



# INDYEAST ECONOMIC MOBILITY DISTRICT

Capacity Building Report



Prepared by Community Solutions, Inc.

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Through the support of a planning grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc., Community Solutions, Inc. was engaged to perform organizational assessments and develop capacity-building plans for housing-related non-profit organizations serving the IndyEast Economic Mobility District. Non-profit organizations that had been actively operating affordable housing development programs within the district over the previous five years were invited to participate at no cost to the organization.

Seven organizations in the IndyEast Economic Mobility District participated in a process to identify the capacity-building needs most essential to their long-term success. Each organization was paired with an individual coach throughout the process.

The seven participating organizations included: **Edna Martin Community Center, Englewood Community Development Corporation, Home Repairs For Good, John Boner Neighborhood Center, Martindale-Brightwood Community Development Corporation, Near East Area Renewal, and Shepherd Community Center.**

Through a shared assessment process, each organization determined which investments would have the most significant impact on its ability to serve the community. In addition to the summary below, each organization was provided with an individualized capacity building plan to inform its decision-making. The collective result, summarized here, is a diverse portfolio of capacity-building projects that are organization-specific and collaborative at the economic mobility district level, requiring over \$1,900,000 in investment over the next three years.

The array of projects focuses on building the infrastructure, systems, and culture that will enable these community-based organizations to thrive for years to come, allowing them to concentrate on delivering a more profound, more sustainable impact.

Each participating community organization addresses complex social challenges. Yet, they often lack the resources to build the internal strength needed to enhance their work and support their staff. By allowing the organizations themselves to define their capacity-building priorities, this approach ensures that funding aligns with real, pressing needs rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

The projects represent a rare opportunity to invest not only in programs, but in the core capacities that make programs possible—from staff retention and leadership culture to data systems that support the ability to demonstrate impact. These investments enable organizations to become stronger stewards of resources and more effective change agents in the community.

## Summary of Priorities Across Organizations

When asked to describe their priority capacity-building needs that would most strengthen their impact, the seven organizations identified the following priorities:

- **Technology and Evaluation Systems (7 projects):** Investments in integrated data systems, dashboards, and evaluation frameworks to demonstrate outcomes and drive decision-making.
- **Operational & Business Planning (9 projects):** Addressing board development, staffing systems, communications strategies, and group health insurance—critical supports that strengthen organizational foundations and/or ensure long-term stability and accountability.
- **Program Expansion (3 projects):** Efforts to test, design, and launch new services that respond to emerging community needs.
- **Organizational Culture and Retention (3 projects):** Initiatives to build staff engagement, alignment, and resilience.

## Capacity Building Priorities: Leadership, Networking, and Collaboration

In addition to organizational-specific capacity needs, organizations were also asked about activities across the entire community in which collaboration and shared experiences occur. In response, organizations voiced common themes about what would strengthen their work and increase their long-term impact at a community network level. They were asked specifically about three interconnected areas of capacity building: leadership coaching, peer networking, and collaborative partnerships. A summary of their responses outlines a picture of organizations that are committed to growth, but also clear-eyed about the need to be an authentic and committed partner.

### Leadership Coaching: Building Confidence and Skills

There is a strong interest in leadership coaching at all levels, particularly for emerging leaders and program managers stepping into supervisory roles. Many of these individuals are highly skilled in their areas of service delivery but have had little formal training in people management. While some have participated in online workshops, leaders expressed a desire for deeper, more personalized coaching that could guide them through the day-to-day realities of building and leading effective teams.

One suggested approach that emerged is pairing leadership development with tools like strengths assessments, then offering hands-on coaching that translates assessment results into practical strategies. This type of investment would help managers not only understand their own leadership style but also learn how to create cohesive, motivated teams. By

equipping mid-level staff with these skills, organizations can both improve current operations and strengthen their leadership and career pipeline for the future.

### **Peer Networking: Creating Space for Shared Learning**

Peer networking opportunities are unevenly distributed across roles. Executives and external-facing staff often have access to convenings and collaborative networks, but many other staff do not. Property managers, finance professionals, case managers, youth workers, and financial coaches often have limited outlets to connect with peers in similar positions at other organizations. This lack of connection can leave staff feeling isolated and without access to the collective problem-solving and idea-sharing that is so valuable in nonprofit work.

Respondents emphasized the transformative potential of creating spaces where peers from different organizations can gather, share challenges, and exchange solutions. Leaders of small- to mid-sized nonprofits noted that these opportunities provide not only practical strategies but also a sense of solidarity and encouragement. For staff on the front lines, peer networking could foster innovation, reduce burnout and turnover, and create stronger professional communities across the city.

### **Collaboration: Expanding and Deepening Partnerships**

Collaboration emerged as a defining strength and an ongoing priority. Organizations described their current partnerships as diverse, encompassing collaborations with affordable housing providers, community-based agencies, and faith-based networks. Many view these relationships as crucial to addressing the diverse needs of the community.

There is also an eagerness to expand current collaborations –particularly in areas such as workforce development and affordable housing. With a more intentional strategy for joint efforts, organizations will be better positioned to secure the necessary funding and resources.

Respondents noted that by building stronger partnerships, they can share resources, coordinate services, and collectively advocate for systemic change. In this way, collaboration is not just an operational strategy but also a core value that shapes how these organizations approach their missions.

### **A Unified Vision for Growth**

Together, these perspectives illustrate a sector that is both reflective and forward-looking.

- **Leadership coaching** can prepare the next generation of managers and executives for success.
- **Peer networking** can break down silos and build communities of practice.
- **Collaboration** can magnify impact and create pathways for more coordinated, sustainable change.

For funders and partners, these priorities present clear opportunities to invest in efforts that will have a ripple effect across organizations and communities. Strengthening leaders, fostering peer exchange, and deepening collaboration can help ensure that nonprofits are equipped not only to meet immediate needs but also to drive long-term, systemic progress.

## Recommendations

Based on the organizational assessment and capacity planning process, the following capacity-building approaches and activities implementation proposal:

- **Organization-specific projects** identified by each partner entity to address unique needs and priorities.
- **Collaboration projects** within the economic mobility district, involving all organizations or a subset of organizations to support collective impact.
- **Leadership development strategies** focused on targeting emerging leaders across all partner organizations to strengthen future capacity.

### Organization Specific Capacity Building

The chart below summarizes the organization-specific capacity-building projects that the six organizations prioritized as a result of the capacity-building assessment process. There are eighteen projects, ranging from program-related initiatives to operations and technological improvements, totaling \$1,022,500. The estimated costs are based on actual quotes obtained by organizations and projected costs derived from current market costs for similar projects.

Table 1. Organization-Specific Capacity Building

| Category Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Number of Projects | Total Estimated Cost |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Program Expansion &amp; Innovation:</b> Seed new program design and testing that responds to emerging community needs.                                                                                                                                                                           | 3                  | \$55,000             |
| <b>Organizational Culture &amp; Retention:</b> Implement initiatives that improve staff engagement, resilience, and workplace culture, with a focus on reducing burnout and turnover.                                                                                                               | 3                  | \$135,000            |
| <b>Operational &amp; Business Planning:</b> Invest in board development, communications strategies, and staffing systems that ensure long-term organizational stability. Support shared or group health insurance initiatives that can help retain staff and improve organizational sustainability. | 9                  | \$320,500            |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |           |                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| <b>Technology and Evaluation Systems:</b> Design and implement integrated data systems, dashboards, and evaluation frameworks that help organizations measure outcomes, demonstrate impact, and strengthen competitiveness for future funding. | 7         | \$512,000          |
| <b>Estimated Total Cost</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>22</b> | <b>\$1,022,500</b> |

### Collective Collaboration Capacity Building

This category of capacity building focuses on economic district-wide collaborations, engaging all partners or a subset of partner entities that share common interests. The activities outlined in Table 2 below emerged through the capacity-building assessment or through discussions between the organizations and their coaches. In many instances, organizations expressed interest in collaboration but lacked clarity on how to proceed or which partner might align with their goals. Included below are recommended facilitation activities designed to build these connections and guide next steps.

In addition, creating and supporting structured peer networks for roles that currently lack opportunities for cross-organizational connection, such as property managers, finance staff, case managers, and youth workers, was a highlighted need. Support for regular convenings, workshops, or communities of practice emerged from the assessment process as a key strategy to reduce staff isolation, spark innovation, and encourage collaboration across organizations at all levels.

Table 2. Collaboration Capacity Building

| Category Description                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Convene meetings to determine the interests and priorities of community-wide collaborative efforts.                                 |
| Invest in joint initiatives across organizations, such as an affordable housing strategy or shared workforce development pipelines. |
| Provide resources for cross-sector convening and planning that strengthen the ecosystem rather than isolating organizations.        |
| Support collaborative pilots that can later be scaled if proven effective.                                                          |
| Potential shared back-office services facilitation/discussion                                                                       |
| Create and Support Peer Networks (facilitation over two years)                                                                      |
| <b>Estimated Total Cost: \$370,000</b>                                                                                              |

### Leadership Development Capacity Building

Throughout the assessment process, a consistent concern emerged: the need to prepare for the next generation of organizational leaders. Some organizations anticipate the retirement

of long-term leaders and are eager to ensure that their next-level staff are equipped and ready to step into leadership roles. Other organizations want to focus on reducing turnover and creating meaningful career paths within their organization to retain talent. Ideas such as coaching for emerging and mid-level leaders, particularly those new to staff supervision, were frequently mentioned. Additionally, pairing coaching with tools like Gallup Strengths Finder, DISC, or similar assessments was also mentioned as a practical strategy for building effective teams.

*Table 3. Leadership Development Capacity Building*

| Category Description                                                                  | Total Estimated Cost |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Leadership development for emerging leaders (facilitation and coaching)               | \$120,000            |
| Training scholarships for emerging leaders (\$20,000 per organization over two years) | \$140,000            |
| Organizational Coaching (\$37,000 per organization for two years)                     | \$259,000            |
| <b>Estimated Total Cost</b>                                                           | <b>\$519,000</b>     |

### Investment Recap and Timeline

Below is a snapshot of the total investment in all capacity-building activities previously described.

- Organization-Specific Capacity Building \$1,022,500
- Collective Collaboration Capacity Building \$ 370,000
- Leadership Development Capacity Building \$ 519,000

**Capacity-Building Grand Total \$1,911,500**

Projects could begin in the first quarter of 2026 and extend through 2028, with shorter initiatives focused on immediate improvements and longer efforts dedicated to complex system change. The staggered timelines ensure a balance between quick wins and sustainable, long-term growth.

By investing in this collective effort, funders have a clear opportunity to help fulfill more than \$1,900,000 in identified and targeted capacity-building needs. The return: more resilient organizations scaling their impact, sustaining their work, and adapting to the evolving needs of the communities they serve. This is not just an investment in projects – it is an investment in people. It is an investment in the future of community leadership, long-term stability, and collective resilience.