



# the collaboration prize

## 2009 finalists



the **collaboration** prize

# About the Collaboration Prize

The Collaboration Prize is designed to inspire cooperation among nonprofit organizations. Recognizing the efficiencies gained from working together, the Prize shines a spotlight on collaborations among two or more nonprofit organizations that each would otherwise provide the same or similar programs or services and compete for clients, financial resources, or staff.

In the summer of 2008, over 600 nominations were received for the inaugural year of the Prize. Each nomination was evaluated according to a comprehensive scoring rubric. The collaborations that advanced demonstrated quantifiable evidence that they achieved exceptional impact and substantially eliminated the duplication of efforts through programmatic collaborations, administrative consolidation, or other joint activities.

All submissions were reviewed for eligibility by La Piana Associates, one of the nation's leading management and consulting firms dedicated to helping nonprofits and foundations become stronger and more effective through collaboration. The recipient of the \$250,000 award is chosen by a Final Selection Panel, which has been chaired by Sterling Speirn, president and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and included representatives of both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors.

The eight finalists are showcased herein.

The Collaboration Prize was created by the Lodestar Foundation. The mission of the Lodestar Foundation is to maximize the growth and impact of philanthropy. This mission is fulfilled, in part, by supporting collaborations that increase impact and eliminate duplication of efforts among nonprofits that would otherwise compete. In support of this mission, Lodestar seeks to identify achievements in collaboration as models for inspiration and replication in the nonprofit world.

The Prize also seeks to build an information base of effective practice models that can be studied and used by academics, nonprofit leaders, and grantmakers to inspire and advance their work. True to the spirit of collaboration, the Lodestar Foundation has partnered with the AIM Alliance on these efforts.

The Arizona-Indiana-Michigan (AIM) Alliance is a collaboration comprising The Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation at Arizona State University, The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, and The Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University (Michigan). The AIM Alliance assists in promoting and publicizing the Collaboration Prize, reviewing nominations and selecting semi-finalists. The AIM Alliance is also involved in creating articles, white papers, and research to inform and inspire others in the sector.

## Acknowledgements

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## From the Lodestar Foundation

The mission of the Lodestar Foundation is to maximize the impact of philanthropy. One strategy we use to carry out that mission is to encourage nonprofits to work together to avoid competing or duplicating each other's efforts. Over the years, we have found that there are many different ways that nonprofits can collaborate, but we have also found that there are many challenges to making it happen. Unfortunately, there is relatively little practical how-to documentation on different ways nonprofits can collaborate and how to overcome collaboration challenges.

The purpose of the Collaboration Prize is to collect and promote best practices from the most successful nonprofit collaborations around the country. Documenting these different models revealed why and how they were developed, what difficulties they encountered—and how they were overcome—and what the results have been. The Collaboration Prize attracted nominations of 644 different collaborations. Through a rigorous selection process, based on satisfying specific criteria established by the Prize organizers, the eight collaborations showcased in this publication have been voted the finalists—the very best.

**Jerry Hirsch**  
*Chairman*  
The Lodestar Foundation

THE LODESTAR FOUNDATION 

"I was so impressed with the work by the practitioners, and it seemed clear evidence that the impulse to look for efficiencies and synergies through collaborations and mergers was a wellspring of nonprofit creativity that appeared more of a constant than the exception to good practice. Financial crisis and pressures from funders certainly come into play from time to time, but the Prize generated an overwhelming response that demonstrated how nonprofit organizations deploy the entrepreneurial spirit not only in starting new organizations and new programs, but by reinventing and renewing their work through collaboration."

**Sterling K. Speirn**  
*President and CEO*  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

## Why Collaboration

The nonprofit sector has long seen the benefits achieved through working together. Nonprofits could not operate without drawing a critical mass of people to their cause to donate time and resources. This intrinsic sense of cooperation lays a natural foundation for external collaboration as a way in which people and institutions work together more effectively and efficiently to improve the quality of life in communities.

Despite its inherent value there are challenges related to collaboration as a leadership and management construct in nonprofits. So why is collaboration so difficult? And more importantly, why is it so critical in today's environment?

The calendar year 2008 showed a slowing of the economy not likely to recover until 2010 or beyond. With nonprofits competing for fewer resources (volunteers, donors, government funds, etc.), many will not be able to sustain operations. Economists call this collapse "market correction," which is a distressingly sanitized term for the fact that the places people once went for help are no longer there.

With such good intentions, what is going wrong? Nonprofits are so often wrapped up in "doing the good work"—serving communities in need—that they neglect the important work of building their organization's capacity. When focusing on meeting next week's payroll or providing a thousand extra food boxes, nonprofits often aren't developing long-term sustainability plans.

A vital component of long-term sustainability is understanding the environment: what economic forces will prevail and who will your competitors be? Those nonprofits that survive the next few years will be the ones who've recognized these factors. But doing so calls for critical self-reflection—sometimes a painfully hard look at inevitable truths about what the organization is currently doing and what its future will be.

The universal lesson learned from the best nominations for the Collaboration Prize is that enterprises flourish when the needs of the organization are put second to advancing the mission. Only when freed from the restraints of old thinking ("We've always done it this way", or "This is just who we are") can nonprofits elevate to place where innovation and collaboration can occur.

But this is easier said than done. The following pages describe the collaborations of many nonprofits that were able to make a success out of this very difficult work. We hope their stories both inspire and provide direction to those embarking on this journey, and we wish you the very best of luck in your quest to develop and implement relevant, impactful collaborations.

**Robert F. Ashcraft, Ph.D.**  
*Director*  
ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation

 **Lodestar Center**  
for Philanthropy & Nonprofit Innovation  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Cancer Vaccine Collaborative

Model of Collaboration:  
Joint Program Office

### collaborators:

Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research  
– New York, NY

Cancer Research Institute  
– New York, NY

### challenges:

- Fair credit for both organizations in media and public relations.
- Prioritizing ideas from investigators.
- Overcoming reluctance to share sensitive data and clinical results across organizational boundaries.

### benefits:

- Operating efficiencies, including reduction of administrative costs and duplication of efforts.
- Considerable time savings for both institutes, which translates into progress in cancer immunology.



The Cancer Vaccine Collaborative was established to facilitate the shared goal of developing therapeutic cancer vaccines. The Ludwig Institute specializes in academic research and clinical discovery, while the Cancer Research Institute funds research investigating the immune system's relationship to cancer and discoveries related to cancer therapies. Formal collaboration allows each to capitalize on the strengths of the other. The Ludwig Institute particularly benefits from public relations and fundraising, while the Cancer Research Institute benefits from enhancing its clinical trials potential and process.

The Cancer Vaccine Collaborative has allowed both partners to raise more money, as well as their collective standing in the field. The impact is measured by growth in the number of scientific papers and the ability of the Collaborative to move more of its vaccines to market.

### From the nomination:

"The Cancer Vaccine Collaborative has enabled laboratory and clinical investigators to conduct early-stage clinical investigations in the development of a new therapeutic modality. Other foundations and institutes conducting medical research could benefit their constituents by forming similar collaborations and using the model of bringing the investigative rigor of academia together with the product-development mindset of industry."

Established in 1992, the Tennessee Aquarium is already a mature organization. Its ability and willingness to share resources is the basis of the Chattanooga Museums Collaboration, which primarily extends administrative support to its sisters, the Creative Discovery and Hunter museums. Providing both stability and efficiency, the Tennessee Aquarium provides human resource, finance and accounting, information technology, marketing, and retail sales to its partners. This close arrangement has facilitated further joint opportunities, including exhibition, programming, and fundraising.

Between 2001 and 2008, the arrangement has resulted in a reported collective savings of \$3.6 million in administrative expenses for the Creative Discovery and Hunter museums. On the other side, the Tennessee Aquarium has turned its administrative costs into a profit center.



## Chattanooga Museums Collaboration

### Model of Collaboration:

**Joint Administrative Office**

### collaborators:

Tennessee Aquarium  
- Chattanooga, TN

Creative Discovery Museum  
- Chattanooga, TN

Hunter Museum of American Art  
- Chattanooga, TN

### challenges:

- Human resources staff must be willing and able to speak on behalf of three different organizations.
- With joint marketing, each organization runs the risk of losing control of its own identity. In this case, Creative Discovery Museum decided to maintain its own public relations.

### benefits:

- Marketing cost efficiencies, including joint advertising buys, TV and radio production, printed media, marketing research, and joint ticketing.
- Retail purchase efficiencies, especially in joint purchasing for three museum stores.
- Stabilization of sister museums through access to established, professional administrative machinery.



### From the nomination:

"The synergies involved in this partnership are just astounding. These institutions see cost savings, gain expertise, and increase their credibility in the community and among visitors. In a time when we know the benefits of collaboration, Chattanooga's cultural institutions are blazing a trail for others to follow."

- U.S. Senator Bob Corker, Tennessee

## Crittenton Women's Union

Model of Collaboration:  
Fully-Integrated Merger

### collaborators:

The Women's Union  
– Boston, MA

Crittenton  
– Brighton, MA

### challenges:

- Blending two long-standing and distinct organizational cultures, especially in the boards of directors.
- Breaking down silos and building new connections between programs.
- Re-branding a new organization with more than 300 years of collective history.

### benefits:

- Administrative efficiency: Elimination of four executive positions and a streamlined accounting staff.
- New synergy through alignment of two established programs, leading to new emphasis on research and advocacy.
- Combined investments in top-line accounting, fundraising, and outcome management software.



As separate institutions, the Women's Union and Crittenton shared a lot in common. Both were founded in the 1800s and both were dedi-



icated to helping low-income women and families achieve financial independence, including housing, education, case management, and job skills training. Complementary programs, direct competition for resources, tenuous finances, and searches for new leadership led to a complete merger of the two organizations.

The collaboration led to all the efficiencies that comes with a full merger, along with synergy that created new and expanded programs. In its first year, the new organization realized a reported \$800,000 savings on overlapping expenses. Whereas the two organizations operated in the red in 2006, the newly-merged 2007 organization operated solidly in the black.

### From the nomination:

"Not only did the merger of Crittenton and The Women's Union create savings and efficiencies, but the process has also lifted services and program quality to a completely new level, thereby creating a much richer tapestry for their clients."

For many years, the Dallas Museum of Natural History and The Science Place operated similar programs next door to each other without joint programming. Aging exhibits, declining attendance, and financial shortfalls led to the prospects of a merger. Joined by the Dallas Children's Museum, which could add pre-school expertise to the mix, the three entered into a fully-integrated merger.

The resulting economy of scale met all expectations, and more. Streamlined operations led to profitability, improved exhibits, and the ability to attract major national shows that had been beyond their reach as independent institutions. In addition, the public and



local funders recognized the expanded potential of the combined enterprises, responding positively with both attendance and financial contributions.



## Museum of Nature & Science

### Model of Collaboration:

#### Fully-Integrated Merger

### collaborators:

Dallas Museum of Natural History  
– Dallas, TX

The Science Place  
– Dallas, TX

Dallas Children's Museum  
– Dallas, TX

### challenges:

- Integration of ticketing, donor database, and telecommunications systems was more challenging than anticipated.
- Integration of three distinct organizational cultures, facilitated by a Culture Team.
- Renaming and rebranding of longstanding community institutions, which is an expensive and ongoing issue.

### benefits:

- Expanded programming, including the scale necessary to attract world-class travelling exhibits.
- Substantial operating efficiencies, mainly from elimination of duplicate and overlapping staff positions.
- Position upgrades and ability to attract employees with higher skill sets.
- Upgraded image was the basis of a successful capital campaign.



### From the nomination:

“The Museum of Nature & Science is now able to produce and deliver better customer service and higher-caliber programs and exhibitions generating an increase in attendance, memberships, and contributions. The collaboration has benefitted the community and our constituents by creating a single, family-fun destination dedicated to educating about nature and science.”

## New York LawHelp Consortium

### Model of Collaboration:

**Joint Partnership, Affiliated Programming**

### collaborators:

City Bar Justice Center – New York, NY  
 Legal Services NYC – New York, NY  
 Legal Aid Society of New York – New York, NY  
 Pro Bono Net – New York, NY  
 Volunteers of Legal Service – New York, NY  
 Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York – Albany, NY  
 Empire Justice Center – Albany, NY  
 New York State Bar Association – Albany, NY  
 Legal Assistance of Western New York – Geneva, NY  
 Legal Services of the Hudson Valley – White Plains, NY  
 Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Consortium – Islandia, NY

### challenges:

- A long list of collaborators makes management and decision-making more cumbersome.
- A desire for statewide comprehensiveness requires special efforts to recruit partners that represent all counties and special interests.
- Programmatic challenges regarding lack of Internet access for low-income users.

### benefits:

- Substantive, current legal information is aggregated in one place.
- Legal aid organizations no longer have to compile information and referral lists, resulting in savings in time and money.
- The model is readily replicable, saving an estimated \$85,000 per state.

### From the nomination:

“In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, legal services groups in New York quickly came together to help New Yorkers with legal issues resulting from the attacks. Consortium members say the sense of trust they have working together on LawHelp/NY originated when they quickly united in the wake of that disaster.”

## Welcome to New York LawHelp

This short video show you how to:

- find information about your legal problem
- find legal assistance available in your area
- find other important information about the courts and organizations that can help



Many people need legal information or referrals to legal counsel, but the task of maintaining current and comprehensive information is daunting. Without coordination, individual efforts are spotty and quickly outdated. New York LawHelp solved these problems by forming a consortium dedicated to providing an online legal referral database and plain language legal information to all New Yorkers.

The large consortium ensures that the whole state is served, with a special emphasis on low-income people. More than 600 organizations that provide free legal services are listed in the database. LawHelp provides training events for organizations that provide referrals to the Web site. Traffic to the Web site is heavy, and LawHelp is the go-to source for legal referrals and information. The model is being replicated in 27 other states.

# LawHelp.org/NY

Helping low-income New Yorkers solve legal problems



Ready, Set, Parent is testament to the synergies created by two committed partners. As Buffalo-area hospitals stopped providing parent education courses, EPIC and Baker Victory Services stepped up to provide parenting, literacy, wellness, nutrition, and safety information to new parents. Their competition and overlapping services suggested a partnership that has resulted in a ten-fold increase in the number of people served by the two organizations despite a smaller number of staff required to carry out the programs.

The division of duties demonstrates the depth of commitment to the collaboration. EPIC manages grants; program implementation, oversight, and program evaluation; licensing; communications; and provides office space. Baker Victory Services manages human resources, including all staffing; data entry and management; medical reimbursements; course materials and scheduling.



## Ready, Set, Parent!

### Model of Collaboration:

#### Joint Partnership, Affiliated Programming

### collaborators:

#### Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)

– Buffalo, NY

#### Baker Victory Services

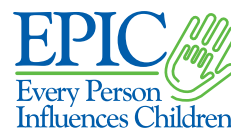
– Lackawana, NY

### challenges:

- Complex division of duties requires regular and detailed communication between collaborators.
- Lengthy start-up phase that required a lot of meeting, planning, and writing with few immediate results.

### benefits:

- Administrative efficiencies, including one-third less staff and the ability to capitalize on the human resource expertise and benefits provided by Baker Victory Services.
- Increased staff allowed partners to take the project to scale, expanding from 750 combined room visits to over 8,000 room visits.
- Increased programming, including workshops featuring physicians.



### From the nomination:

“The division of duties contributes to the success of the collaboration by bringing two otherwise competing organizations together in order to capitalize on each of the programmatic and administrative strengths of each organization and has turned two average prevention programs into a program with the potential to create systemic change in high-need communities across the nation.”

# Shorebank Enterprise Cascadia

## Model of Collaboration:

### Fully-Integrated Merger

#### collaborators:

ShoreBank Enterprise Pacific  
– Ilwaco, WA

Cascadia Revolving Fund  
– Seattle, WA

#### challenges:

- The size, complexity, and assets of the organizations increased the length and intricacy of the merger process.
- Community development finance has regulatory burdens, so the merger required additional levels of approval and extra expenses.
- Most Cascadia staff and board members struggled to find a place in the newly-created enterprise.
- Fears that the rural service dimensions might be lost in the new entity.

#### benefits:

- The larger reserve fund tripled the capacity to accept risk, opening loans to larger pool of applicants.
- Total dollars loaned more than doubled and the number of approved loans tripled, compared to combined loans of two partners.
- Maximum available loan size tripled.
- Average cost of lending was halved.



ShoreBank Enterprise Pacific and the Cascadia Revolving Fund shared a mission of helping disadvantaged business owners gain access to loans. However, neither has achieved the scale necessary to take on risk or be able to provide the number and size of loans required. A merger between the two community development financiers helped provide the scope and scale necessary to better serve its constituents.

The merger also allowed for a reorganization of personnel, removing duplication while expanding programming. Consequently, loan production increased, along with the size of loans and the capacity to accept risk. Greater access to capital is good news for Washington's low income communities and entrepreneurs.



SHOREBANK ENTERPRISE CASCADIA  
Let's change the world.®

#### From the nomination:

"Probably the best decision we made very early in the merger process was to be transparent with our respective teams and not avoid the tough issues. At every stage we communicated and then communicated some more."

In urban centers across the United States, Jewish Community Centers and YMCAs provide essential recreational, educational, and social services. In Toledo, rather than building separate major facilities, the two decided to merge. Operating from a campus owned by the United Jewish Council, the YMCA/JCC has one membership structure granting access to a single set of jointly administered programs.

An immediate benefit of the collaboration is that the YMCA did not have to build new facilities in the growing greater north-west Toledo area. Rather, those resources were allocated to increased programming, capital repairs and maintenance, and scholarships.



## YMCA / Jewish Community Center

**Model of Collaboration:**  
Fully-Integrated Merger

**collaborators:**

United Jewish Council of Greater Toledo  
– Sylvania, OH

YMCA of Greater Toledo  
– Sylvania, OH

**challenges:**

- Resistance from national umbrella organizations who initially did not want to adjust their dues structures.
- Accommodating resistance from professional staff whose culture and routines were challenged by the merger.
- Persuading funders of both partners that the programs and character of each would not be compromised.

**benefits:**

- Facilitates a better understanding of the Jewish and Christian faiths between members of those communities.
- Eliminated duplicative and competing programs.
- Removed the need for construction of a multi-million dollar YMCA facility.
- Larger pool of potential donors.



**From the nomination:**

“Imagine the positive impact if 10 percent of community-based nonprofits were able even to merge their administrative functions, let alone their program and service modules. Just think of the hundreds of millions of dollars that could be redirected to direct services instead of into administration and facilities. All it takes is a couple of calm heads who have vision, who have a clear understanding of the mission of their own organization and at least a basic understanding of the partnership organization and its role in the community.”



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