



## SIF CLASSIC GRANTEE PERSPECTIVE

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Sinead Keegan, Director of the Social Innovation Fund – Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City

### Our Programs

The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) is the unit of the mayor’s office that coordinates the city’s antipoverty agenda and pilots and evaluates innovative and evidence-based programs. The Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City is the non-profit, grantmaking arm of city government that leverages outside funds in support of city priorities.

The Mayor’s Fund, in partnership with CEO, was an inaugural SIF grantee in 2010. With that award we partnered with 30 funders and seven cities to build evidence for five promising program models that build economic opportunity. The programs offer youth development, employment services, and asset development supports. It is evident that we are thrilled to be a SIF grantee because we went back for more. We are now working on our second SIF award for a new project that is currently underway.

### The SIF Endorsement

We have found that winning a SIF award is sort of like getting a blue ribbon endorsement or a formal gold star for your work. It opens doors and provides a platform for you to elevate your work. Our overarching goal is to strengthen evidence to increase federal investment in strong models. The SIF provided a platform for us to do this work, and facilitated our relationships with federal agencies. We had previously developed relationships but the SIF helped put us on the map with other federal agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Labor, for example. The Office of Management and Budget has also been a great partner to us as we try to move our work forward.

The SIF has also helped these programs leverage funds and grow locally, which we consider a real win too. Our subgrantees across cities often have establish and develop relationships with funders, which helps them sustain their programs and expand into other programs in their communities.

### Improving Programs and Strengthening Impact

Our 2015 grant is helping us to go deeper on an issue that is a priority for New York City – mental health access – and was a clear need identified by the subgrantees from our 2010 grant. Many of the participants in the programs we fund have unmet mental health needs but they have trusting relationships with the program staff. Our new SIF grant is working on an initiative called Connections 2 Care which trains community-based organizations staff in basic, non-clinical mental health treatment to provide service to their program participants. The overall goal is to improve participant mental health and programmatic outcomes. For example, an employment program implementing this model would be expected to improve participant employment by addressing their mental health needs.

### The Power of Technical Assistance and Shared Learnings

Through our SIF program we are able to partner with social research and technical assistance firms including MDRC, RAND Corporation, and the NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty, Policy, and Research. They are evaluating the programs – including random control trials for three of the six program models – and they provide technical assistance to support the subgrantees in a range of areas.

We have found that we have had to invest a lot of hours in technical assistance and grant management support to the subgrantees – both around program implementation but also around financial management. Our portfolio of SIF subgrantees has included organizations new to federal funds, for example. We have been able to provide technical assistance to get them up to speed on the federal requirements, and SIF requirements. Doing so has helped us increase subgrantee capacity even beyond SIF funds.

Lastly, another great component of SIF is the learning network. On both grants, we are supported to provide opportunities for partners in our projects to learn from each other, and to share lessons with wider community, like city government partners. For example, as evaluation are coming out now on our 2010 projects we are able to share those lessons with city government partners to inform city policies and practices. Our SIF funded projects have provided a lot of insight as our city works towards revamping its workforce development programs.