

Executive Summary

Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit

ROUNDS 1-3: 2015–2017

APRIL 2021



Photo: Michigan Environmental Council

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
PROGRAM EVALUATION GROUP
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit (KIP:D) began in 2014 as a way for The Kresge Foundation (Kresge) to invest in neighborhood-based organizations throughout the city. In 2019, the Program Evaluation Group (PEG) at the University of Michigan School of Social Work partnered with Kresge to conduct an evaluation of the first three rounds of KIP:D projects, which took place from 2015–2017.

Through a variety of participatory data collection methods, staff from PEG gathered insights from 45 people connected to KIP:D projects in order to learn about the impact projects had on residents' quality of life; effective strategies for ensuring inclusive engagement; whether and how projects were catalytic; and the ways in which Kresge could further support the initiative. This report summarizes the findings.

PART 1: THE STORY OF KIP:D

In the first three rounds of KIP:D, Kresge awarded over \$5 million to 40 unique organizational partners through 19 planning grants and 37 implementation grants.

The Nature of Project Implementation

KIP:D organizational partners worked with residents to imagine and implement projects related to reclaiming and renovating community spaces. Organizational partners discussed three primary challenges in this work: navigating city bureaucracy; racism and sexism; and limited organizational capacity. Leveraging partnerships with residents, community leaders

and grassroots organizations helped organizations mitigate these barriers.

The Process of Community Engagement

Insights from organizational partners and residents reveal communication tension points, such as navigating visions that differ between residents or between residents and a funder, as well as lessons learned around the need for extensive, continuous and direct community engagement. Our findings also show the importance of three key engagement strategies: building trust; prioritizing relationships; and starting from assets.

PART 2: THE RESULTS OF THE KIP:D INITIATIVE

KIP:D Projects Improved Residents' Quality of Life and Fostered Community Cohesion and Ownership

KIP:D projects improved residents' quality of life by creating new assets, fostering a greater sense of safety and increasing community vibrancy.



Photo: Ebony Reddock

Residents and organizational partners often felt their communities were more cohesive after a project was implemented. As KIP:D projects created space for residents to see their neighborhood visions come to fruition, they helped nurture a sense of community ownership over projects and the neighborhood more broadly.

KIP:D Projects Built Organizational Capacity and Point to Broader Community Impacts

KIP:D projects increased organizational partners' ability to serve residents both in the short term, through the immediate impact of the projects, and long term, through increased organizational capacity and stability as well as the ability to advocate for system change. Our findings reveal early examples of ways project impacts can ripple out to communities more broadly, such as organizations having greater power in policy decisions.

PART 3: THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF KIP:D PROJECTS

There Are Barriers to Both Project-Level Sustainability and Community-Level Sustainability

Some organizational partners were reaching project-level sustainability by securing community buy-in and stable funding while others were struggling with the need for ongoing support and maintenance. However, our findings point to multiple barriers to scaling up development projects to meet the community's needs, including the need for more capital, greater cross-sector collaboration and strategies to mitigate the harmful impacts of gentrification.

Organizations' Responses to the Crises of 2020 Showed Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice uprisings of 2020 highlighted the critical role that community-based organizations play in times of crisis and change in helping to ensure that the physical, informational and emotional needs of residents are met. In stepping up to serve in these roles, organizations showed their resiliency.

PART 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KRESGE

Continue to Nurture a Culture of Authentic Engagement

The ways in which Kresge staff are embedded in Detroit helps to ensure that funding decisions reflect community priorities. Furthermore, the emphasis that Kresge places on engagement and racial equity encourages organizational partners to emphasize these values in their work.

Help Organizations Navigate City Bureaucracy and Provide Access to Technical Assistance

While Kresge has significantly increased opportunities for technical assistance since the first three rounds of KIP:D, our findings indicate that further opportunities to connect organizational partners to the expertise they need could be developed, such as pairing organizations in mentorship relationships.

Strategically Connect KIP:D and Kresge's Operating Support Initiatives

Our findings point to a natural synergy occurring between KIP:D organizational partners and the Detroit 21, a group of Kresge-supported community development organization leaders. Linking these initiatives together in a broader theory of change may have greater impact on strengthening the community development system in the city.

Continue to Fund Projects that Add Value to the Neighborhood and, at the Same Time, Think Regionally

Many organizational partners were eager for more collaboration within regions of the city that can ensure new KIP:D projects build on existing projects and help organizations move collectively toward the infrastructure and policy changes needed for long-term sustainability.

Photo: Michigan Environmental Council



CONCLUSION

In its first three rounds, KIP:D set a foundation for equitable community development that invited neighborhood residents to articulate their visions for community spaces and provided the resources to make those visions reality. Our findings show that both the process and result of implementing these neighborhood visions have been

impactful in the lives of residents and in the work of organizational partners. By creating opportunities for residents to increase feelings of connectedness and organizations to access new resources, KIP:D is building capacity for neighborhood change block by block, cumulatively paving the way for equitable development across the city in lasting and powerful ways.

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A comprehensive evaluation of the **Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit** is available on
The Kresge Foundation's website: kresge.org/resource/kipd-evaluation

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