

Social Innovation Fund National Assessment



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** ★★ ★

A Transformative Program for Bringing Evidence-Based Solutions to the Country's Most Pressing Challenges

The goal of the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) is to bring evidence-based solutions to the country's most pressing challenges. The SIF seeks to transform the organizations that are funded under the program and the larger world of nonprofit grantmakers. According to an independent and rigorous study commissioned by the Corporation for National and Community Service and conducted by ICF International, the answer to the question, "Is SIF a transformative program?" is, "Yes."

The SIF National Assessment study defined 14 areas of capacity and practice across different components of the SIF such as: SIF grantees' adoption of evidence-based grantmaking strategies, ability and willingness to build the evidence base for the service models they support, ability to support and scale the service models, and use of collaborative approaches to address local community needs. The study found promising evidence of improved organizational capacities among the SIF grantees in almost all of these areas. These partner organizations changed more and faster compared to other grantmakers and programs while SIF grantees reported that the SIF program was instrumental in bringing about these changes.

The SIF Program's Organizational Reach and Engagement

- To date, the SIF has partnered with 35 grantmaking organizations under its SIF Classic grant program.
- The SIF Classic grantees have partnered with 300-400 nonprofit implementing organizations.
- More than 178 grantee match partners and 338 subgrantee match partners have committed resources to the interventions supported under the SIF.

Key to the SIF changes are a combination of:

- **Financial investment** – federal funds and matching funds
- **Accountability** – clear requirements and intensive ongoing monitoring of progress, and
- **Training, technical assistance and other "hands on" support** – from the SIF program staff and CNCS researchers and their evaluation contractor; peer support among the SIF grantees; and support from the SIF grantees to the organizations they fund to carry out the SIF program.

The SIF National Assessment found that compared to a national sample of grantmaking nonprofits:

- **Evaluation:** The SIF grantees reported more growth in three key areas including 1) conducting rigorous evaluations of the programs; 2) using evaluation findings to improve programs; and 3) using evaluation findings to demonstrate and communicate effectiveness of programs funded by the organization.
- **Support for subgrantees:** The SIF grantees reported greater changes in the extent to which the organization provided funding to support evaluations and provided their subgrantees with training or technical assistance to conduct rigorous evaluation.
- **Scale-up:** The SIF grantees reported greater changes in the extent to which the organization selected programs for scale-up based on rigorous evaluation that shows them to be effective.
- **Collaboration:** SIF grantees participated in more funding alliances and collaborations with other nonprofits in order to share knowledge.

Finding What Works, Making It Work for More People

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States. The SIF was founded on the fundamental idea that we can make enormous progress toward overcoming significant challenges by finding and growing the most promising of these solutions.

The SIF works with and through existing grantmaking institutions, or “intermediaries,” to direct resources to nonprofit organizations and state and local government entities, or “subgrantees,” focused on youth development, economic opportunity, and healthy futures – helping to build the capacity of the social sector and lift-up solutions that can transform lives and communities.

Social Innovation Fund Programs

The **SIF Classic** program awards grants to eligible grantmaking institutions or partnerships to select, fund, support, and evaluate community-based nonprofits seeking to grow innovative, evidence-based solutions to challenges facing low-income communities nationwide.

The **SIF Pay for Success (PFS)** program awards eligible nonprofit organizations and state and local governments prepared to engage in PFS projects that advance and evaluate new models of funding high-quality, effective social interventions to produce measurable outcomes for individuals and communities.

Social Innovation Fund Grantees

Social Innovation Fund intermediaries are selected through a rigorous, open competition and are required to match their federal grants dollar-for-dollar. With those combined funds, they then take part in all or a part of the following activities:

- Host open competitions to select organizations and/or government entities implementing or seeking to implement innovative program models;
- Invest in expanding the capabilities and impact of the organizations and government entities they select;
- Support those organizations through rigorous evaluation of their programs and
- Share data, lessons learned and results.

