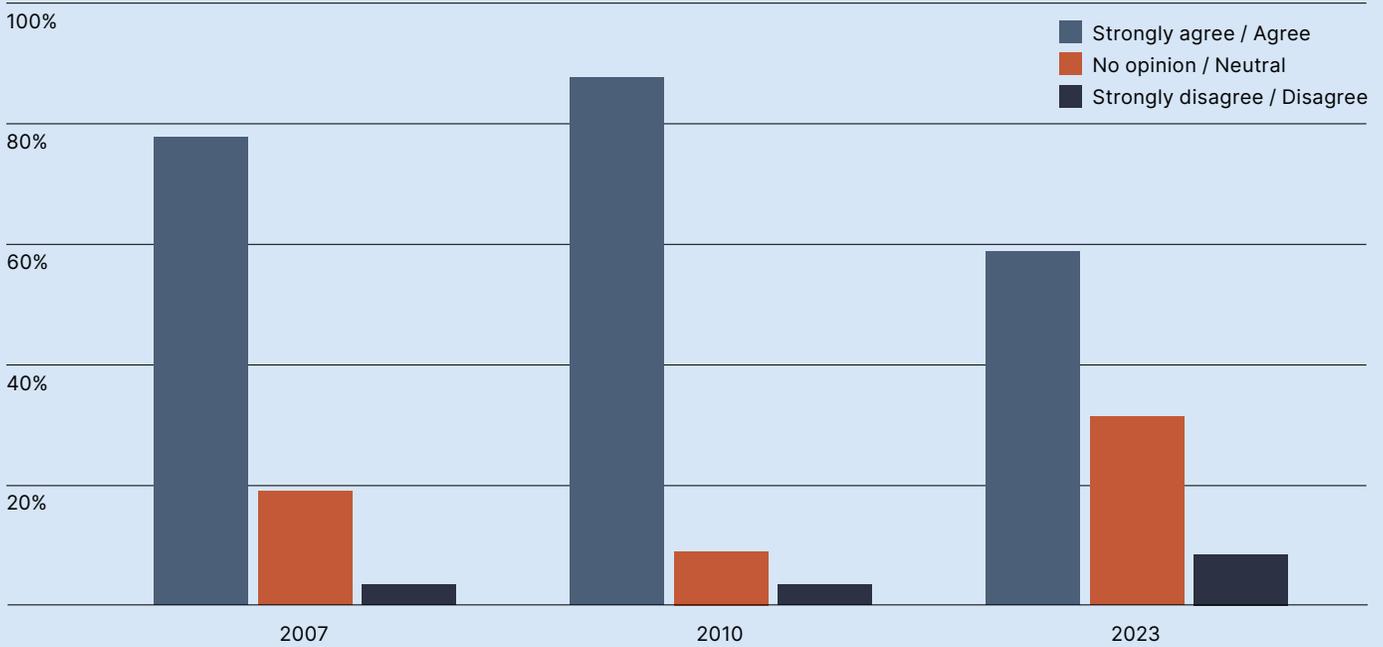
STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	
	2007	2023
I use OFL to get information about current priorities and emerging partnerships within the philanthropic sector or in state government.	66%	62%
I use OFL to identify potential partners for my organizational / agency priorities.	56%	48%
I attend forums and exchanges sponsored by OFL.	60%	71%

**TABLE 3. TYPES OF INTERACTION WITH OFL – PERCENT OF STAKEHOLDERS RESPONDING “YES” TO SURVEY OFL ROLE STATEMENTS, 2007**

STATEMENT	“YES”
OFL provided me with advice on how to approach certain projects or people.	49.5%
OFL advised me on whom to talk to about specific issues and topics.	48.5%
OFL connected me with other people working on issues of concern to me.	48.5%
OFL brought new issues to my attention.	51.5%
OFL consulted / brainstormed with me on issues and ideas.	50.5%

Stakeholders believed that OFL has been effective in increasing partnerships. In the 2007 survey, 77% agreed or strongly agreed that, “The Liaison Office has increased government/philanthropy partnerships.” In 2010, this increased to 87%. In the most recent survey (2023), this was somewhat lower at 58%. (See Figure 2.) This lower rate might be influenced by the global focus on pandemic-related work during the preceding two years.

FIGURE 2. PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY QUESTION: "I FEEL THAT OFL HAS INCREASED GOVERNMENT/PHILANTHROPY PARTNERSHIPS IN THE LAST TWO/FOUR YEARS



NOTE: The 2007 and 2023 surveys asked about the last two years; the 2010 survey asked about the last four.

## Staffing the Office

The knowledge, skills and abilities of the liaison staff are the key to its success. Stakeholders noted that this staff must:

- Understand both government and foundation sectors;
- Have strong interpersonal skills;
- Have humility about their role — they are not funders and don't run agencies;
- Be able to work with individuals and organizations from across the political spectrum;
- Have strong mediation skills to find common ground; and
- Not be intimidated by working with organizations and individuals who hold a great deal of power.

In some places that have not been successful in creating or maintaining liaison offices, the role has been conceptualized as a coordinating and scheduling role and assigned to a junior person. As the detailed description of the role hopefully makes clear, it is a senior position that requires being in the center of sometimes contentious issues and helping to navigate the politics — all to further its mission of creating better outcomes for all Michigan residents.

## OTHER STAFFING MODELS

How important is it to have experience in both philanthropy and government sectors? In California, the staff's expertise and relationships are in government, while the work of building the relationships with the philanthropic sector is managed largely by an outside consulting firm. Kathleen Kelly Janus notes that it is easier to get the expertise in foundations from outside consultants than to get the government insider access, in her opinion making government experience and expertise critical for the role. In North Carolina, on the other hand, being embedded in the budget office provides the access to other state agencies, and the expertise in foundations is a more critical skill.

## Results

The third phase of the evaluation focused on results and progress toward goals. One report was a case study of the Michigan Benefit Access Initiative (MBAI). This program grew out of the call for greater coordination of the intake process across state programs. The vision was to create one entry point for access to services, so that an individual or family could learn about all the services available to them and not have to go through multiple agencies and forms to apply. This was a complex, multi-year initiative that include developing and deploying new software, training outreach staff, harmonizing intake processes and conducting public outreach. Across time, the OFL served as the glue that held the initiative together, bringing in foundation, nonprofit and government partners to move the work forward. As a result, the benefits application was reduced to 20 pages (down from 65), a call center to provide support to applicants was launched and the system has become a model for other states.

For 2018-19, the evaluation team developed several mini-cases of specific bodies of work. The case studies document the role the office played across different issue areas. (See Appendix B.) Two examples:

- The Office of Great Start was launched to provide a focal point for state funding for early childhood services. The OFL played a key role in bringing funders to the table to support not only the Great Start office, but also research and policy analysis. One result was an increase of \$130 million in state support for preschool funding.
- Fair Food Network, a Michigan nonprofit, had been working to combat food insecurity and promote access to healthy foods through Double Up Food Bucks. The program allows Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries to use \$20 of their assistance funds to get \$40 worth of Michigan-grown produce at farmers' markets and some grocery stores. OFL helped bring the attention of this program to state and national funders, resulting in the expansion of the program across Michigan and its adoption in 20 other states. Then, the program informed the 2014 Farm Bill, resulting in \$100 million in funding to support a national implementation.

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## OFL IN ACTION DURING THE PANDEMIC

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On March 13, 2020, the OFL closed its office in the George W. Romney Building along with all other state personnel as the COVID pandemic hit. Within two weeks, the OFL had arranged for a virtual meeting where Gov. Whitmer and the department directors of the State Budget Office, Housing Development Authority, Health and Human Services, Labor and Economic Opportunity and the state superintendent provided an update to all members of the Council of Michigan Foundations. From that point forward, the OFL became a direct conduit for policy updates from the executive branch to Michigan's foundation community. These updates accelerated during the early days of the pandemic. From the OFL, "you get up-to-date, straight-from-the-source information [...] when policy is taking shape," according to one funder.

For smaller, local funders, these virtual updates and large-scale meetings connected them to a broader universe of foundations and established a useful context for many decisions from the state capital. "When it came to some of the COVID-19 relief efforts and process," said one funder, "I think learning from that greater capacity was helpful and we were able to pivot and learn and get ideas from others." Moreover, as many of these primarily rural funders regularly collaborated with their local legislators, and those legislators were often at odds with Gov. Whitmer's policies, hearing policy briefings directly from department directors and others in the administration shed light on this tension. "I think I have a better perspective of where the governor's priorities are and why they might not directly align with what [my local lawmaker is] trying to do," said one funder. "Even though it's two different opinions of how to get to the same goal, I at least have a little bit of a better understanding of where some of that tension has been."

All the mini case studies, found in Appendix B, were used to educate gubernatorial candidates about the office in the 2018 election cycle.

For 2020, the evaluation focused on the response to COVID-19 and the racial reckoning that was given new urgency by the deaths of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, Amaud Arbery and others. The OFL played a key role in sharing information across sectors about responses to the pandemic.

## Managing Transitions

How has the OFL managed to successfully transition across diverse gubernatorial administrations? To examine this question, the evaluation team interviewed key stakeholders, observed meetings of the OFL Advisory Committee and analyzed historical documents, such as past evaluations and meeting minutes. Twenty-four individuals were interviewed, including past and current senior representatives from the governor's executive and transition teams, the Council of Michigan Foundations, the Foundation Liaison Advisory Committee, the Michigan Department of Corrections, the Michigan Department of Education, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget.

What emerged from the data is that the OFL has successfully sustained itself over the course of three gubernatorial administration transitions through a multi-faceted and nuanced approach that includes:

- The OFL's collaborative founding story;
- The OFL's unique structure and experienced staff;
- The OFL's cross-sector and cross-administration relationships;
- The OFL's ability to facilitate, mediate, connect and translate across public and private sectors; and
- An ongoing evaluation process that provides evidence of impact.

Each of these sources has informed the OFL's transition tactics that include:

- Developing and maintaining relationships and partnerships with state department staff beyond political appointees,
- Reaching out to the candidates during the campaign to educate them about the office and its successes;
- Serving as a nonpartisan resource throughout transitions; and
- Being willing to be a strategic, flexible and adaptable ally in aligning foundation and gubernatorial priorities.

# Conclusions

Michigan's Office of Foundation Liaison was conceived of as a long-term structure to support cross-sector partnerships. It was designed as a boundary-spanning organization, which means it is more than a bridge — it works within each sector to help it more effectively work across sectors. Some of the key lessons from the OFL are:

- The combination of independent fiscal management and proximity to the governor's policy team has helped it to be effective and nonpartisan.
- The person in the liaison role is the most critical success factor. The liaison role is not a junior role. It includes the ability to tap people with the right expertise, problem-solve, facilitate and see their role as one of servant leadership. The role requires analytical skills to find gaps and identify the sweet spot where all sectors can be on the same page.
- The liaison identifies what role each sector can play in addressing community issues. Foundations need to advocate and fund; government needs to provide access to people, a seat at discussions, as well as policy solutions. Harmonizing these functions means understanding and accommodating the different timelines and decision-making processes in foundations versus government. The liaison needs to continually reinforce the role, which can be misperceived as being a fundraiser for the government.

For those considering starting a liaison office, there are some questions that should be considered:

- Is the intention to serve one administration's agenda or is the goal to work across administrations?
- Is the foundation community well-enough organized to collaborate effectively with each other and with government? For example, is there a strong state philanthropy association?
- Is the governor (or local executive leader, if exploring a smaller regional office) committed to providing access to conversations about their priorities?
- Is there an entity that has the confidence of both sectors that can provide ongoing fiscal oversight?

Ultimately, there is no one right model for a liaison office. The culture and context matter. While the Office of Foundation Liaison model has been successful in Michigan, answers to these questions might lead others to different choices. Hopefully this document will serve as a guide to making those choices.

## Appendix A: Memorandums of Understanding

## Memorandum of Understanding

### **Governor's Office of Foundation Liaison**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is between the Council of Michigan Foundations ("CMF"), a Michigan nonprofit corporation with principal offices located at 1 South Harbor Avenue, Suite 8, Grand Haven, Michigan 49417, and the State of Michigan, Office of Governor Gretchen Whitmer ("State") in Lansing, Michigan.

Recognizing that CMF has a nearly 30-year history of partnering with state government and that the Office of the Foundation Liaison to the Governor ("OFL") has existed since 2003 through MOUs with the Office of former Governors Granholm and Snyder, it is the intent of CMF and its members providing financial support to continue to support the OFL in partnership with Governor Whitmer and her Executive Office in her term of office through the terms of this MOU.

This MOU will confirm the parties' understanding regarding the purpose, scope and limits of the OFL. The purpose of the OFL is to create and enhance relationships between Michigan's foundation community and the offices of state government that will promote public private partnerships in collaborative responses to issues vital to the quality of life for residents of Michigan.

1. Karen Aldridge-Eason, a loaned executive to the State from the C.S. Mott Foundation through the Private Sector Executive Loan Program ("Liaison"), and Stephen Arellano, Michelle Danaj, and shared time of a Public Policy Fellow to the Office, all employees of CMF, will continue to serve as the staff of the OFL at no direct cost to the State. The staff of the OFL will continue to have knowledge of philanthropy, the grantmaking process and the operations of state government.
2. Ms. Aldridge-Eason shall act in the capacity of a volunteer as defined by MCL 691.1401(h) when providing the services described in this MOU. Ms. Aldridge-Eason, as the principal staff of the OFL, will be considered by the State as comparable to a Cabinet-level appointment by the Governor and will have access to Cabinet Meetings as appropriate in order to accomplish the purpose of the OFL.
3. The four initial objectives of the OFL as set forth below will continue to guide the operations of the OFL with appropriate amendment to insure alignment with the priorities of Governor Whitmer:
  - **To increase state officials' understanding of philanthropy and to identify opportunities for partnering with state government.** The OFL will work with the Governor's staff, appropriate State agencies and selected members of the Legislature to increase the understanding and identification of partnership opportunities for philanthropy and Michigan's public sector.
  - **To support models that improve efficiency and/or effectiveness of State government.** The OFL will provide information and technical support to State officials and to Michigan grantmakers and foundations making grants in Michigan to develop relationships concerning program models for continuous improvement of the operation of State programs which support the Governor's strategic policy priorities.

- **To respond to opportunities for new local, regional and statewide public-private partnerships to serve populations in the implementation of government programs.** The OFL will utilize the experience of foundations and public-private partnerships which already exist to help respond to such opportunities. The OFL will work to bring together private partners to support initiatives to make more efficient use of state funds and state administered funds in local communities.
  - **To attract new national grants and federal funds to Michigan.** The Liaison will assist the nonprofit community, private foundations, and appropriate state offices to attract new resources, including federal grants, especially in the public private relationships that may be created.
4. The staff in the OFL will serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The OFL staff will be provided with specific assignments and the State's job expectations, requirements and limitations by the Governor or her designee, the Chief of Staff. The OFL's specific duties and work performance will be monitored by the Governor's designee. CMF will provide periodic evaluations for the private funders of the OFL's work, in conjunction with the Governor's designee.
  5. Term; Early Termination Provisions.
    - a. This MOU will be in effect January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2022 and may be extended for a three-month period or longer by mutual consent of the parties.
    - b. Either party may cancel this MOU with 60 days' notice for any reason without cause.
  6. The State and CMF agree to continuation of an Advisory Committee to the OFL. The role of the Advisory Committee is to lend advice and support to the OFL and meet not less than every six months. The Advisory Committee will consist of the Governor's designee and additional representatives of the foundation community, including funders of the OFL, and the Michigan Nonprofit Association as appointed by CMF.
  7. Business expenses, authorized by CMF in advance, together with limited authorized travel expenses, shall be reimbursed to the staff of the OFL or paid directly by CMF upon receipt of proper written request and substantiation, consistent with CMF expense reimbursement policies.
  8. The State will provide the OFL with office space and support items for MOU-related services, including computer system access, telephone support and office supplies.
  9. CMF will provide the OFL with appropriate administrative staff support from funds provided by the foundations supporting the budget of the OFL.
  10. The Governor's Office ("State") retains all intellectual property rights to any document or work product developed by the OFL. The State will not be charged nor owe payment for any document or work product developed. An outside evaluation of the OFL, funded by the foundations through CMF and overseen by the Advisory Committee mentioned above, will be a public document that CMF is able to provide to funders of the OFL and other parties interested in replicating the OFL in other states.

11. The OFL's role will be strictly limited to functioning in an advisory capacity. OFL staff will not be expected to nor will they have authority to make any substantive decisions affecting the operations of the State or of the Executive Office including, but not limited to, decisions pertaining to budget, accounting and allocation of funds, investment of funds, staffing, or changes in administrative services provided by the State to the public. The Governor's Office staff will remain responsible for making any and all substantive decisions with respect to evaluation and implementation of recommendations, analysis, or advice provided by the OFL.
12. The OFL staff will adhere to any guidelines provided by the State regarding conflicts of interest and the reporting of potential conflicts. The OFL will also comply with the Governor's Executive Orders, Executive Directives, Executive Office Policies, and other applicable state policies and work rules, including policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment.
13. The OFL staff will adhere to confidentiality requirements as set forth in State policy and Federal and State laws and regulations. OFL staff will not divulge information and materials obtained in connection with volunteer services provided to the Office, even if not otherwise subject to confidentiality requirements under Office policy or federal or state laws and regulations, without express written authorization by the Governor and her designee. In the event authorization is given, OFL staff will protect and refrain from divulging any information that would identify individuals served by the Governor's Office.

Approved:



\_\_\_\_\_  
For the Office of the Governor  
By: JoAnne Huls  
Its: Chief of Staff

5/20/19  
Date



\_\_\_\_\_  
For Council of Michigan Foundations  
By: Kyle Caldwell  
Its: President

5/3/19  
Date

## Memorandum of Understanding

### Private Sector Executive Loan Program

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is between the **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**, a Michigan nonprofit corporation with principal offices located at the Mott Building, 503 S. Saginaw Street, Flint, Michigan 48502 (the “Foundation”), and the **Executive Office of the State of Michigan for the Governor’s Office of Foundation Liaison (the “Office”)**, which is located within the Executive Office in the Romney Building in Lansing. With Karen Aldridge-Eason’s (“Eason”) full knowledge and approval, the Foundation shall assign Eason, its employee, to serve as a volunteer to the Office, as a part of the Governor’s Private Sector Executive Loan Program. As Foundation Liaison to the Governor, Eason shall provide evaluation, advice, and consulting, while remaining an employee of the Foundation. This MOU will confirm the parties’ understanding regarding the purpose, scope and limits of this arrangement.

This MOU is a part of an initiative spearheaded by the Council of Michigan Foundations (“CMF”), which has been instrumental in defining the Office and the position of Foundation Liaison (“Liaison”). CMF, with the financial support of its members, is supporting this initiative financially by providing a program coordinator Stephen Arellano, office assistant Michelle Danaj, and shared time of a Public Policy Fellow to the Office, paying certain expenses of the Office, and reimbursing the Foundation for a portion of Eason’s compensation. CMF also works with an Advisory Committee to the Office in assisting in defining the Liaison’s objectives, suggesting strategies, and evaluation of Eason. CMF is neither Eason’s employer nor a party to this MOU.

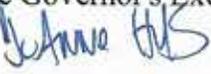
CMF’s obligations to the State are embodied in its Memorandum of Understanding with the State. CMF’s obligations to the Foundation are embodied in its Memorandum of Understanding with the Foundation.

1. In response to Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s request to maintain a Private Sector Executive Loan Program to support the State of Michigan, the Foundation and Eason have agreed that Eason will volunteer her services as Liaison to the Office at no cost to the Office or the State of Michigan.
2. Eason shall act in the capacity of a volunteer as defined by MCL 691.1401(h) when providing the services described in this MOU.
3. Eason will serve as Foundation Liaison for the Governor’s Office of the Foundation Liaison. The functions and activities of the Liaison will be amended as the Governor and the Chief of Staff for the Governor identify the priorities of the Administration. However, as a starting point the following three initial objectives will be continued as identified:
  - **To increase state officials’ understanding of philanthropy and to identify opportunities for partnering with state government.** The Liaison will work with the Governor’s staff, appropriate State agencies and selected members of the Legislature to increase the understanding and identification of partnership opportunities for philanthropy and Michigan’s public sector.

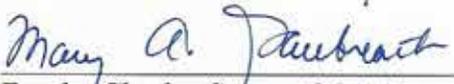
- **To support models that improve efficiency and/or effectiveness of State government.** The Liaison will provide information and technical support to State officials and to Michigan grantmakers and foundation grantmakers making grants in Michigan to develop relationships concerning program models for continuous improvement of the operation of State programs which support the Governor's strategic policy priorities.
  - **To respond to opportunities for new local, regional and statewide public-private partnerships to serve populations in the implementation of government programs.** The Liaison will utilize the considerable experience of foundations and public-private partnerships which already exist to help respond to such opportunities. The Liaison will also work to bring together private partners who would support initiatives to make more efficient use of state funds and state administered funds in local communities.
  - **To attract new national grants and federal funds to Michigan.** The Liaison will assist the nonprofit community, private foundations, and appropriate state offices to attract new resources, including federal grants, especially in the public private relationships that may be created.
4. Eason will serve as Liaison at the pleasure of the Governor, except as limited by 7(c) below. The Liaison will be provided with specific assignments and the State's job expectations, requirements and limitations, and the Liaison's specific duties and work performance will be monitored by the Chief of Staff of the Governor's Office. In accordance with the reporting required by foundations funding the Office, CMF will, with input from the Chief of Staff for the Governor, provide periodic evaluations of the Liaison's work.
  5. Eason has been asked to serve as Liaison because of her knowledge of philanthropy, state government, and the grantmaking process. It is expected that her work will create and enhance relationships between the foundation community and state government.
  6. Eason may also participate in a cross-agency review of other private sector loaned executive activities.
  7. Term; Early Termination Provisions.
    - a. This initiative will be in effect on January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2022 and may be extended for a three-month period or longer by mutual consent of the parties.
    - b. This MOU may be terminated at any time by the State at the Governor's pleasure with 60 days-notice to the Foundation and CMF.
    - c. This MOU also can be terminated at any time by the Foundation with 60 days-notice for any reason. In addition, this MOU can be terminated if:
      - i. Eason voluntarily resigns.
      - ii. Eason should become disabled, as determined under the Foundation Long Term Disability Plan.

8. Eason is volunteering services and will not be paid by the Office or the State of Michigan for these services. It is further understood that the Foundation will continue to compensate Eason as its employee while participating in the Private Sector Executive Loan Program. Eason will be assigned by the Foundation on a full-time basis to this program. The Office is not the employer of Eason and she is not a state employee for any purposes including, but not limited to, retirement, workers' compensation, unemployment, hospitalization, health, or disability benefits.
9. CMF will reimburse Eason for certain travel, meal, and other expenses incurred while serving as a volunteer to the Office, in accordance with CMF's contract with the Foundation. If authorized in advance by CMF, CMF shall pay certain business expenses, and limited travel expenses, either by reimbursing Liaison or paying the expenses directly, upon receipt of proper written request and substantiation, consistent with existing CMF expense reimbursement policies.
10. The State will provide the OFL with office space and support items for MOU-related services, including computer system access, telephone support and office supplies.
11. The Office retains all intellectual property rights to any document or work product developed by Eason. The Office will not be charged or owe payment for any document or work product developed.
12. Eason's role will be strictly limited to functioning in an advisory capacity. Eason will not be expected to nor will she have authority to make any substantive decisions affecting the operations of the State. The Governor's Office, with support from the Advisory Committee to the Office, will remain responsible for making any and all substantive decisions with respect to evaluation and implementation of recommendations, analysis, or advice provided by Eason.
13. Eason will remain subject to and will adhere to the Foundation's policy with respect to conflicts of interest and representing the Foundation with integrity. Eason will promptly disclose to the Foundation any situation that could result in an actual or potential conflict of interest while serving as Liaison.
14. Eason will adhere to any guidelines provided to her by the Governor's Office regarding conflicts of interest and the reporting of potential conflicts. She will also comply with the Governor's Executive Orders, Executive Directives, Executive Office Policies, and other applicable state policies and work rules, including policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment.
15. Eason will adhere to confidentiality requirements as set forth in Office policy and Federal and State laws and regulations. Eason will not divulge information and materials she obtains in connection with her volunteer services provided to the Office, even if not otherwise subject to confidentiality requirements under Office policy or federal or state laws and regulations, without express written authorization by the Governor. In the event authorization is given, Eason will protect and refrain from divulging any information that would identify individuals served by the Office.

Approved:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
For the Governor's Executive Office  
By: 

5/20/19  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
For the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
By: *VP Administration + Secretary/Treasurer*

5/2/2019  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Memorandum of Understanding

### **Loaned Executive for Governor's Office of Foundation Liaison**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is between the **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**, a Michigan nonprofit corporation with principal offices located at Mott Building, 503 S. Saginaw Street, Flint, Michigan 48502 (hereinafter referred to as "Mott"), and **Council of Michigan Foundations**, a Michigan nonprofit corporation with principal offices located at 1 South Harbor Avenue, Suite 8, Grand Haven, Michigan 49417 (hereinafter referred to as "CMF").

WHEREAS, Mott and CMF desire to assist the State of Michigan (the "State") in the funding and operation of the Governor's Office of the Foundation Liaison, a cabinet level position in the Executive Office of the State of Michigan (hereinafter referred to as the "OFL"); and

WHEREAS, the parties agree that the OFL is to focus on opportunities to connect the common interests of grantmakers and state government; and

WHEREAS, the OFL position is held by Karen Aldridge-Eason (hereinafter the "Liaison") an employee of Mott; and

WHEREAS, the parties agree to the following duties, rights and obligations in conjunction with the arrangement contemplated by this MOU.

NOW, THEREFORE, the parties agree as follows:

**1. Scope and Term of MOU.**

- a. Mott agrees to continue to loan the services of its employee, Karen Aldridge-Eason, to the State for the purpose of serving in the capacity as Liaison.
- b. During the term of this MOU, the Liaison will remain an employee of Mott and be a volunteer and not an employee, in relationship to the State. The Liaison will not be considered an employee or a loaned employee in relationship to CMF.
- c. The term of this MOU shall continue beginning January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2022, subject to the provisions of paragraph 3 of this MOU.

**2. Responsibilities of Liaison.** The particular objectives of the Liaison position are set forth in Attachment B to this MOU which is incorporated herein by references as if the same were fully set forth, word for word, in this MOU.

**3. Termination of MOU.**

- a. This MOU will terminate automatically on December 31, 2022.
- b. This MOU shall also terminate automatically upon either the termination of the Memorandum of Understanding between Mott and the State or the termination of the employment relationship between the Foundation Liaison and Mott.

#### **4. Control and Evaluation of Liaison.**

- a. The Liaison shall report to and shall be given assignments by the Chief of Staff of the Office of the Governor.
- b. With approval from CMF, the Liaison will convene an Advisory Committee which shall meet at least every six months and will provide advice and support to the Liaison, as described in Section 6 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the State and CMF. (See Attachment A)
- c. CMF will assist the Governor's Chief of Staff and Advisory Committee to the OFL in defining the Liaison's objectives. In accordance with the reporting requirements of the private and community foundations supporting the OFL, CMF shall provide periodic evaluations of the Liaison.

#### **5. Obligations of Mott.**

- a. Mott shall pay all wages and fringe benefits, including workers' compensation, for the Liaison and shall withhold all appropriate amounts for federal, state and local taxes, including payroll, social security and other withholding taxes.
- b. Mott shall comply with all state and federal employment laws and shall satisfy any other obligations imposed by law on an employer, and/or as set forth in this MOU.

#### **6. Obligations of CMF.**

- a. Effective for the term beginning January 1, 2019, CMF shall reimburse Mott, on a quarterly basis, for a specified percentage of the cost of the Liaison's wages, at a rate to be mutually agreed upon.
- b. If authorized in advance by CMF, CMF shall pay certain business expenses, and limited travel expenses, either by reimbursing Liaison or paying the expenses directly, upon receipt of proper written request and substantiation, consistent with existing CMF expense reimbursement policies.
- c. CMF shall continue to provide the Liaison with program and /or administrative support.
- d. CMF shall satisfy its obligations set forth in Attachment A concerning the Advisory Committee, as well as any other obligations as set forth in this MOU.

#### **7. Indemnification.**

- a. Each party to this MOU agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless all other parties to this MOU from any and all liability, damages, expenses (including court costs and reasonable attorney fees) and claims for damage or injury of any nature whatsoever, including but not limited to claims of bodily injury, personal injury, property damage or economic loss or damage, whether known or

unknown, which may be incurred or which may be asserted as a result of its own acts, errors or omissions including without limitation, any damages or expenses as a result of a breach of this MOU.

- b. Mott agrees that it shall indemnify and hold harmless CMF from any claims of Liaison (or in the event of her death, by her personal representative(s)) for workers' compensation benefits or other employment related claims, including costs and reasonable attorney fees.
  - c. Any party seeking indemnification under this MOU shall provide written notice to the party from whom indemnification is sought, of the claim or proceeding for which indemnification is sought and that party shall have the right to undertake to defend against any such claim or proceeding.
8. **Assignment.** This MOU cannot be assigned by either party without prior written consent of the other party to this MOU.
9. **Binding MOU.** This MOU shall be binding upon the parties hereto, their successors and assigns.
10. **Governing Laws.** This MOU is governed by and shall be constructed in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan, without regard to its conflicts of law provisions. All parties hereby consent to the jurisdiction of the appropriate courts in the State of Michigan for the purposes of enforcement of rights and remedies arising under this MOU and shall not bring any action or proceeding relating to this MOU in any other court.
11. **Severability.** If any provision of this MOU (or application of such provision) is held invalid or unenforceable by a court or tribunal of competent jurisdiction, such provision shall be deemed to be modified in a manner consistent with the intent of such original provision so as to make it valid and enforceable in this MOU, and the application of such provision to persons or circumstances other than those with respect to which it would be invalid or unenforceable shall not be affected thereby. In addition, all other provisions of this MOU not invalid or unenforceable shall remain in full force and effect.
12. **Entire MOU.** This MOU constitutes the entire MOU between the parties hereto and supersedes and cancels any prior MOUs, representations or communications whether oral or written, relating to the subject matter contained in this MOU. Neither this MOU nor any provision hereof maybe changed, waived, discharged or terminated orally, but only by an MOU in writing signed by both parties.
13. **Appropriate Notice.**
  - a. Notice as contemplated by this MOU must be made by certified mail, return receipt requested.
  - b. Notice to the parties is sufficient if addressed to the parties at the addresses set forth in the opening paragraph of this MOU.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have duly executed this MOU freely and voluntarily as of the day and year first above written.

C. S. MOTT FOUNDATION

By: Mary A. Saltbrack  
VP Administration

Its: Secretary / Treasurer

Dated: 5/2/2019

COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN FOUNDATIONS

By: [Signature]

Its: PRESIDENT + CEO

Dated: 5/3/19

## ATTACHMENT A

(Excerpt from Memorandum of Understanding between  
Council of Michigan Foundations and the State of Michigan)

6. The State and CMF agree to continuation of an Advisory Committee to the Governor's Office of the Foundation Liaison (OFL). The role of the Advisory Committee is to lend advice and support to the OFL and meet not less than every six months. The Advisory Committee will consist of the Governor's designee and additional representatives of the foundation community, including funders of the OFL, and the Michigan Nonprofit Association as appointed by CMF.

## ATTACHMENT B

- **To increase state officials' understanding of philanthropy and to identify opportunities for partnering with state government.** The Liaison will work with the Governor's staff, appropriate State agencies and selected members of the Legislature to increase the understanding and identification of strategic opportunities for philanthropy and Michigan's public sector.
- **To support models that improve efficiency and/or effectiveness of State government.** The Liaison will provide information and technical support to State officials and to Michigan grantmakers and foundations making grants in Michigan to develop relationships concerning program models for continuous improvement of the operation of State programs which support the Governor's strategic policy priorities.
- **To respond to opportunities for new local, regional and statewide public-private partnerships to serve populations in the implementation of government programs.** The Liaison will utilize the considerable experience of foundations and public-private partnerships which already exist to help respond to such opportunities. The Liaison will also work to bring together private partners who would support initiatives to make more efficient use of state funds and state administered funds in local communities.
- **To attract new national grants and federal funds to Michigan.** The Liaison will assist the nonprofit community, private foundations, and appropriate state offices to attract new resources, including federal grants, especially in the public private relationships that may be created.

## Appendix B: Case Studies



# The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the  
State of Michigan and the  
Council of Michigan Foundations

## Convening Public and Private Partners to Support Education Success in Michigan

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

OFL works within three priority issue areas: prenatal to postsecondary education, workforce development, and health. A long-standing education issue that OFL is working to address through public-private partnerships is chronic absenteeism. Recently, OFL planned a state-wide summit on chronic absenteeism called Attendance Matters that brought together foundations, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, teachers, school administrators, school districts, elected officials, and private citizens to provide recent research and actionable resources to help facilitate change in educational policies and practices across the state.

### Chronic Absenteeism: A Long-Standing Issue Gains Statewide Attention

In 2015, legislators began discussing how to improve third-grade reading success in Michigan. During this same time period, the federal government reauthorized funding for elementary and secondary education through the Every Student Succeeds Act. To access this funding, states needed to create their own school improvement accountability systems and define specific metrics to measure. Michigan opted to use school attendance as one of these measures as it has been proven to be a reliable indicator and has been linked to student academic success, including reading proficiency.

As the state began to take interest in school attendance, OFL noticed that the philanthropic community had flagged it as an issue to watch as well. Recognizing the potential for a public-private partnership that could help strengthen Michigan's education system, OFL sought to obtain more information about the subject of school attendance and connected with education expert Hedy Chang of Attendance Works.

Through conversations with Chang, OFL learned that Michigan has the highest rates of chronic absenteeism in the country. According to a recent data set from the Office for Civil Rights that Chang shared with OFL, nearly one-third of Michigan schools experienced high (20–29%) or extreme (over 30%) rates of chronic absence. The City of Detroit alone tops the nation's chronic absence list, with most schools hovering around a 58% chronic absence rate and some with staggeringly high rates upwards of 60–70%. If students are not present in the classroom, then educational achievements, like reading proficiency, cannot be effectively met, leaving Michigan's children without the tools to access a better, brighter future.

In addition to providing recent research and data, Chang showed OFL that chronic absenteeism does not exist in a vacuum. Underpinning chronic absenteeism are issues around poverty, health, workforce development, transportation, teacher and parent engagement, and even data quality, as Michigan does not have a standard state definition for absenteeism.

Armed with this new knowledge, OFL knew Michigan's policymakers and funders would appreciate digging deeper into the issues as well.

### Igniting a Statewide Conversation through Attendance Matters

OFL set to work and planned the state's first summit around school attendance called Attendance Matters, partnering with

the Detroit Public Schools Community District, Attendance Works, the Michigan Department of Education, Scholastic, the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA), Liberty Ellen Consulting, and the Council of Michigan Foundations P-20 Education Affinity Group to bring it to life. OFL spearheaded the facilitation of the Attendance Matters Planning Team, the development of the summit's program, and the outreach to statewide partners.

Initially, the summit's attendance goal was around 100 people. However, thanks to OFL and its planning team's strategic outreach, the summit brought in more than 300 people, including representatives from foundations, state agencies, school districts, and nonprofit organizations along with teachers, school administrators, elected officials, and private citizens. Such a swell in attendance showed OFL and its partners that school attendance was an important issue to many around the state.

In bringing such a wide variety of participants to the table, the one-day summit provided attendees with valuable peer-to-peer exchanges. In fact, because of the summit, OFL managed to re-establish an important relationship with the National Governors Association that provides free and low-cost issue-based support to states across the nation. In addition to forging connections among peers, Attendance Matters gave attendees a deeper insight into the issues behind chronic absenteeism, like poverty, and offered resources that could help improve school attendance.

Above all, Attendance Matters showed attendees that they are not alone — that chronic absenteeism is a statewide problem, not just one concentrated in certain pockets of the community.

### **Continuing the Conversation to Improve Education Success**

Conversations around Michigan's chronic absenteeism issue that sprouted at the summit have continued to gain momentum. In Detroit, for instance, partners like Attendance Works, the Skillman Foundation, and the Michigan Community Service Commission, have come together to address the city's dire attendance problem. The city was even recently awarded AmeriCorps grants to help support data systems enhancement and the creation of attendance teams in every Detroit school.

As the issue continues to be top of mind for organizations and schools across the state, OFL is keeping in touch with the Department of Education and other partners to identify ways to bring together the public and private sectors around viable attendance improvement models.

### **OFL's Key Roles in Addressing Chronic Absence in Michigan's Schools**

- ▶ Recognizing the potential for public-private partnerships to help strengthen Michigan's education system
- ▶ Gathering important information about the issues grounding school absenteeism (such as poverty) to better educate both state and philanthropic partners
- ▶ Convening education partners from across the state and nation to launch Michigan's first summit around school attendance
- ▶ Facilitating meetings between summit planning team members and outreach to public and private partners to ensure a successful, relevant, and inspiring summit
- ▶ Keeping a finger on the pulse of work in both private and public sectors around school attendance improvement initiatives in Michigan

One new statewide effort that has emerged since Attendance Matters is called Launch Michigan and is comprised of a multi-disciplinary group that includes partners like the Council of Michigan Foundations/OFL, Public Sector Consultants, Business Leaders of Michigan, and the Education Trust-Midwest. MEMSPA is also beginning a new effort with partners to attack early literacy. These exciting, new initiatives are committed to working toward a statewide education system where every child in Michigan receives access to a high-quality, student-centered learning environment.

Work around addressing education issues in Michigan has only just begun and Michigan faces a long, arduous road ahead. But thanks to OFL's convening power that resulted in a successful Attendance Matters summit, many foundations, state agencies, policymakers, nonprofit organizations, and school districts are more equipped than ever before to tackle Michigan's school attendance issue and school achievement gap.



# The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the  
State of Michigan and the  
Council of Michigan Foundations

## Bringing Philanthropy and the State Together to Improve Michigan's Child Care System

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

OFL works within three priority issue areas: prenatal to postsecondary education, workforce development, and health. A program that crosses these three major buckets is Michigan's child care subsidy system that touches the lives of Michigan's low-income families and children along with local businesses and child care professionals. Recently, OFL worked with both government and philanthropic partners to uncover gaps in the state's child care subsidy program and facilitate improvements to help Michigan's families and children have access to a better, brighter future.

### Seeking Clarity around a Complicated State Child Care Issue

Michigan runs a program called Child Development and Care (CDC) that serves to implement the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant that provides working, low-income families with access to child care via state subsidies. The CDC is a long-running program but, in recent years, rumors were spreading through Michigan's funding community about why the state needed to return funds to the federal government — the only state in the country to do so. Many funders came to believe that Michigan could not find the match it needed to use all the federal subsidy funds allocated to the state.

Upon hearing this information, OFL sought clarity around the state's subsidy budget issue and went to speak with Michigan's Office of Great Start about the matter. What OFL learned was that Michigan was indeed sending unused subsidy funds back to the federal government, but it was not because it lacked a funding match, as OFL and others in the funding community had initially assumed. Rather, the issue was a policy one that kept low-income families and child care centers from accessing state subsidies.

On learning this important distinction, OFL recognized that the Office of Great Start's upcoming report on Michigan's child care system would be an excellent opportunity to convene funders and the state to build understanding and clarity around the issue. Thanks to OFL's strategic networking, the Max and Marjorie Fisher Foundation had come forward to support the creation of this report in collaboration with the Department of Education. The Fisher Foundation found that the report would align perfectly with its early childhood work and was eager to see the results.

### Major Gaps in Michigan's Child Care Subsidy Program Revealed

In September 2016, *Building a Better Child Care System: What Michigan Can Do to Help More Parents and Children Access Quality Care*, prepared by Public Sector Consultants for the Office of Great Start, was finally released. Following the report's publication, OFL, in collaboration with the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) P-20 Education Affinity Group, scheduled a funder's briefing that saw a strong turnout with over 35 foundation representatives and nonprofit advocates in attendance.

At the briefing, attendees learned that Michigan had the lowest eligibility level in the country for access to child care assistance and the lowest reimbursement rate to child care centers. In

addition, funders learned that the reimbursement system was very complex; it took months for many child care centers to receive reimbursement checks and the reimbursement application for families was exceedingly long, at 50 pages with about 80% of applications denied.

### **Inspiring Funders and Policymakers to Take Action for Michigan's Families**

These findings shocked the funding community. Coming out of the briefing, funders felt they not only had a better grasp of the child care subsidy issue but also how they could work with policymakers to leverage private dollars with state funds to improve child care for Michigan's families.

The report was also influential among state agencies, early childhood advocates, and early childhood-focused organizations as it clearly defined the problems within the state's subsidy program and how they could be fixed. The report even caught the attention of Governor Snyder who later added an increase in child care provider payments to the administration's proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

Inspired by the report's findings, CMF's P-20 Education Affinity Group recommended that CMF's Public Policy Committee take up the issue. The Committee then held their own briefing to discuss what they could do to help Michigan's low-income families obtain better access to child care and sent their recommendations to the CMF Board. CMF's Board took these recommendations and submitted letters to Governor Snyder and House and Senate leadership showing support for the proposed increase in child care provider payments, urging the state to take additional action by increasing the income eligibility threshold, and to transition from an hourly billing system to biweekly payments for child care providers.

### **A Win for Michigan's Low-Income Families and Child Care Providers**

Thanks to collaborative efforts between the funding community, early childhood advocates, businesses, and state agencies, two major changes to Michigan's child care subsidy program were incorporated into the 2017–2018 state budget. The income eligibility level was increased and the reimbursement system was improved by switching to more sustainable biweekly payments.

### **OFL's Key Roles in Supporting Improvements to Michigan's Child Care System**

- Engaging in strategic networking to connect funding partners to opportunities with state agencies
- Clarifying important budget vs. policy issues to ensure government and philanthropic partners are on the same page
- Facilitating collaboration between private and public partners to cultivate knowledge-sharing between sectors and inspire coordinated cross-sector action

These improvements to the state's child care subsidy program would not have been possible without OFL. While other bodies and organizations took the reins to spur Michigan's government into action through advocacy efforts, OFL was instrumental in getting the Office of Great Start's report funded, as Jeff Guilfoyle, Vice President of Public Sector Consultants, expressed in an interview.

OFL, harnessing its unique Executive Office position, stepped in to obtain clarity around a complicated state issue, securing frank and transparent answers from state agencies. OFL also brought the Fisher Foundation together with the Office of Great Start to make the report on Michigan's child care system a reality. *Building a Better Child Care System* inspired subsequent actions by actors across the state who then successfully pushed for improvements to Michigan's child care system. This entire process—from information gathering to policy implementation—illustrates the power of cross-sector collaboration and the important role OFL plays in facilitating this collaboration.

# The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the  
State of Michigan and the  
Council of Michigan Foundations

## Connecting Government and Philanthropy to Improve the Health of Michigan's Families

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

OFL works in three priority issue areas: prenatal to postsecondary education, workforce development, and health. Within health, OFL has made great strides in connecting government and philanthropy to expand access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food, especially for Michigan's most vulnerable populations.

### From a Fledgling Program to a Nationwide Model: Double Up Food Bucks

Healthy eating is an integral part of fostering a vibrant, sustainable community where families and children can thrive. Yet healthy eating is not easily accessible for all. In fact, low-income families in urban communities often struggle to find healthy, quality food to bring home due to a lack of affordable and available options in their area.

Fair Food Network, an Ann Arbor-based nonprofit, has been working to combat this food accessibility issue in Michigan's most vulnerable urban communities through Double Up Food Bucks, a program that allows Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries to take \$20 of assistance and double it by purchasing Michigan grown fruit and vegetables at local farmer's markets and some grocery stores.

Through education sessions, Dr. Oran B. Hesterman, Fair Food Network's President and CEO, brought Michigan's food access issue to light for OFL and Michigan funders. OFL saw an

opportunity to help Fair Food Network serve a greater number of Michigan's low-income families and supported the program's expansion by connecting Fair Food Network to the Governor's Office and to funders like the Open Society Foundations, which provided the largest grant for program expansion.

In the beginning, Double Up Food Bucks operated only in five Detroit-area farmer's markets. Today, Double Up Food Bucks has expanded to hundreds of markets across the state and has become a nationwide model that is used in over 20 states. The program has allowed low-income Michigan families to bring home more nutritious food while also supporting family farmers and the growth of local economies across Michigan. What's more, Double Up Food Bucks helped inform national policy; the Farm Bill of 2014 included \$100 million in funding over five years to support the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program.

According to Dr. Hesterman, OFL was an essential partner in helping Double Up Food Bucks expand across Michigan. Without OFL's facilitation and special position between the philanthropic and governmental sectors, Michigan's low-income families would not have received the expanded access they need to healthy, nutritious food.

### OFL's Key Roles in Helping to Expand Double Up Food Bucks

- 1 Gathering important information about food access issues for funder education opportunities
- 2 Connecting public and private partners to help Fair Food Network serve a greater number of Michigan's low-income families
- 3 Facilitating conversations with government and philanthropic partners through OFL's special position between the public and private sectors



# The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the  
State of Michigan and the  
Council of Michigan Foundations

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## Strengthening and Advancing Early Childhood Efforts in Michigan through Public-Private Partnerships

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

OFL works within three priority issue areas: prenatal to postsecondary education, workforce development, and health. Bridging all three issue areas, OFL has been instrumental in the advancement of early childhood efforts in Michigan by supporting the creation and evolution of the Office of Great Start.

### Elevating the Importance of Early Childhood

From the 90s to the early 2000s, there was a lack of strategic, coordinated movement on critical early childhood issues. Michigan trailed behind most of the U.S. in third grade reading scores and the state routinely lacked capacity to take advantage of all available federal funding for early childhood care and education. In addition, three different government agencies — the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the Department of Human Services (MDHS), and the Department of Community Health (MDCH) — had some hand in early childhood work, resulting in a fragmented approach to addressing issues that affect Michigan's youngest populations and impact educational and economic outcomes. While the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) had been founded in 2005, in part, to address the fragmentation in state and federal early childhood funding, there was a growing need to ensure that early childhood issues were at the forefront of the MDE's work and that the department owned these efforts more fully.

Informed by the ECIC's work and advocacy, a collaborative effort — with bipartisan support from the legislature — emerged that recognized the need to improve Michigan's third grade reading scores, increase public education funding, and have one state office with a singular focus on early childhood work. This group of partners, including nonprofits, philanthropic funders, businesses, and government agencies, understood that Michigan could only get ahead if there was a concentrated effort in improving access to and quality of care and education from birth to eight years of age. By facilitating strategic discussions and mediating tough decisions, OFL worked with these partners to build consensus and hold them accountable to the vision of creating a more vibrant Michigan through a strong early childhood system.

### Creating the Office of Great Start

With an Executive Order, Governor Rick Snyder created the Office of Great Start in June 2011, consolidating and streamlining the state's early childhood programs and services within the MDE. To ensure that the Office of Great Start would be effective in achieving its mission of supporting Michigan's families and children, OFL collaborated with the ECIC, the Governor's Office, the MDE, and philanthropic organizations to assist the Office in building a strong foundation.

The ECIC, under the leadership of former ECIC Vice President Joan Blough, supported the Office of Great Start in its early stages by conducting research on early childhood office models and taking the lead with nonprofits and state organizations to critically look at these models and decide what would work best for Michigan. OFL participated in these discussions to communicate this information to interested funders and to assist Blough as she became the Interim Director of the Office of Great Start.

Together with the ECIC, OFL reviewed the Governor's Executive Order language and facilitated conversations with staff involved in the shift of responsibilities from the ECIC to the Office of Great Start, as the ECIC had previously handled the majority of early childhood funding work. OFL helped the ECIC and the newly formed Office of Great Start figure out staff roles and how to move the early childhood agenda forward. OFL was especially instrumental in linking public and private partners to encourage foundation support for the new Office.

Thanks to OFL's unique sector-bridging skills, several funders came to the table to support the build-out of the Office of Great Start, including the Payne Family Foundation, the McGovern Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Colina Family Foundation. In addition, OFL maintained consistent communication with Susan Broman, former President of the Steelcase Foundation, as she transitioned into becoming the Office of Great Start's first Director. Broman's appointment as Director highlighted the importance of keeping the public and private sectors connected in service of Michigan's children and future.

### **Supporting Michigan's Children through the Office of Great Start**

The creation of the Office of Great Start was in and of itself a great success for Michigan as there are few states in the nation with a dedicated center of support for young children and their families. The Office embodies the collaborative effort of public and private sectors, illustrating how diverse stakeholders were able to come together to help Michigan succeed.

Since the Office of Great Start's creation, a strong base of support for early childhood has been built. Through OFL's convening power, the Office of Great Start has partnered with foundations on a variety of projects and initiatives to strengthen Michigan's early childcare efforts, including the creation of the following reports:

- *Building a Better Child Care System*, written by Public Sector Consultants and funded by the Max and Marjorie Fisher Foundation.
- *Great Start, Great Investment, Great Future*, written by Public Sector Consultants and funded by the Kresge Foundation.
- *Building a Sustainable Future: Analysis of the Fiscal Resources Supporting Children from Birth through Age 8 in Michigan*, written by the Finance Project and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which was later used to support the Office of Great Start's *Early Childhood Program Inventory*.

### **OFL's Key Roles in Strengthening and Advancing Early Childhood Efforts in Michigan**

- ▶ Facilitating strategic discussions and mediating tough decisions to build consensus among cross-sector partners and hold them accountable
- ▶ Collaborating with diverse stakeholders to create a strong foundation for the Office of Great Start to help it effectively support Michigan's families and children
- ▶ Communicating regularly with philanthropic funders about state issues to facilitate the growth of public-private partnerships
- ▶ Convening public and private partners to support projects and initiatives to strengthen Michigan's early childhood efforts

This positive forward momentum and cross-sector collaboration on early childhood has moved the Michigan legislature to add \$130 million to state preschool funding and grounded Governor Snyder's decision to increase Michigan's childcare subsidy income eligibility level and improve the childcare subsidy payment reimbursement system with the passage of the 2017-2018 state budget.

By convening public and private sectors and facilitating focused and constructive dialogue among diverse stakeholders, OFL played an integral role in supporting the Office of Great Start's evolution from its early stages to its central work in collaborating across government agencies and philanthropic organizations to strengthen and advance the state's early childhood efforts so that Michigan's children can have a brighter future.

# The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the  
State of Michigan and the  
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## Connecting Government and Philanthropy to Improve the Health of Michigan's Families

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

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### Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Flint Residents during the Water Crisis

Connecting Flint residents to clean water and physical health services were top priorities during the Flint Water Crisis. Yet, amid early crisis relief efforts, mental health services were largely neglected. OFL and the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) were reminded of a conversation with a foundation that worked on Hurricane Katrina disaster relief efforts. Through this conversation, OFL and CMF learned about the importance of mental health services in helping residents manage stress and trauma following a crisis. OFL and CMF immediately shifted into high gear to identify partners that could come together to fund and bring a mobile mental health unit to Flint.

As CMF worked with New York-based Children's Health Fund to acquire their mobile mental health unit used during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, OFL connected funders,

including the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Health Endowment Fund, the Ruth Mott Foundation, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, and the Flinn Foundation, to the Genesee County Health Department to put the unit into operation.

Since the mobile mental health unit's arrival, the Flint Health Department has seen the great impact it has had on the Flint community. Many locals have expressed deep gratitude for the unit and the well-trained local Flint staff who provide the mental health services.

OFL and CMF's collaboration and their ability to quickly connect philanthropic and governmental partners facilitated the City of Flint's ability to meet the mental health needs of its residents in the wake of the Flint Water Crisis.

### OFL's Key Roles in Bringing Mental Health Resources to Flint Residents

- ▶ Engaging in strategic collaboration to identify important public and private partners in providing vital crisis relief resources to Flint residents
- ▶ Bringing public and private sectors together to deliver, restore, and launch the operation of a mobile mental health unit in Flint in the wake of the Water Crisis

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### Mitigating the Effects of Future Lead Exposure through School Breakfast

While lead was officially discovered in Flint's drinking water in September 2015, Flint's children and families had been drinking lead-poisoned water since April 2014. Although the damage was done, a solid nutrition foundation could still be created that could help mitigate the effects of future lead exposure and give Flint's children the best chance for a healthy future.

Prior to the Flint Water Crisis, OFL participated in conversations with Flint Community Schools around creating a district-wide alternative breakfast program. With the onset of the Water Crisis, a new approach to Flint's school breakfast program became a necessity to limit the effects of future lead exposure and to increase the capacity of Michigan's children to be engaged students despite their exposure to lead.

To help bring the alternative breakfast program to fruition, OFL connected government and philanthropic partners, including

Michigan No Kid Hungry, the United Way of Genesee County, Flint Community Schools, the Kellogg Corporation, Fair Food Network, the United Dairy Industry of Michigan, and the District's food service company, SoedexoMAGIC. Through these partnerships, OFL linked the Flint Community Schools to the funding and technical assistance it needed to carry out its unique and ambitious district-wide breakfast program plan.

Flint Community Schools tailored alternative breakfast programs to each school in the district, including: Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab and Go, and Second Chance Breakfast to cater to individual student's needs. Since the breakfast program's implementation, school breakfast consumption in Flint has nearly doubled. An evaluation of the program is currently underway, but preliminary reports from school officials indicate that both attendance and school culture have improved.

OFL was instrumental in bringing together the right partners at the right time to help Flint's children during a crisis. As partners have expressed through interviews, the success of Flint's district-wide Breakfast in the Classroom program would not have been possible without OFL's ability to bring government and philanthropic organizations to the table around a shared agenda.

### OFL's Key Roles in Bringing Flint's Breakfast in the Classroom Program to Life

- Identifying support gaps in operating a district-wide school breakfast program and understanding where private partners can step in to help
- Connecting the right public and private partners at the right time that would work together to implement an ambitious and successful district-wide school breakfast program in Flint

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### Supporting Seniors' Access to Clean Water in Flint

During the Flint Water Crisis, as Flint families received clean, bottled water, many Flint seniors continued to use lead-contaminated tap water for cooking and drinking. Without accessible transportation, many seniors had bottled water delivered to their doorstep. Unfortunately, they were often unable to haul the water containers into their homes. Even if they did manage to succeed in carrying the heavy load indoors, they struggled to open the bottles, leaving them with no choice but to continue using tainted water for their daily needs.

When this clean water access issue came to OFL's attention, OFL went straight to work bringing partners together to develop a solution for Flint's seniors. Through OFL's expert facilitation, AARP Michigan, Valley Area Agency on Aging,

and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund came together to ramp up food and water delivery to Flint seniors, provide them with rubber grips so that they could open and use the delivered bottled water, and conduct a needs assessment study.

OFL also worked with the Valley Area Agency on Aging to utilize the well-known local Meals on Wheels program to deliver food and water at the same time. This ensured that seniors felt safe and did not need to struggle with the heavy water containers. By using its staff expertise, official governor-backed position, and expansive relationship network, OFL enabled partners to come together and ensure Flint's vulnerable senior population gained access to fresh, clean water throughout the Flint Water Crisis.

### OFL's Key Roles in Helping Flint Seniors Access Clean Water

- Expertly facilitating connections between the public and private sectors to ramp up food and water delivery into senior's homes
- Coordinating efforts with partners to find creative clean water access solutions for Flint's seniors