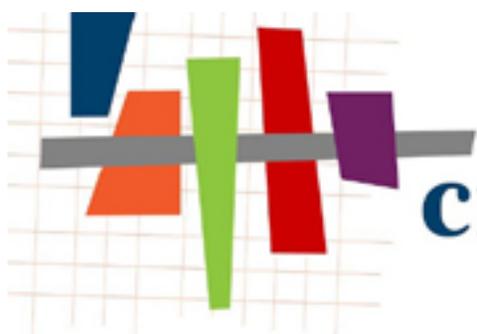


# Memphis Music Initiative & ELMA Philanthropies: *A Case Story*



**creative youth**

DEVELOPMENT

**This publication is part of a series of tools created to enable deeper connections between creative youth development program leaders and funders:**

- [Building Funding Pathways: A Strategy Towards Expanding Funding for the Creative Youth Development Field](#)
- [Mapping Skill to Will: Approaches to Funding Creative Youth Development in the United States](#)
- [BAYCAT & The Golden State Warriors: A Case Story](#)
- [Memphis Music Initiative & ELMA Philanthropies: A Case Story](#)
- [The San Diego Creative Youth Development Network & The Clare Rose Foundation: A Case Story](#)
- [YMCA Lighthouse Project & The Heinz Endowments: A Case Story](#)

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The National Creative Youth Development Partnership is a collaborative effort by youth and adult field leaders committed to the CYD values of Racial Equity & Social Justice, Youth Voice and Leadership, and Collective Action in and with the community.

[www.CreativeYouthDevelopment.org](http://www.CreativeYouthDevelopment.org)



Dedicated to the development of thriving communities and a more just world, Creative Generation works to inspire, connect, and amplify the work of young creatives who catalyze social transformation and those who are committed to cultivating their creative capabilities.

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## Introduction

In 2019, the Creative Youth Development (CYD) National Partnership engaged in a project to better understand the funding landscape of their field. To illustrate their findings, researchers connected with funders and CYD program leaders in four settings to better understand the dynamics of their partnerships.

The following is a case story showcasing a partnership between a large, national foundation and a local CYD program, demonstrating the high skill-high will traits of the funder. For a glossary of terms, please see the last page of this publication.

## Key Partners

As with most creative youth development initiatives, there is a complex web of individuals and organizations who collaborate to make it happen. For this case story, we will examine the relationship between the two key players:

- Elma Philanthropies
- The Memphis Music Initiative

## Big Takeaways

Through an examination of several examples across the country, numerous themes emerged to provide guidance to both funders and CYD leaders to enable strong partnerships. For this case story, the following themes are illuminated:

- Co-conspire rather than collaborate
- Invest in relationships – with people and communities – to renegotiate power dynamics

“

*Make the space for relationship building – relationships may not yield right away, but they are often worth it in the long-run. As a creative youth development leader, give yourself permissions to pursue a long-term cultivation process for beneficial partners: they probably just need to learn more and be brought along.*

”

## What's the Story?

When two colleagues met years before working together, they knew they had a penchant for collaboration. When it came time for that collaboration, the foundation program officer and founding executive director worked together to answer the question, “how do we best support leaders of color to transform their communities through music in the most underinvested communities in the country?” And, they did it through continuously engaging the community.

As a foundation, there were two problems to solve in order to fully realize the vision they have collaboratively began to craft: 1.) How do we work within the framework our foundation has established? And 2.) How do we – as a national funder – operate within the existing cultural and educational infrastructure of the city? For both, the team – funder and executive director – began on the ground. They met with leaders from the community to best

understand how things worked in the community. Their tactic was to always defer to the local community regarding context, relationships, and what good work was happening.

Next, the team reported up to the national foundation, who got it. Not only because of the city they chose to work in – Memphis, a small- to mid-size predominantly black Southern city – but because of the community-driven approach they took in their research. The foundation only had to slightly adapt what they already knew from other grant-making to best support this new initiative. For the foundation this was part of a larger strategy to include cities like Memphis, which might otherwise be overlooked by other national funders. They also recognized, that as a funder, they had access to other large, national funders to focus their attention, on a peer-to-peer level, on the good work happening through this collaboration.

Over time, the CYD program and funder became more strategic and aggressive in their approach. They took to understanding the systems within which they had to work and focused on breaking down problematic pieces (like systemic racism and socio-economic hierarchy) and building new systems (like the development of leaders of color) at the same time. As their work matured, they refined their infrastructure, and fine-tuned their approaches until the work was sustainable and leadership transition was able to occur.

“

*Ideally collaborations with business or industry partners can be multifaceted to include a donor relationship, client work, and that they can be a future employer of the youth in your program. It's like a Venn Diagram – you want to select partners that fit in the middle.*

”

## ***Glossary of Terms***

***Creative Youth Development*** — *A recent term for a longstanding theory of practice that integrates creative skill-building, inquiry, and expression with positive youth development principles, fueling young people's imaginations and building critical learning and life skills.*

***High Skill/High Will (Field Builders)*** — *This category of funders actively funds and supports CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs and identifies as part of the CYD landscape of their community or funding region.*

***Low Skill/High Will (Potential Stars)*** — *This category of funders actively funds or seeks to fund CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs, but struggles with aligning those investments to existing strategic priorities.*

***High Skill/Low Will (Reluctant Allies)*** — *This category of funder actively funds and supports CYD and CYD-adjacent organizations and programs, but does not see themselves as part of the CYD ecosystem.*

***Low Skill/Low Will (Potential Stars)*** — *This category of funders does not currently fund CYD organizations or programs nor is currently knowledgeable about CYD as a field of practice. They do, however, demonstrate potential based on their strategic funding priorities.*

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