The California Public-Philanthropic Partnerships Model
Overview Developed for Oregon Metro, the Partnership and Social Innovation Program

While California boasts the fifth largest economy in the world and has a robust and activated philanthropic community, it also consistently ranks among the states with the highest poverty and inequality rates in the country. Recognizing that no one sector can ever effectively respond to these challenges in isolation, the California partnerships model is designed to support the development of strategic collaboration among philanthropy, nonprofits, and the state government to address the state's most pressing challenges in new and innovative ways. The model is comprised of representatives from each sector and an external coordinator.
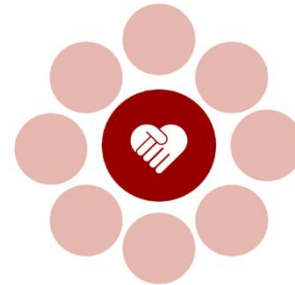

Senior Advisor on Social Innovation and
Agency Partnership Liaisons

External Partnerships
Coordinator

Philanthropic Community

- **Senior Advisor on Social Innovation** sits on the Governor's cabinet team and serves as a key point of contact for partnerships on behalf of the Governor's Office and works closely with senior government staff to ensure that partnerships are aligned with the administration's priorities.
- **Agency Partnership Liaisons** build and support partnerships relevant to each agency's program areas, bringing issue-area expertise and coordinating closely with the Senior Advisor.
- **Freedman Consulting, LLC** serves as the external partnerships coordinator and liaison between the state and the philanthropic sector. It is funded by philanthropy to provide the coordination, strategic advising, and engagement support necessary for partnership development in close collaboration with the Senior Advisor and agency partnership liaisons.
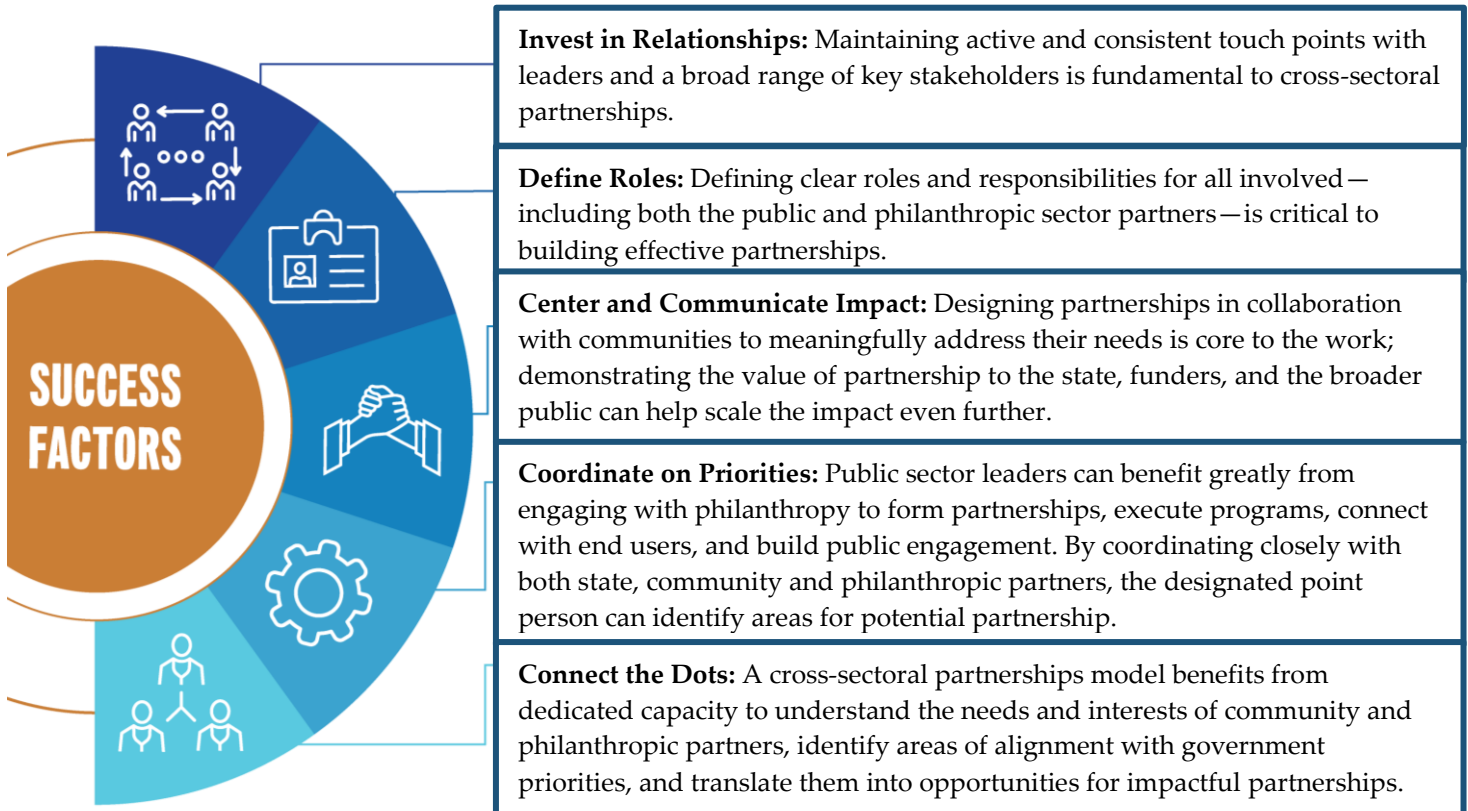
Impact

This partnership model has enabled sustainable, ongoing collaboration between the state and philanthropy, and has helped break down engagement and trust barriers that allows both sectors to respond to community needs more effectively. It has advanced progress on a wide range of important issues, including housing and homelessness, COVID-19 testing and vaccines,

59 public-private partnerships to date

27
California state
agencies and
departments engaged

$4.2 Billion
in philanthropic and corporate
contributions leveraging over
$13.48 billion in public dollars

200+
Philanthropic and
corporate partners and
1,647
community-based
organizations engaged

workforce development, re-entry support for formerly incarcerated people, and more. Impact to-date includes:

- 430,000+ low-income Californians connected to benefits such as food, healthcare, cash and rental assistance, and earned income tax credit.
- 69,300+ Californians received workforce training.
- 6,000 affordable housing units created.
- 250,000 California students received devices or hotspots to enable distance learning.

Success Factors

Through five years of partnership development, we have identified and honed a set of best practices that have enabled the success of this model. These success factors speak to the collaboration that is at the core of partnership development in California.

Invest in Relationships: Maintaining active and consistent touch points with leaders and a broad range of key stakeholders is fundamental to cross-sectoral partnerships.

Define Roles: Defining clear roles and responsibilities for all involved—including both the public and philanthropic sector partners—is critical to building effective partnerships.

Center and Communicate Impact: Designing partnerships in collaboration with communities to meaningfully address their needs is core to the work; demonstrating the value of partnership to the state, funders, and the broader public can help scale the impact even further.

Coordinate on Priorities: Public sector leaders can benefit greatly from engaging with philanthropy to form partnerships, execute programs, connect with end users, and build public engagement. By coordinating closely with both state, community and philanthropic partners, the designated point person can identify areas for potential partnership.

Connect the Dots: A cross-sectoral partnerships model benefits from dedicated capacity to understand the needs and interests of community and philanthropic partners, identify areas of alignment with government priorities, and translate them into opportunities for impactful partnerships.

Ways for Philanthropy to Engage

There are numerous ways for philanthropy to partner with the government and fill critical gaps to optimize the impact of larger programs and better serve community needs.

Philanthropy can supplement government efforts or serve as a collaborative partner in shared initiatives, as well as plug in where the public sector needs support in piloting innovative solutions or developing proof points. In addition, philanthropy can support capacity-building and provide expertise to conduct strategic planning related to long-term state investments, innovate to achieve systems change, and analyze regional needs.
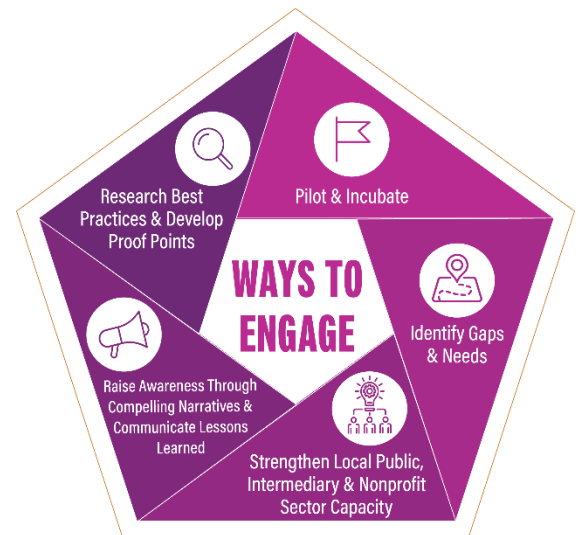
Guiding Strategies for Effective Partnership Development and Implementation

Freedman Consulting, in close coordination with California's Senior Advisor on Social Innovation, has identified and implemented six overarching strategies that have helped drive the success of 59 partnerships. These strategies represent actions, approaches, and mechanisms that help ensure successful development and implementation of partnerships.

Secure early wins; drive long term impact. Develop impactful low-hanging-fruit partnerships that engage key partners early on, especially within new policy priorities. This will build excitement and momentum for further engagement and put partnership muscles to practice.

Partnership Example: Many of the COVID-19 response partnerships, such as public awareness campaigns and community testing site set ups, were developed quickly and efficiently because partners were aligned on goals and desired impact. The partnerships model enabled the coordination that brought ideas and resources together, which in turn built strong relationships that supported future, more complex, partnerships.

Facilitate cross-sector working groups. Create ongoing engagements for leaders from across sectors to roll up their sleeves and align, ideate, co-design, and launch partnerships within specific policy areas. This can build trust across sectors and encourage peer coordination that benefits communities.

Partnership Example: In October 2020, the State of California Jobs and the Economy Philanthropy CEO Working Group was launched in an effort to bring together cross-sectoral partners to ideate, build, and launch partnerships that supported California's workforce development efforts. The High Road Training Fund, a key partnership, was created through the working group with support from member organizations. To date, the fund has supported training of over 1,000 workers with over $4 million in pooled philanthropic investment.

Engage trusted community intermediaries. Engage intermediary partners, such as community foundations and CBOs, who elevate community voice and can act as trusted messengers, fiscal sponsors, and help validate public-private partnerships early on to ensure community needs are front and center.

Partnership Example: Together Toward Health, a philanthropically supported initiative administered by Public Health Institute (PHI), coordinated closely with state government to support a 22% uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations during the pandemic. PHI is a trusted intermediary to a vast network of small and medium sized community-based organizations and was able to quickly mobilize resources from philanthropy, disseminate information about vaccines in coordination with the state, and inform the state about vaccine equity gaps within communities.

Work toward sustainability. Build strategic and coordinated relationships with staff in multiple levels of government and philanthropy. This will build sustainability in the model through a culture of partnerships beyond any one leader. Think: *"partnership is not a thing we do, it's how we do things."*

Partnership Example: In September 2022 a pro-bono team of Google.org fellows and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) launched Planscape, a critical climate preparation tool that allows state and private forest managers to plan landscape-scale projects in a way that improves wildfire safety. This partnership was initiated and led by the CNRA Agency Partnerships Liaison, who maintained a strong relationship with Google.org through which new potential partnership opportunities have emerged within the agency.

Steward partnership implementation. Convene the key set of stakeholders driving a specific partnership on a regular basis to keep track of impact, needs, and challenges. Iterate and adjust each partnership's approach as needed to ensure that the partnership is fully resourced and as impactful as possible.

Partnership Example: The California Dignity for Families Fund was launched in May 2021 in partnership with Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) to strengthen CBO infrastructure at California's southern border. Freedman Consulting and the Senior Advisor held monthly partnership coordination meetings with GCIR, state staff, and partnership funders to ensure the partnership was fully resourced and supported through implementation. Later that year, thanks to a coordination structure that enabled swift mobilization of stakeholders, the fund was able to quickly pivot and secure additional resources to support the surge of Afghan refugees arriving in California.

Leverage investments to center equity. Build partnerships that leverage private funds to maximize or unlock public funds for communities. Partnerships that enable access to equity tools such as technical assistance, capacity building, and matching funds are critical to ensure equitable access to public funds, especially in this moment as communities hope to draw down historic

Partnership Example: The Homekey 2.0 fund was launched in partnership with Enterprise Community Partners to provide technical assistance to applicants competing for state Homekey funds from mainly rural and tribal regions. The technical support provided to communities through this partnership increased geographic equity in the distribution of a historic $12 billion state investment, enabling 6,000 affordable housing units to come online for communities that might have otherwise missed out on the opportunity to benefit from these funds.