



FROM PROGRAM TO CULTURE:
Promoting Positive Family
Interactions Demonstration Grant



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YEAR 2
EVALUATION

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A FEW WORDS FROM POISE FOUNDATION



Since the launch of the Promoting Positive Family Interactions (PPFI) Demonstration Grant in 2013, one important focus of the project has been reporting our findings annually to community stakeholders.

We're excited to share this Year 2 Evaluation Report with you. It outlines the positive outcomes in that year for participating families—as well as for our grantee organizations, and the Foundation itself.

In year two, families reported that Promoting Positive Family Interaction (PPFI) activities continued to be valuable—and, in many cases, became cherished opportunities for

connecting. Our grantee partners continued to develop ways to institutionalize family-centered practice in their organizations. And POISE recognized areas where it needed to build capacity in order to further advance family-centered practice.

The continued success of the PPFI Demonstration Grant further validates the importance of our commitment to Black families and our investment in their success. We hope this report encourages you to consider incorporating a family-centered approach in your own organization or grantmaking portfolio.



KARRIS JACKSON

Vice President of Programs

THE INAUGURAL CHAPTER

In July 2014, as a part of its broader Strengthening Black Families grantmaking strategy ¹, the POISE Foundation funded four nonprofit organizations through its Promoting Positive Family Interactions (PPFI) Demonstration Grant ².

In the first year of funding, PPFI grantees worked with 50 families, which included 65 adults and 99 children. They implemented projects that offered an array of family-centered activities, including multi-family psychoeducational

groups, multi-family outings, family retreats, and individual sessions with families. Much of this work—across organizations—focused on increasing the number of interactions between family members that were intentional and healthy (e.g. compassionate, affectionate, playful, assertive, authentic, supportive, etc.). Families were also given tools for increasing the amount and quality of time they spent together, both at home and in their communities.

Through PPFI-supported activities, families and family members were given opportunities to:

- set family goals
- develop new problem-solving, coping, and relationship skills
- learn and play together
- create a sense of shared identity through mission statements and other collaborative projects
- support each other—and other families



PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

By the end of year one, family members found great value in project participation, no matter what organization they worked with. Participants reported that the PPFi-sponsored program they were part of provided opportunities for family members to reconnect with one another; to renew their shared identity as a family unit; and to strengthen their sense of togetherness. They also appreciated the time to simply catch up with one another—a rarity in the day-to-day functioning of these otherwise busy families.

PPFi program participants also reported that they gained new knowledge and skills for improving their relationships, and were able to apply the lessons learned in their daily lives. Furthermore, they were able to see that they were not alone. They found value in being able to support and help other families along the way. Traditionally isolated family members connected with one another, while traditionally isolated families connected with other families.

In year one, family participants:

- **Reconnected** with one another
- **Gained** new knowledge and skills for improving relationships
- **Received** and **offered** support within a community of families

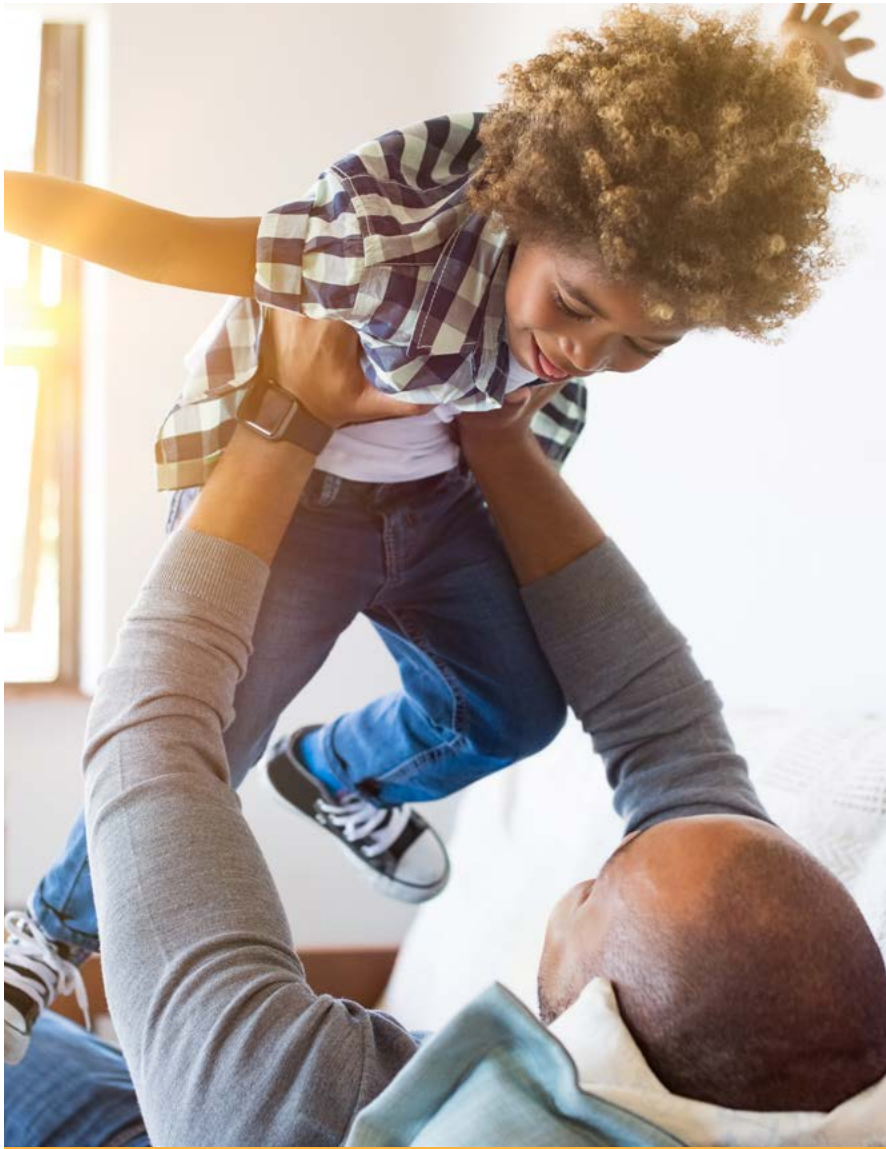
THE BACKSTORY

The evaluation³ of project activities during the first year of funding revealed favorable participant experiences. It also revealed an emerging backstory of the Foundation's and its grantees' movement toward a family-focused approach. This backstory supported a paradigm shift in families' experience as they participated in PPFi programs.

At the heart of this backstory was the importance of intentionality. Over the first two years (i.e., during the grant proposal process and the first year of funding), POISE and its grantees engaged in a deliberative process that moved all of the organizations toward family-centered practice.

In year one, grantee organizations:

- **Shifted** some of their longstanding beliefs and perspectives about families
- **Built** more authentic and valuable relationships with families
- **Reframed** core issues using a family-centered approach
- **Integrated** families and family life into community spaces
- **Sponsored** family-centered programming



Through this process⁴, the Foundation built its capacity—and helped grantee organizations build their own greater capacities⁵—for applying a family-centered approach to their work. As a result, grantees, began to:

- shift the longstanding perspectives and beliefs they held about family engagement (e.g., that parents are not interested in participating in activities; that parents are the problem; and that it's too hard to work with families or parents)
- build more authentic and valuable relationships with multiple family members, as well as with each family as a unit
- reframe core issues—and grantees' core competency areas—around a family focus (e.g., approach parental incarceration as a family and community issue, not just a parenting issue)
- integrate families and family life into community spaces
- sponsor activities that were more inclusive of families—and that better met families' needs

POISE and PPFI grantees also committed to learn and grow together⁶ to better support the healthy development and functioning of Black families in Pittsburgh.

GROWING PAINS

While the Foundation and each grantee organization grew their knowledge of family-centered practice, during year one this growth did not come without some growing pains. For example, the traditional Request for Proposal (RFP) protocol morphed into an eight-month-long sequence of events that led to several additional steps in the review process. These included an additional Q&A session with potential grantees, to help them better understand the aim of the demonstration grant; in-person interviews with potential grantees during the review process; and coaching sessions for selected grantees, which created greater alignment between their proposed programs and the goals of the entire PPFi initiative. These extra steps took more of POISE's money and staff time than anticipated.

Grantee organizations also had to commit some of their own staff time to engage in this deliberative planning process. As a result, one of the selected organizations, which simply did not have the capacity for this level of engagement, opted out of the demonstration grant. This changed the number of PPFi grantees from five to four. While these four successfully completed the coaching process, they still faced challenges in implementing their programs.

For each grantee, when its program met the realities of family life, each organization was pushed to adjust. For example, one organization had to test new recruitment methods, because its traditional methods, which had been successful for recruiting individuals, did not work well for recruiting families. The organization also discovered that promoting positive family interactions with younger couples who had been together for only a short time, and/or who had not made a significant commitment to one another, could lead to couples breaking up. (As people developed healthier relationship skills, those skills actually encouraged some of them to leave the relationships.)

When programming met the realities of family, each organization was pushed to adjust.

At least two other grantees discovered, midway through their grants, that they lacked the organizational capacity to properly support their PPFi programs, and the families in them. In one case, participating families wanted to continue beyond the eight weeks of sessions planned and designed by the organization. As a result, the organization chose to move from a time-limited approach to a continuing-group format. In another example, participating parents and young people pressed for more parent-child interactions. In each case, the sponsoring organization provided the additional programming, but had to invest additional staff time to make it happen.

Building the capacity to move to a more family-centered approach was the most salient organizational theme in year one. Engagement with family members was often intensive. Orientating participating families to this new approach—and building relationships with them—were critical. Some of these organizations focused on serving youth; in these cases, the addition of adult family members was a new experience for parents, children, and staff.

In addition, many of the participating families had been isolated from other families in the communities. These families, and their individual members, had to become comfortable with engaging with other families in more intimate ways.

The relatively small number of participating families allowed for some flexibility, and for careful attention to be paid to relationships within and among families. An important question emerged, however: if these family-centered

programs were to be scaled up, would the organizations have the capacity to fully serve all participants and provide all the relevant programming?

Grantees also faced capacity challenges as they tried to institute organization-driven evaluation methods. Even though they had PPFi-specific evaluation protocols ready to use, organizations struggled to find ways to integrate family assessments into their work in ways that seemed natural and did not disrupt relationships. This was made more difficult by the fact that many African Americans are understandably leery of being the subjects of research and evaluation. All of this, alongside the required shifts in thinking and practice, proved to be too much for some organizations. As a result, some grantees did not do a good job with the pre- and post-project assessment of families' functioning.

Overall, year one was critical in establishing the central importance of family—and the promise and possibilities of a family-centered approach—in the thinking of all grantee organizations. In year two, some organizations focused on maintaining the momentum of their work with families, while others focused on institutionalizing what they had developed and learned during the inaugural year. All of the grantees also worked—and, at times, struggled—to ground their work in a family-centered approach.

Building the capacity to move to a more family-centered approach was the most salient organizational theme in year one.

CAPTURING THE NEXT CHAPTER

This report highlights the next chapter in this story. In line with the principles of developmental evaluation⁷, it captures the evolution of PPFI programs as they progressed from their inceptions through the end of year two—i.e., through the innovation, testing, and critical reflection phases (see Figure 1). It also connects the salient organizational and participant themes that emerged in year two to the critical reflection, insights, lessons learned, and themes

that emerged in the previous year. In addition, it highlights the real-time learnings that bubbled up over the course of the year, and the ensuing real-time programmatic and organizational shifts that resulted. Lastly, it weaves together the interrelated narratives of the Foundation, grantees, participants, and the evaluator-participant⁸ as a way to capture the complex and dynamic context of this work (see Figure 2).

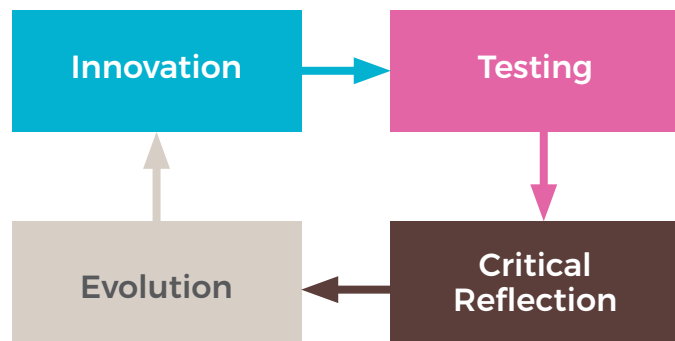


Figure 1: Phases of Innovation

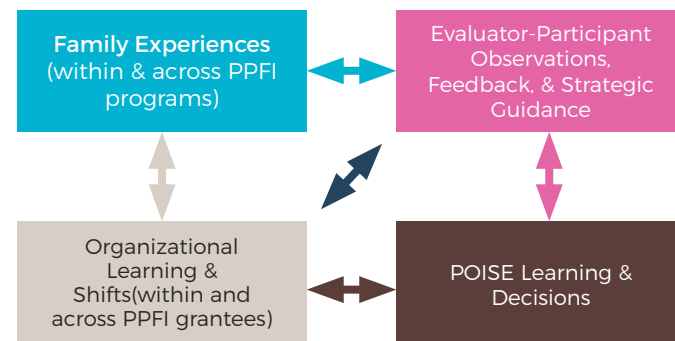


Figure 2: Dynamic Context of PPFI Relationships



SAMPLE

The findings in this report are based on the perspectives of at least three staff members from each of the four PPFI (N=12) grantee organizations; the perspectives of two Foundation staff members (N=2); and the perspectives of at least 54⁹ families across all the PPFI programs. This last set of perspectives included those of:

- individual family members (through focus groups and interviews)
- multiple family members (e.g., a parent and a child or a parent and a grandparent) responding together in focus groups and/or interviews
- the evaluator-participant, who closely observed many family interactions

There were three focus groups. The experiences of at least five different families (N=5) are represented in one of the focus groups; the perspectives of nine families are represented in the remaining two (N=9¹⁰). At least 12 families in each of two PPFI-sponsored activities were observed by the evaluator-participant (N=24).

Twenty-four parent participants—across all four organizations—expressed interest in completing individual interviews with the evaluator; however, only 16 interviews (N=16) were actually completed during the specified timeframe, across three organizations. All of the interviews were conducted with people who participated in a PPFi program on a regular basis.

While the responses of parents make up the bulk of the interview data (which include the results of the Family Functioning Style Survey), the perspectives of children were also captured in two organizations' programs via focus group and/or the evaluator-participant's observations.



METHODS

In year two, multiple sources of data (see Table 1) were used to better understand the development of the PPFi programs and the associated themes. As in year one, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, and emerging themes were used to inform future stages of project development, as well as the evaluation process itself.

ONGOING DATA COLLECTION

As in year one, the evaluator-participant actively engaged the Foundation and PPFi grantees in a deliberative process of data-based reflection and decision making. This process involved participant feedback, staff feedback, and observation. There were multiple consultations and strategic planning sessions, both within and across organizations (e.g., a cohort session). The Foundation and grantee organizations shared key documents that informed—or, in some cases, emerged from their work with the evaluator-participant. The evaluator-participant also maintained process notes that highlighted emergent themes within and across organizations.

Evaluation Data Collection Methods				
		Evaluator-Participant	Organization	Evaluator-Participant and Organizations
Ongoing Data Collection	Document Review	Session handouts; year 2 action plans; planning documents; evaluation data; end-of-session focus group; survey data		
	Planning Sessions			Participation in individual sessions (4-5 sessions per organization) and a cohort planning session; 5 team-based interviews in year 2, including 1 with POISE
	Process Recordings	Process notes of themes emerging within and across organizations		
Time-Specific Data Collection	Focus Groups	2 parent focus groups (N=9; N=5) with two PPFI programs; 1 youth focus group (N=7) with one PPFI program	1 organization-sponsored set of 3 parent focus groups (N=8; N=9; N=7)	
	Interviews	Parent interviews with a sample of participants across projects (N=16)		
	Evaluator-Participant Observations	2 multi-family group observations; 1 full-day family retreat observation; process observations		
	Surveys	Family Functioning Scale Survey, with a sample of participants across projects (N=16)	End-of-session surveys; Family Functioning Scale Survey	

Table 1: Data Collection Methods

TIME-SPECIFIC DATA COLLECTION



FOCUS GROUPS

In year two there were three participant focus groups, all conducted by the evaluator-participant. These included one parent and one youth focus group for one of the organizations (Organization A) and a parent focus group for the other (Organization B). Organization B also hosted three additional focus groups to better understand the practice and advocacy needs of the families served.

Changes in project design made it difficult to conduct participant focus groups with the remaining two organizations. In one case (Organization C), due to recruitment challenges, the organization did not conduct any PPF program sessions during the year. In the other (Organization D), at the time of evaluation, conducting a focus group would have been premature, in terms of both data collection and relationship building with participants. Planning a focus group later in the year also proved unworkable because of multiple group, program, and organizational changes.

EVALUATOR-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

In lieu of a focus group for Organization D, on three occasions the evaluator-participant served as an observer in multi-family psychoeducational groups. In addition, the evaluator-participant was an observer in an all-day family retreat for Organization A.

INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

As in year one, each of the PPFI grantees was instructed to administer the Family Functioning Style Survey ¹¹ as a pre-test and post-test. However, also as in year one, three of the organizations encountered difficulties. As noted earlier, one organization had no program participants in year two. Another had a late start due to funding delays; this pushed out the overall programming schedule, making it difficult to administer the scale in a meaningful way.

A third organization had trouble naturally integrating the survey into its program and processes. In this case, the evaluator-participant worked with program staff to use the tool both for evaluation purposes and as a way for families to track their changes over time. Despite these efforts, the organization stayed much more focused on simply doing (rather than doing and evaluating) the work, and was concerned that its participants would not want to be seen as research subjects. There were also staff and project design changes in this organization during year two.

The fourth organization, however, was able to administer a modified version of the survey as a part of its intake process, as well as in follow-up assessments at six-month intervals. Analysis of the data collected through this organization was done by an outside evaluation team. The report from that team was not available for review at the time this document

was created.

Because of these failures to administer the Family Functioning Scale Survey, as well as the need to check themes that emerged in participant focus groups against individual family experiences, POISE conducted one-to-one interviews with a small sample of parent participants. Given the ad hoc nature of the interviews—and the fact that most parents were busy watching over their children—these were conducted over the phone.

Parents in programs across all four organizations were invited to be interviewed. Each interviewee was given a gift card to compensate them for their time. During these interviews, parents were given the opportunity to:

- share their lived experiences as participants in PPFI programs
- discuss the ways in which participation benefited their families
- reflect on the sponsoring organization's shift to a more family-centered approach, and what that meant for them and their family
- explore ways they would like their family to be more involved in the future

As part of these interviews, the Family Functioning Scale Survey was administered. Parents were asked to respond based on two time points: 1) retrospectively, before participation in the PPFI program, and 2) in the present, following their participation. Including the Family Functioning survey in these interviews not only enabled the collection of quantitative data, but it also allowed the evaluator to learn how this survey (or a similar survey) might best be used in the future.



ANALYSIS

Qualitative data (focus group discussions, interview responses, the evaluator-participants' notes, etc.) were reviewed and coded for themes. Responses to the Family Functioning Style Scale were scored. Frequencies were tabulated based on changes reported from before their participation in the PPFI programs to after participation. Some data analysis occurred alongside data collection. Data were triangulated as a way to identify and check the most salient themes across data sources. The repeated themes are captured in this report.

PPFI PROGRAMS, PARTICIPANTS, AND EXPERIENCES

The next chapter in the PPFI Demonstration Project was marked by project and participant shifts. Many of these changes were parts of the natural cycle of evolution described earlier.

Interestingly, despite the shifts in project design and implementation, the emerging themes from family experiences remained constant throughout years one and two. This was true both for those who participated in a PPFI program only during year one and those who participated in both years. Below is a summary of key observations and themes.

PPFI PROGRAMS

POISE funded the four initial grantee organizations¹² for a second year. While the organizations remained the same, there were marked changes in their work during year two. Some of these emerged as a result of insights and lessons learned during year one, while others emerged naturally—and often of necessity—during the second year.

First, let us look at the elements that remained the same across projects and years. On some level, each PPFI grantee continued to bring together a community of families as part of its work. In each session, within each program and organization, families engaged in psychoeducational and relationship-based workshops, as well as in more everyday family time activities (e.g., family meals, games, collaborative art projects, family outings, and family retreats).

YEAR TWO AT A GLANCE

PPFI	Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Black Families (Amachi Pittsburgh) • Family Matters (Center that C.A.R.E.S.) • Family Matters (Melting Pot Ministries) • Teen Mom, Young Dads Program (University of Pittsburgh Department of Family Medicine)
	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73 families • 91 adults: 84% females (e.g. mothers, 4 grandmothers); 16% males (fathers and stepfathers) • 130 children
	Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family art sessions (painting, family collage) • Family art gallery (family collage showcase, family-time event) • Individual family sessions (one organization only) • Multi-family community outings and events (amusement parks, sports activities, festivals, and a holiday party) • Multi-family psychoeducational sessions • Multi-family community conversations (both in-person and live-streamed) • Retreats (a family retreat; youth retreats with parents included)
	Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy and leadership • Attachment • Boundaries • Family communication • Family goal setting • Family roles • Family games • Financial literacy • Healthy family functioning • Healthy relationships • Navigating tragedy and triumph • Promoting and supporting healthy youth behavior • Social issues affecting families (incarceration, racism, poverty, community violence, neighborhood relationships, bullying) • Stress and coping

Table 2: PPFI: Year Two at a Glance

	Number of Families and Individuals Participating in the PFI Program	Key Project Activities	Program Focus
Amachi Pittsburgh: Strengthening Black Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 families • 19 adult family members • 35 child family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly multi-family sessions • Multi-family outings and recreational events • Quarterly Healthy Youth retreat (parents included) • Participation in Strong African American Families (S.A.A.F.) Program¹³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting and supporting healthy youth behavior in families • Healthy family relationships • Social issues impacting the family (e.g., causes of incarceration; racism) • Stress and coping • Financial literacy • Advocacy and leadership
Center that C.A.R.E.S.: Family Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 families • 15 family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly multi-family group sessions • Live-streamed multi-family community conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family roles • Navigating trauma and triumph • Family goal setting • Family communication • Attachment • Family boundaries • Social issues Impacting the family (e.g., neighborhood violence)
Melting Pot Ministries: Family Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47 families • 57 adult family members • 95 child family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 family retreat • 3 family art sessions • 1 family art gallery/ family night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family identity • Family communication • Family-time games • Healthy relationships
University of Pittsburgh Department of Family Medicine: Teen Mom, Young Dads Program	<p>The primary focus of this project in year two was on strengthening the organization's ability to recruit young couples into the program. New recruitment methods included the use of social media and bus ads. In addition, the project developed partnerships with community agencies that had existing relationships with the target population, and linked this program with another Department of Family Medicine program that works with a similar population.</p>		

Table 3: Year Two: PFI Programs at a Glance by Sponsoring Organization



All of the grantees experienced shifts in project design during year two. Most of these shifts were the result of one or more of these factors:

- **Experiences of participants.** At least three of the organizations revised their projects based on family members' desire for more family-centered activities, more family interaction, and/or the involvement of additional (especially male) family members.

- **Organizational reflection.** As organizations gained new insights, all of them sought to make their work more family-centered.

- **Increased organizational capacity.** At least three of the organizations built greater staff capacity to carry out the work. Two hired an additional staff member to focus on family-centered programming. Another deliberately expanded its capacity using existing staff time and resources. In at least two cases, as organizations understood what it would take to adopt and sustain a family-centered approach, they evaluated whether they had the sufficient capacity to do it well. These considerations led to important internal conversations.

- **Shifts in organizational culture.** In at least two cases, organizations institutionalized their family-focused work, creating greater alignment between their PPFI programs and some of their other programming and practices.

Here are some instructive examples of the influence of these factors, one from each grantee organization:

- 1** Organization A, which had previously offered separate youth and parent activities, changed its approach to one that integrated parents and youth into shared activities. (These all involved the arts and culture—e.g., family painting, family collage, family gallery showings, etc.) This shift resulted from both parents and youth asking for more family interaction, and the value they found in “being and doing family” together in year one. While this new approach was initially designed as small-group activities, one for each stage of child development, the activities ultimately morphed into larger sessions, with more people and children of a wide range of ages, that met over a shorter period of time.
- 2** Organization B changed its approach from one that was staff-led to one that empowered parents and trained them to serve as co-facilitators. This shift was part of the program’s initial design, but it was not realized until year two. In part, this was by design; in part, the shift also reflected the project’s natural development (e.g., over time, parents wanted to take on a greater leadership role in program sessions). However, from early on, parents shared the organization’s vision for a family-led approach. For example, during year one, participants expressed a desire to become actively involved in the recruitment of new families, as well as to advocate for families with an incarcerated parent.

Parent participants repeated this desire for greater leadership in the mid-year focus group during year two. In fact, it was clear that, without an evolving approach, family members would outgrow and leave the project. In response, the program and its participants moved to a co-facilitated, parent-led approach. This involved adapting a model being used in a different family-focused program run by the same organization.

- 3** Organization C shifted its approach from one that, from the beginning, simultaneously engaged both members of a couple to one that focused on couples’ relationships, but worked with each partner separately, based on each person’s readiness. Recruiting both partners from the beginning proved to be an ongoing challenge. Each time a new couple was about to begin the program, either the couple would drop out, or one of its members—usually a man—would. The organization decided to maintain a family focus, but, when appropriate, begin by working with just the one interested partner. Staff believed that this approach could lead to a positive shift in each relationship’s dynamics, and, in many cases, to eventually bringing the absent partner into the program.¹⁴



4 Organization D moved from a somewhat intimate program, with a small community of families working toward similar goals, to a much more forum-like approach, in which participants could raise family issues, offer updates, and express concerns to and about the community. Communication could be either in person or via a Facebook live stream. This program shift emerged—unintentionally and unexpectedly—out of a new partnership with a grassroots group that focused on building fathers’ engagement with their families.

This partnership increased the number of participants, especially men. It also created a more diverse group—and, because of Facebook Live, reached a wider audience. On the other hand, the merger posed some challenges. While new participants were comfortable with the new format, some families who had participated in the first year’s activities missed the intimacy, privacy, and depth of the earlier, smaller group sessions. Some of these people found the shift to this larger, more public format difficult. Others, however, preferred the larger group.

Another challenge was that new participants—fathers—entered the programs as individuals, not as part of family units. As a result, the use of many relationship tools changed. In the first year, participants practiced them with their families in small-group sessions. In the second year, participants were taught the tools, and then simply asked to begin practicing them at home. This shift raised questions—both at POISE and within Organization D—about whether the morphed program was adhering to a genuinely family-centered approach. The discussions that ensued resulted in program changes. To

maintain a strong sense of intimacy (which had been an important factor during year one) in this larger group, Organization D created smaller family cohorts within the large overall group. It also added small-group activities to each weekly session. In addition, project staff encouraged participants to bring more of their family members to the weekly sessions. This was an attempt to recapture elements of the program’s year one design. Ultimately, however, staff could not make these proposed changes work. Staff changes, limited organizational capacity, and differences in perspective all got in the way. One staff member had this to say about the merger of the two approaches and programs:



“I think they both could work. It’s a matter of trying to create a hybrid, and the hybrid, that was the struggle. If they were two separate programs, you have to appreciate the intimacy of the first and I think you can appreciate the reach of the second, but I don’t think they can exist in the same space where some people sign on for intimacy and other people are okay with the more public nature of it....I think they are two different models that were trying to be collapsed into one....This approach is about reach and this approach is about intimacy...can we support them both?”

PPFI PARTICIPANTS

In year one, 50 families and 164 family members (65 adults and 99 children) participated in PPFI activities. In year two, this number grew to 73 families and 221 family members (91 adults and 130 children). Of the 91 adults, 84% were women (mothers and four grandmothers); 16% were men (fathers and stepfathers). These increases resulted from:

- efforts to recruit more men—in particular, the partnership between one PPFI program and the father engagement project described earlier
- the recruitment of new participants who initially approached a grantee organization for other services (e.g., youth mentoring)
- greater recruitment of families whose children participated in activities for youth at these organizations (in some cases, children recruited adults from their families)

As in year one, a pre-existing relationship with the organization remained a critical factor for recruitment—and for active and consistent engagement in program activities.

Buy-in to any program was essential to consistent and active engagement. In general, there was a lot of buy-in. As one staff member observed:



The families really look forward to it; I think that is an accomplishment. It is not that we have to drag them kicking and screaming to participate. They are calling, asking, when is the next this, when is the next that? I mean, they are growing. Their kids are more involved; we are just seeing a lot of growth within the family.

Most family members who participated in year one continued their involvement in year two. Few dropped out, and those few generally did so because of external factors (e.g., a new and conflicting work schedule) rather than dissatisfaction with the program.



The families really look forward to it; I think that is an accomplishment... They are calling, asking, when is the next this, when is the next that? I mean, they are growing.

PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

Four themes that emerged in year one remained significant in year two as well. These were:

- Creating a place where people can be and do family

- Applying what is gained in the program in everyday life

- Establishing a sense of community for families

- Finding value in family-centered practice

CREATING A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN BE AND DO FAMILY

PPFI events remained valued and sacred places for family members to reconnect with one another. Family members looked forward to the opportunity to share, play, learn, and grow together during PPFI activities.

This was true for both new and second-year PPFI families, and it showed up across multiple data sets. These included family members' self-reporting during focus groups and interviews; observation by the evaluator-participant and project staff; session evaluations; and participants' responses on the Family Functioning Style Survey, particularly those connected to the "interactional patterns" subscale. Of those participants who were interviewed, 100% mentioned the sense of togetherness they felt during PPFI activities. They appreciated the opportunity to come together, spend time together as a family, and have family members' attention be on one another.

Participants gave similar responses in focus groups conducted earlier in the year. For example, a mother and daughter—who participated in two separate focus groups—independently mentioned how important the family-centered activities were to their relationship. Mom's work schedule was demanding, so they both recognized and valued the time they were able to spend together through the PPFI program.

Family members felt a sense of togetherness when engaged in PPFI activities.

Participants were particularly excited about the extended time they spent together at family retreats, which offered great opportunities for strengthening their relationships. In response to the retreat evaluation question What did you like most about the family retreat?, participants responded:

- Spending time with family.

- The togetherness as a family and watching the kids having fun.

- It was a good idea to bring families together.

Family members were particularly excited about extended time spent together at family retreats.

As in year one, family members continued to say that participation in the PPFi programs had an overall positive impact on family relationships. They cited these particulars: improved communication, increased family time, a greater sense of togetherness, improved coping, and improved family functioning. (Seventy-five percent of interviewees reported an improvement in the overall functioning of their families. Many cited this improvement as the impetus for their continued participation in a PPFi program.)

Perhaps most notably, 69% of the 16 participants interviewed by the evaluator-participant reported improvement in family interactions (see Table 4). The interaction subscale looks at a family's ability to spend time together; appreciate one another; communicate; problem solve; cope; agree on what is important; and be flexible.



		Increase in Score	Decrease in Score	No Change in Score
FFS Subscale	Interactional Patterns	68.75%	18.75%	12.5%
	Family Values	37.5%	12.5%	50%
	Coping Strategies	75%	6.25%	18.75%
	Family Commitment	12.5%	12.5%	75%
	Resource Mobilization	31.25%	6.25%	62.5%
	Overall Functioning	75%	18.75%	6.25%

N=16 parent participants

Table 4: Family Functioning Style Scale Results

On the down side, some family members in a PPFI program whose approach shifted from an intimate “family room” setting to a larger forum expressed a sense of loss. They yearned for the family intimacy they were able to achieve in the room during year one, which wasn’t part of the larger-group setting in year two. In this same project, even participants who valued the larger-scale format of year two expressed a tremendous sense of loss over no longer having weekly small-group sessions.¹⁵

Skills garnered through parent-child psycho-educational sessions provided a model for parents and youth to engage in difficult conversations at home.

TRANSLATING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS GAINED IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In interviews and focus groups, participants often made the connection between the knowledge and skills developed in program sessions and changes that family members made in their daily lives to enhance relationships and family functioning. For example, a conversational model that people learned in parent-child psychoeducational sessions helped both the adults and youth to engage in difficult conversations at home.

Participants also identified a number of ways that program sessions prepared them to handle parenting issues and better cope with challenging behaviors they faced with their children. This was evident from participant interviews, focus groups, and observations of multi-family psychoeducational sessions. Participants also said that PPFI activities helped both parents and children to navigate new developmental stages as the kids grew older.

In addition, family members consistently noted that the PPFI programs helped to improve family communication and increased the amount of time the family spent together outside the program sessions. (This response came not only from interviews and focus groups, but from responses on the Family Functioning Style Scale. Program staff also noted these changes in many families.) And, in fact, families were actively encouraged to spend more quality time together in a variety of configurations—as a family unit, in various parent-child pairs, and so on. One mother-daughter pair who participated in years one and two maintained a commitment they made in year one to have lunch together regularly. They also made a point to safeguard their family time.

Sessions prepared parents to address parenting issues and cope with challenging behaviors they were facing with their children.

Other outcomes reported by participants included:

- Families who participated in the savings initiative, and set savings goals, in year one maintained their savings accounts during year two.
- Some participants said that program activities taught them how to spend time together as a family, both at home and out in the community. The program also provided them with ideas for things to do together, as well as help with setting goals and planning activities.
- Several families discussed the importance of introducing or maintaining regular family fun nights as part of their normal routines.

ESTABLISHING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY FOR FAMILIES

Another theme reinforced in year two was the sense of community that family members felt. They also felt a sense of support and value, particularly in their ability to share with and contribute to the lives of others. Many participants mentioned the benefits of this mutual support and learning environment; so did project staff, who observed this mutual support in action.

This sense of community was particularly important for (and especially notable and noticeable among) those families that generally mistrusted people outside of the family unit and, as a result, had operated largely in isolation. While these families still remained generally guarded outside of project activities (as their responses on the Family Functioning Scale revealed), they did make

important connections in these projects, both within their families and with other families. They are becoming more comfortable with sharing their lives with project staff and other participants. As one staff member explained, “There’s a lot more honesty between parents and us; the walls of secrecy are coming down; the parents who attend the most tend to be much more open. We can be up front and talk.”

Traditionally isolated families felt a sense of value as they offered and received support in a community setting.



FINDING VALUE IN FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICE

Overwhelmingly, family members—especially parents—supported grantee organizations’ more family-centered approaches. This not only improved relationships within and among families, but it improved many families’ relationships with the organizations. Some adult participants worked more closely in partnership with staff. In general, parents were more willing and eager to be connected and involved—with their own families, with other families, and with the sponsoring organizations.

Overwhelmingly, family members—especially parents—supported grantee organizations’ more family-centered approach. This not only improved relationships within and among families, but it improved many families’ relationships with the organizations.

Not all feedback was positive, however. Some participants raised the following issues and concerns:

- scheduling difficulties (e.g., planning events sufficiently in advance and dealing with conflicting work schedules)
- clear communication regarding program activities (in particular, giving parents enough advance notice of future events)
- the need for the projects to continually evolve along with their participants

FROM PROGRAM TO CULTURE

In year one, as one staff member put it, “the organization was trying to settle on the mission, method, and format” of its family-centered work. In year two, however, each organization sought ways to institutionalize the work—and family-centered practice in general.

The need for this institutionalization became increasingly evident as organizations tried to expand their reach. To do this work right, they realized, they needed to build greater organizational capacity—and they needed more money. Each organization also needed to think beyond simply running a program.

As staff members of these organizations reflected on the past two years, they articulated their own shift in focus toward family-centered practice. They revealed that their work with families was no longer viewed or discussed simply within the context of a program, as it was in year one. Instead, it was discussed within the larger context of how their organizations worked with families.

For example, in one project, staff noted that they no longer thought in terms of operating three separate programs. Rather, they viewed these as three related, family-centered programs, with Program A focusing on family support, Program B focusing on relationship-building skills, and Program C providing an opportunity for parents and youth to discuss family-related topics within their own peer groups. Both staff and family members reported a seamless flow for families among these activities. During the focus group at another organization, participants explained that they did not see the programs as separate entities, but as options on a menu of family-centered activities.

During the focus group at one organization, participants did not see the programs as separate entities, but as options on a menu of family-centered activities.

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND BUY-IN

Staff at all four PPFI programs told the author of this report that they needed to take deliberate steps to instill a family-centered focus within the cultures of their organizations. Not surprisingly, they faced challenges in doing this. Two organizations hired staff specifically to work with families and coordinate family programming. In each case, the organization was able to leverage its POISE grant, make the case for family-centered practice with additional funders, and raise more money. A third organization allocated additional staff time—not paid for by POISE funds—in order to create the additional capacity the organization needed to adequately carry out the work. This reconfiguring turned out to create additional value for the organization by also supporting its more general efforts to provide high-quality programs.

Not surprisingly, organizations that were able to create buy-in at all levels—among their boards, leaders, and staff—had an easier time making the necessary changes. Although, in general, these changes followed a natural progression, it is notable that, over time, the pathways to change became more strategic and less reactive. More and more time was spent in advance thinking and planning, and less and less in response to immediate needs or

events. The more strategic an organization became, the more able it was to build capacity.

The family-centered approach also helped to create greater pride and ownership for the work within each grantee organization. This, in turn, encouraged strategic thinking around what pathways each organizations might follow to keep the work going. As one staff member observed:

“I think we have a good thing. There are a lot agencies that do family engagement work, but I like what we have....Because we are focused on a particular target population and demographic, it is nice to be able to offer everything that we do. I’d hate for that to go away... because we rely on money to keep it going....We are growing and engaging, and so I would like to see that continue, and to do even more.”

Interestingly, institutionalizing this family-centered work often involved contending with broader institutional factors. For example, a university-based program had to navigate university policies on providing incentives to participants, policies on making program changes, the requirements of its Institutional Review Board, and so on. Another, much smaller organization was in the middle of a sizable development project—and, at the same time, was running one project and growing another. That organization was forced to prioritize. Both of these situations raised questions about what kinds of organizational environments are best suited to institutionalizing family-centered work. For example, how much flexibility needs to already exist—or be created—in the culture? How much stability?

In the two cases noted above, the organizations were forced to ask themselves, Should we continue? Can we do this at this time? Despite

the challenges, one organization saw the work as sufficiently important to continue, found a new way to move forward, and recommitted itself to the work. The other recognized the limitations of its capacity and decided not to seek a third year of funding. However, it maintained its commitment to embed a family-centered approach in its existing services. It also plans to revisit the program it suspended—or create something similar—once the organization builds greater capacity and concludes other projects.

Institutionalization of a family-centered approach—for both the Foundation and its grantees— was more of a journey than a deliberate, clear-cut act. Sometimes it occurred in small steps, sometimes in big leaps.

Like its grantee organizations, POISE also had to revisit its original question: What does it take to do this work? While the Foundation's commitment remained strong and clear, it continued to wrestle with a related question: How do we approach this work? Indeed, even as the Foundation's staff observed the institutionalization of a family-centered approach in its grantee organizations, POISE went through its own process of institutionalizing that approach. POISE also recognized the need to grow its capacity alongside the capacities of its grantees. This raised questions regarding:

- what types of grants to award (e.g., for programming, for operations, or for both)
- the most effective timeline for funding (e.g., for how many years, and with what start and end dates)
- staff capacity and the long-term viability of each project, including the significant role the evaluator-participant has played¹⁶
- setting priorities and balancing each project or program with other work
- the Foundation's evolving relationship with each grantee (in particular, setting and managing the amount of each grantee's autonomy)
- funding, fundraising, and the sustainability of each program and organization
- integrating new grantees into a program (e.g., at what point should they be added, and should participants be added one at a time or as a cohort)

Institutionalization of a family-centered approach—for both the Foundation and its grantees—was more of a journey than a deliberate, clear-cut act. It involved some innovating, testing, critical reflecting, evolving, and grappling with concepts and processes. Sometimes there were more questions than answers. (That was often the case within POISE itself.) Sometimes institutionalization occurred in small steps, sometimes in big leaps. At times, it was highly intentional, strategic, and planned. At others, it was entirely unplanned; the work with families led the organization to make necessary changes.

CRITICAL REFLECTION: WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

The above question keeps innovation and continuous learning at the forefront of POISE's efforts—and the efforts of its grantees. It also suggests that there is something to be learned from every element of this work. Most importantly, it allows the work to evolve. Here are some current answers to the question:

1 POISE CONTINUES TO MEET THE PRIMARY AIMS OF THE PPF DEMONSTRATION GRANT.

The primary goals of this work have been to:

- shift the conceptual and practice paradigms of nonprofit organizations toward family-centered practice
- encourage and equip nonprofit organizations to strengthen Black families by uplifting, supporting, and leveraging the family as a core institution
- support programs that lead to improved family relationships (e.g., improved family communication, increased family time together, etc.) for Black families

As in year one, year two findings suggest that the Foundation's investments continue to drive Pittsburgh nonprofits toward each of those goals. By the end of year two, PPF grantees have moved from a programmatic focus to an institutional focus in their work with families. This shift has led—indeed, in most cases, forced—these organizations to wrestle with institutionalized principles, paradigms, policies, practices, and partnerships that previously limited their involvement with the family as a unit.

The result of this wrestling has been positive change—at some organizations, incremental changes; at others, significant leaps forward that involve new ways of being and thinking about their work. Some organizations are still wrestling with the issues. They have either begun thinking more strategically about families and family-centered practice or, in one case, put family-centered programming on hold until the organization can undertake it in a meaningful way.

These changes have not gone unrecognized by participants. They—particularly parents—overwhelmingly support this family-centered approach.



2

WHAT IS BEING TESTED AND LEARNED THROUGH THESE PROJECTS CONTINUES TO BE RELEVANT, AND CAN GUIDE THE FUTURE WORK OF PRACTITIONERS, FUNDERS, RESEARCHERS, AND EVALUATORS.

Below are the insights, learnings, and questions that emerged during this second year of work:

THE ROLE OF THE MULTI-FAMILY GROUP

The multi-family group continued to be an important aspect of the work for both participants and organizations. Family members desired, appreciated, and benefited from the mutual learning and support, especially as they worked through difficult issues or celebrated successes. It also empowered them to share their experiences in ways that could be helpful to other families.

For grantee organizations, the multi-family groups were a natural path forward, and an effective way to engage families and support healthy interactions in a community space. This proved quite important, because most of the organizations could not provide family therapy, family case management, or many of the other more traditional (and much more expensive) family support services. Furthermore, many of the participating families would likely have shied away from such services.

Thus, in these programs, it will be important to pay particular attention to the role of multi-family groups—including how to best design, include, and run them as programs scale up. Some projects had to contend with the issue of a larger number of participants in year two. Grantees have had to figure out how to replicate the intimacy of small multi-family groups for larger numbers of people.

A few possible approaches are being considered for testing during year three:

- Creating some small-group experiences within each larger group (as additions, not replacements).

- Creating some small group experiences for specific topics that might best be dealt with in more intimate settings (e.g., addiction or teen pregnancy).

- Identifying the primary needs of the participant families, and designing small and/or large-group activities around those specific needs (within the limits of capacity and funding).

It will of course be important to track lessons learned along the way.

SHIFTING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES AND BUILDING GREATER CAPACITY FOR FAMILY-CENTERED WORK

From the beginning of the PPFI initiative, POISE invested in a subject matter expert (i.e., a consultant) to help the Foundation frame, design, and implement its new grantmaking strategy. As the PPFI programs progressed, POISE shared what it learned with its grantees, and vice versa.

The year one evaluation report discussed the importance of embedding a subject matter expert/consultant/evaluator—referred to in this report as the evaluator-participant—into this learning process. That report also discussed the importance of providing the necessary coaching to help organizations shift to more family-centered program designs. These investments appear to have paid off. In year two, half as many coaching sessions were required, because grantees were finding their footing with this new focus. More notably, by the end of year two, the organizations were overtly declaring the importance of family-centered approaches, and were looking at how to do more family-centered work—and how to do it better.

As grantees continue to do this work, it will be important to understand how this cultural shift took place in each organization; what steps each one took to encourage and support it; and what capacity issues emerged along the way. This will help the Foundation better determine what types of consultation, technical assistance, and funding (e.g. programmatic, general operating, or unrestricted) can best support each program, and move POISE toward its overall goals.

Of course, what is best is not always what is affordable. As we noted in the year one evaluation report, it may not be possible to provide an expert/consultant/evaluator over an extended period of time. As the work moves forward, it will be helpful to determine what types and amounts of support from such a professional are needed during each phase. It may also be helpful to look at whether the roles of expert/consultant and evaluator should be separated out and assigned to two professionals, or combined into the role of a single professional.

THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDATION IN INSTITUTIONALIZATION

As we noted in the year one evaluation report, the close funder-grantee partnerships proved invaluable for these projects. The ability of all grantees and POISE to share learnings and insights with one another in real time has been crucial. It has allowed both the Foundation and grantees to make ongoing changes and refinements based on lessons learned—and to share those lessons in influential ways.

However, this new way of working together also comes with some challenges. As grantees' staffs struggled to figure out how to do this family-centered work, they and POISE also had to figure out an appropriate role for the Foundation in supporting grantees' necessary organizational changes. While the closeness of the relationship provided a front-row seat for the Foundation, it also created a greater sense of vulnerability for grantee organizations.

Funders aren't usually privy to the messiness of actual program implementation or organizational change, because the number

of contacts they have with grantees are typically limited. Because there was greater visibility in these cases, the Foundation had to learn to often accept the messiness, wait and see, not intervene, and let things evolve. Each POISE staff member had to learn to understand, accept, and support the messiness of the process, and to see each outcome as a potential learning. This meant, among other things, managing their own discomfort with the messiness.

Going forward—not only with these PFFI programs, but with all projects in which there are close funder-grantee relationships—this messiness, staff members’ potential discomfort with it, and their need to manage that discomfort need to be honestly discussed. Funders and grantees need to develop authentic ways to talk about the realities of such an emerging and ever-changing relationship (e.g., the power differential, the degree of autonomy, etc.), and how they can successfully design, navigate, and manage them over time.

THERE IS STILL A NEED TO IMPROVE THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION

In year one, the Foundation learned the importance of triangulating data in this type of project in order to get a clearer picture of outcomes. It also realized the importance of incorporating evaluation questions into the ongoing work with families. With the collaboration of grantees, it came up with ways to do this well during year two.

In this second year, POISE continued to use—and benefit from—multiple data collection methods. However, even with plans in place for including evaluations as part of the work, it is still a challenge for grantees to actually do them. There appear to be

two issues here. First, grantees are still in the process of becoming family-centered; effectively instituting evaluative practices with families may simply tend to come later on this learning curve. Second, doing effective family-level assessments is challenging even for trained and experienced evaluators; it may be asking too much to expect novices in family assessments to conduct them well.

This was addressed in year two by having a professional evaluator-participant, paid for by POISE, do interviews and administer a survey with a sample of participants. This might be an effective way to deal with evaluations in year three.

This approach collected additional data on the family level. It also provided insights for the future process of evaluation itself.

During year three, it will be important to revisit the evaluation design; consider a variety of data collection methods (used separately and together); and think about what approaches will be most effective and sustainable over time. In year three, POISE and its grantees will also need to do some testing of evaluation approaches, in order to discover what works well and what doesn’t.



CONNECTIONS TO LARGER FIELDS

The implications of this work reach beyond one foundation and four grantees. This movement toward a family-centered approach aligns with trends in both the field of philanthropy and many social science fields—including social work, early childhood work, youth development, family education, and family therapy.

Much of the relevant work in these fields has focused on families who are labeled as poor, at risk, disadvantaged, or vulnerable. Most of the work also uses the experience of children as its focus. For example, an underlying principle for much of this work is that children do well when families do well, and that children are less at risk for negative outcomes when family issues are being adequately addressed. Thus, heavy emphasis has been placed on reducing risk factors, and on shoring up protective factors such as parental resilience, social connection, parenting skills, and mutual support.¹⁷

Programs that help support and strengthen families¹⁸ generally work with families to:

- enhance parenting skills

- foster the healthy development and well-being of individual family members and the family unit

- prevent child abuse and neglect

- connect families to helpful resources

- develop parent- and community-driven leadership

- engage fathers and other males

- support healthy relationships between partners

- promote families' economic success

Activities through these programs might include parenting classes and support groups; psychoeducation and skill development; family counseling; crisis intervention; leadership development; a variety of other family activities—either educational, fun, or both; and referrals to additional resources.

The PPFI Demonstration Grant adds to this larger discussion, and to the growing body of relevant research, in at least two ways. First, its focus, approach, activities, and emergent learnings are in line with what is increasingly being seen in the relevant fields as necessary or promising. Secondly, its work is adding something new. Instead of focusing on traditional provider-client relationships and traditional social service settings, in which professionals provide direct services to individuals, POISE's PPFI programs seek to shore up the family as a core social institution—in ways that are organic, community based, and indigenous. In addition, instead of focusing just on people who are disadvantaged, as traditional social services and programs have done, the PPFI programs focus on strengthening Black families, without regard for whether they meet some specific criterion for need or “disadvantagedness.” The work being done in all PPFI programs supports the essential elements for the healthy functioning of any family.

Moving beyond the traditional problem-saturated approach also expands the range of activities that PPFI programs can offer. This can make a huge positive difference for an organization with limited staff or other limited capacity. When PPFI grantees focused less on family problems and more on helping to meet essential needs for family health and well-being (e.g., connection, fun time together, relationship skills, etc.), they often found creative and effective ways to meet those needs. Often, simply providing an opportunity, a time, and a place for family members to be together made a big difference—and was greatly appreciated by the families.

The experience of these first two years raises some important—if not urgent—questions:

1. What does it mean to offer activities (in some cases, the very same activities) to families in a way that isn't presented or experienced as a treatment or an intervention?
2. What is the ideal role (and size) of multi-family groups?
3. In practice, what are the differences between a program-centered approach vs. an institutionalized approach—e.g., one in which focusing on families is not just a specified activity, but the foundation for all activity?

Focusing on families is not just a specified activity, but the foundation for all activity.

As this work moves forward, it will be important for POISE to establish a more deliberate and strategic connection to the work in the relevant broader fields. This will help it find answers to these questions. It will also help the Foundation explore how it can help move the larger culture beyond programmatic interventions to a world in which the family unit is naturally elevated, supported, and leveraged.



SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

POISE's investment in PPFI programs, and PPFI grantees' advancements in the area of family-centered practice, continue to prove promising.

As the project moves into a third year of funding, we are eager to see what emerges next. The flexibility, innovation, and close relationships between the Foundation and its grantees offer many opportunity to co-create new practices that will be helpful and meaningful to families.



CREDITS

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POISE FOUNDATION - VISION AND MISSION

We envision a Pittsburgh Region in which all members of the Black community are empowered and self-sufficient.

This vision is the core of the Foundation's philosophy and its approach to its work.

POISE's mission is:

To assist the Pittsburgh Region's Black community in achieving self-sustaining practices through strategic leadership, collective giving, grantmaking, and advocacy.



ABOUT POISE FOUNDATION

POISE Foundation began in December of 1980 as the first public foundation in the state of Pennsylvania organized and managed by African Americans. The purpose of the Foundation is to develop and enhance the participation of Black philanthropists in the economic and social development of the Black community. For 38 years, the Foundation has been supporting programs that add value to the quality of life of Black Pittsburgh and its surrounding regions; and has expanded its services to impact Black families and their communities across the US. This was the vision of our founder Bernard H. Jones, Sr., of an empowered community, able to take care of itself.

POISE Foundation employs collective giving to enable donors to realize their philanthropic goals, pooling resources to provide funding to worthy organizations and causes. Donors may give to the Foundation's general unrestricted endowment, where funds are pooled to make a greater impact on the Pittsburgh Region. Donors may also start their own individual endowment funds to support their specific charitable interests and organizations. As of December 2017, the Foundation manages 159 funds with a balance of over \$6,600,000.

Collective giving enables POISE to provide grants to programs and projects that primarily benefit the Black Community. The Foundation's grants are typically small, yet over its grantmaking history; POISE has impacted the Greater Pittsburgh Region and beyond with more than \$12,000,000 of direct financial support to organizations assisting our most underserved populations. The Foundation currently focuses its unrestricted endowed funds on programs and services that aim to Strengthen Black Families.

Notes

- 1. The Strengthening Black Families grantmaking strategy aims to re-assert Black families as a core institution in the redevelopment of Pittsburgh's Black community. This is done through community engagement (creating opportunities for community learning and dialogue around the Black family and Black family life); research and policy (promoting policies that positively impact the lives of Black families); thought leadership (influencing the policymakers, civic leaders, and practitioners regarding the value and efficacy of Black families); and local and national philanthropic partnerships (investing in programming that promotes positive family interactions).*
- 2. The Promoting Positive Family Interactions Demonstration Project was developed in response to families' expressed interest in increasing the quantity and quality of time that family members spend together in their homes and communities. It supports programs that work to improve family interactions and communication; increase family-time activities (e.g. family dinners, family nights, and family outings); encourage family civic engagement; and strengthen family resilience.*
- 3. Through the Lens of Family: Promoting Positive Family Interaction Demonstration Project—Year 1 Evaluation*
- 4. POISE staff worked with a subject matter expert to increase its knowledge and understanding of family-centered practice. This enabled POISE to reflect on and strategically develop its action plan for advancing its strategy—and to acquire and allocate the necessary resources.*
- 5. With the support of POISE, the subject matter expert provided coaching, consultation, and technical assistance to help grantee organizations build greater knowledge and skills in family-centered practice.*
- 6. POISE and PPFI grantees participated in conference calls and in-person collaborative learning sessions throughout the year. During these sessions, organizations provided updates, shared lessons learned, received consultation, learned about family-centered practice, and planned activities that engaged the broader community around Black families and Black family life.*
- 7. Developmental evaluation (DE) is the chosen method of evaluation for the PPFI Demonstration Grant. Developmental evaluation treats evaluation as a part of the work itself. Strategic questioning, learning, and action all happen simultaneously and in conjunction with the evaluator, who does not stand apart from the work. The evaluator is thus better described as the evaluator-participant. For a sample PPFI evaluation overview, see Appendix A in *Through the Lens of Family: Promoting Positive Family Interaction Demonstration Project—Year 1 Evaluation*. To learn more about DE and its use in general, see Michael Quinn Patton's book *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use* (The Guilford Press, 2010).*
- 8. The evaluator-participant is embedded within a developmental evaluation design. She works alongside other members of the program team as they conceptualize, design, and test new approaches. She also helps other team members critically reflect on their work by asking evaluative questions, and by gathering, sharing, evaluating, and applying real-time data to help inform decision making and program adaptations.*

- 9.** *About 10 families participated in more than one evaluation activity.*
- 10.** *One of the focus groups involved young participants; a second involved adult participants from the same family units.*
- 11.** *The Family Functioning Style Scale measures the unique strengths and abilities of families. It looks at 1) interactional patterns; 2) family values; 3) coping strategies; 4) family commitment; 5) resource mobilization; and 6) overall functioning based on the five subscales. Source: *Enabling and Empowering Families: Principles and Guidelines for Practice* by Carl Dunst, Carol Trivette, and Angela Deal (Brookline Books, 1999).*
- 12.** *Amachi Pittsburgh; Center that C.A.R.E.S; Melting Pot Ministries; and the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Family Medicine*
- 13.** *S.A.A.F. is a seven-week interactive educational program for African American parents and their early adolescent children. The program aims to reduce adolescent substance use, conduct problems, and sexual involvement. On a weekly basis, the parent and child meet separately with a trainer or counselor for skill-building. Each set of individual sessions is followed by a family session.*
- 15.** *A decision was made to discontinue this PPFI program at the end of the second year.*
- 16.** *The question of the evaluator-participant was very relevant in year two, because she took an extended leave of absence, during which she had limited contact with the work. This proved to be manageable, since both she and the Foundation had planned to be less involved in the day-to-day work of grantees during this second year. Had she taken an extended leave in year one, however, it would have posed a very significant challenge.*
- 17.** *See the Center for the Study of Social Policy's *Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework*, accessible at <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies>. One example of such approach is the Two-Generation Approach, which works to address the needs of both the parent and the child.*
- 18.** *National Family Support Network: *Family Support Programs*, accessible at www.nationalfamilysupportnetwork.org; *Strengthening Families: Community Strategies that Work*,*





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