



THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

American Cities

PROGRAM

We seek to expand opportunity by promoting effective and inclusive community development practice in American cities.

More than 80 percent of Americans – and more than 80 percent of Americans with low incomes – live in metropolitan areas. This puts American cities on the frontline of our nation’s most pressing challenges: Whether we can promote equality and expand opportunity. Whether we can close the widening gap between rich and poor. And whether we can drive lasting and shared prosperity.

Fortunately, American cities have much to offer to meet the challenges at hand. It is in cities that we find the critical mass of people, ideas, energy and institutions necessary to bring about positive change. America’s urban centers have the potential to become accelerators of opportunity for people with low incomes, providing residents with access to jobs, education, housing, human-serving systems, city services and quality public spaces.

Kresge’s American Cities Program is committed to supporting this transformation. To do so, we leverage not only the expertise and financial resources of the American Cities Program but also the breadth of the foundation’s five national grantmaking programs and the depth of the foundation’s experience built from our work in Detroit. We emphasize on-the-ground practice and focus on catalyzing meaningful improvement in communities to advance opportunity for people with low incomes.

We invest through these focus areas:

Knowledge exchange

We develop and fund research, thought leadership and convenings that have the potential to improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of place-based community development practice in cities. We seek to promote the transfer of ideas across urban practitioners including philanthropy, business, community organizations, municipal government and cross-sector partnerships. This work includes:

- Funding research on how community development practitioners can work effectively in place;
- Capturing, sharing and facilitating exchange of best practices and new ideas for working in cities and neighborhoods; and
- Bringing practitioners who work in cities together to share ideas and develop networks.

Surfacing, seeding and scaling new and/or effective approaches to community development

We support multi-city community development initiatives aimed at piloting, testing and scaling effective and inclusive urban practice. For example, we’ve both seeded and scaled the Boston Federal Reserve Bank’s Working Cities Challenge, which encourages the use of collaborative and creative approaches to strengthen low-income communities.



We also support community development organizations of national scale that work in cities (e.g., Living Cities and The Local Initiatives Support Corporation, known as LISC).

Place-based work in Memphis and New Orleans

We steward the foundation’s city-centered grant-making in Memphis and New Orleans, including community development grantmaking inspired by our work in Detroit. This broad array of grants ranges from knowledge sharing to investment in shared, public assets to neighborhood renewal efforts.

KEY INITIATIVES

Drawing on Detroit

If revitalization, recalibration and re-ignition can occur in Detroit, what lessons might the Detroit experience carry for other cities? And, might some components of this kind of recovery be useful in other places across America? To answer these questions, the American Cities Program’s Drawing on Detroit Initiative supports convenings, thought capital and academic research and publications to uncover important lessons the city of Detroit can lend to other cities facing difficult municipal challenges.

Reimagining the Civic Commons

Alongside three other national foundations, Kresge’s American Cities Program supports Reimagining the Civic Commons, a \$40 million national initiative that seeks to counter economic and social fragmentation in our cities by revitalizing and connecting public places such as parks, plazas, trails and libraries to bring together people from different backgrounds. This grantmaking support projects that revitalize and connect civic assets in Akron, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and Memphis.

Place-based work in Memphis and New Orleans

The American Cities Program leads Kresge’s efforts to spur equitable community development in Memphis and New Orleans, two cities that the Foundation has prioritized for its city-centered grantmaking. This broad array of grants – from knowledge sharing to investment in shared, public assets to neighborhood renewal efforts – is at the forefront of Kresge’s national place-based community development work.

Shared Prosperity Partnership

The Shared Prosperity Partnership—a collaboration of the Kresge Foundation, the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, the Urban Institute, and Living Cities—seeks to support and accelerate local efforts to create a more inclusive economy by adding resources and connecting local leadership with national practitioners and researchers. By promoting inventive and actionable ideas, the Partnership aims to strengthen existing efforts and inform urban policy and practice, ultimately increasing economic mobility and decreasing disparities across races, ethnicities, and genders.

To learn more about the American Cities Program, visit kresge.org/programs/american-cities.



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