

# SIF OVERVIEW WEBINAR #1 – GRANTEE PERSPECTIVE

January 29, 2015

*Summary of Discussion by*

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## Capital Impact Partners

**Capital Impact Partners** is a Community Development Financial institution (CDFI) that delivers strategic financing, incubates social innovation programs and supports capacity building and policy reforms that create social change and deliver financial impact nationwide.

**The Cornerstone Partnership** is part of our capacity building work, formed in 2010 as a peer network to support housing practitioners who seek to create strong, inclusive communities with decent, affordable places to live and thrive.

## Our SIF Project

We received our SIF award in 2011 to build capacity and scale in the field of shared equity homeownership. We are in the **Economic Opportunity** issue area: our evaluation is looking to test our hypotheses about the benefits that shared equity homeownership programs offer to low income families, such as access to quality schools and the ability to build assets and transition to market rate homeownership. Our SIF program is **national** in scale, with nine subgrantees across the country implementing similar program models participating in a single, multi-site evaluation.

## Why the SIF?

We had completed an evaluation study the year before we applied, and realized how time consuming it was for the 7 then-participating programs to gather and contribute the data necessary to build the evidence base for this type of affordable homeownership program. The evaluation was promising, but it was clear that **more research was needed**. We felt that applying to SIF provided an opportunity for us to provide capacity building funding and technical assistance to promising programs, who could then simultaneously participate in a larger, more comprehensive evaluation. Additionally, we had another goal as a peer network to document best practices and share them with

practitioners across the country, even further supporting the field, and SIF allowed us to pursue our evaluation and scaling goals at once.

## Progress So Far

We are currently finishing our 3rd year of our SIF subgrantees' work. We initially made 10 subgrants; however, one of our subgrantees exited our portfolio after the first two years of the program, so we currently have 9 subgrantees across the country. Our subgrantees have added **over 1,000 additional stewarded homeownership units** to their portfolios, moved into new geographies, and through our technical assistance interventions developed practices, policies and procedures that are models for others in the field.

Because we are working in homeownership, the impacts on purchasers are measured in years, not months. Our initial evaluation plan provided for just over one year of enrolling participants in the evaluation program, however we found that we needed just over two years to meet our minimum threshold for our quasi-experimental design.

We are planning to release our baseline evaluation report next month, which will describe the subgrantees' program models and the clients enrolled in the study. It also provides some general policy and practical recommendations that should be helpful for the field until our final evaluation results come out in late 2016.

## Determining your Fit with the SIF

- 1. Carefully considering both your and your potential subgrantees' capacity and patience for federal grants compliance.** While the SIF is incredibly flexible and innovative – both the funding and the match funding must all follow federal regulations. This means that setting up systems and clear expectations is essential – especially if you are working with partners who you've worked with in the past under non-federal programs.
- 2. Match funding is another important consideration – having a funder (or funders) ready to make a multi-year Match commitment is extremely helpful.** Beyond considering your own ability to raise Match funds, you should carefully consider your potential subgrantees' likely sources of matching funds. Additionally, five years is a long commitment from a single funder, and there have been some challenges where both intermediaries and subgrantees have to manage potential conflicts – you don't want to be competing with your

subgrantees, so it's important to have a sense of a variety of potential Match funders for both yourself as an intermediary and for your likely subgrantees.

3. **Ensure your commitment and your subgrantees' commitment to the evaluation portion of the SIF.**
  - a. We've had some challenges where subgrantees saw funding as operating funds, and have had to readjust their staffing and resource allocation in order to meet their evaluation contributions.
  - b. The multi-year evaluations often require significant staffing and resources at the intermediary and subgrantee levels. The earlier you invest in this capacity and emphasize this, the smoother the evaluation process will be.
  - c. No matter how much you think you've prepared for it, things will change in the time between creating your proposal and evaluation plans and actually conducting the evaluation, so your flexibility and investment is essential for it to be successful.