



IDEA

The Power of an *IDEA*
to Transform Health

bi3 Learning Series
November 2018

The Power of an IDEA to Transform Health



8 YEARS

\$36 MILLION



4 GRANTMAKING PRINCIPLES



41 GRANTS

1 IDEA



bi3's approach to transforming health is captured in one word: "IDEA."

We are idea seekers. We believe it takes only one idea to provoke change and new ways of thinking. And Cincinnati—like most cities—urgently needs good ideas. While our region is home to leading healthcare systems, Cincinnati's health outcomes lag far behind the rest of the country, including for overall health, life expectancy and social and economic factors¹. Outcomes for our most vulnerable populations are even worse.

"The value of an idea lies in the using of it."

– Thomas Edison

bi3 is making large investments in ideas with the potential to spark and scale health innovation to solve our most important health issues. We seek systems and culture change, which is hard, messy and unpredictable.

We have learned a great deal from funding high-potential projects since 2010. Our work has resulted in better care and improved health outcomes for our community. Specifically, we helped advance technologies and improve primary care; reduce Cincinnati's infant mortality rate; elevate the importance of planning for end-of-life care; and leverage additional funding to spread successful efforts to transform health.

Gleaned from this work, "IDEA" embodies four key grantmaking principles common to our most successful projects: **I**dentifying and leveraging strengths, **D**riving cross-sector collaboration, **E**mphasizing learning and **A**ttracting diverse leaders.

Our goal is to bring transformative thinking to life through these IDEA principles, collaborating with system partners, community leaders and other health-focused grantmakers to improve health and healthcare.

“I” for Identify and Leverage Unique Strengths

An unrelenting focus on an organization’s core competencies makes a significant difference in its chances for success. In our case, several factors come into play.

“bi3 recognizes there are inherent risks in creating fundamental change. As a funder, they are willing to create opportunities without guaranteed outcomes. bi3 leadership engages in valuable and ongoing dialogue to understand lessons learned and respond as our program evolves.”

– Mary Asbury, Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati

bi3 is willing and financially able to take informed risks.

We provide the resources needed for our funded partners to dream big, think differently and try new things. We know new ideas won’t always be successful, but through challenges and adaptations, we learn what works and apply those learnings to future grants.

bi3 is uniquely aligned with TriHealth, a leading healthcare system based in Cincinnati. This relationship allows us to pilot and scale new ideas and programs more rapidly during a time of severe disruption in the healthcare industry where 80 percent of health outcomes are driven by factors outside the walls of a hospital². bi3 is distinctively positioned to facilitate, fund and support collaborations between TriHealth and community-based organizations (CBOs) to pilot new models of care.

We draw upon our partner physicians to vet projects with the greatest potential for sustainable change.

Example: Fueled by a \$1.1 million, three-year grant from bi3, non-profit agency **Beech Acres Parenting Center** teamed with physicians

and care professionals at TriHealth Pediatrics and Cincinnati Children’s Mayerson Center to create Parent Connex. The program places parent coaches inside TriHealth pediatric primary care offices to help families reduce toxic stress at home and improve their children’s development and health. The program includes family screening, parent coaching and community resource referrals to build family resilience and reduce barriers to better health.

Parent Connex leaders cite satisfaction and buy-in from TriHealth pediatric practices piloting the program as the key to encouraging other pediatric practices to join. Currently, seven practices are participating, and a new bi3 grant added a research component to the project. Parent Connex also credits a new bi3 grant with unlocking the ability to include relevant information in patients’ electronic health records. The result—better outcomes due to improved communication and coordination between healthcare providers and parenting specialists.



“The strategic relationship between bi3 and TriHealth has been a key driver to the success of Parent Connex. First, bi3’s selection of Parent Connex for funding provided instant credibility with TriHealth physicians and leaders. Second, the bi3 grant is for a three-year learning project, so the physician practices have been integral partners in creating continuous improvements since inception.”

– James Mason, CEO, Beech Acres Parenting Center

Another important factor driving success is that bi3 makes grants large in size and duration. Multi-year grants provide organizations the time needed to get the model “right” and to build systems and gather data to communicate impact. This allows us to forge deep partnerships and be more flexible with those we fund. We encourage funded partners to recalibrate and pivot because we understand learning is an ongoing process.

bi3 makes grants large in size and duration.

We work alongside our funded partners as a facilitator, convener, co-creator and thought-partner at every stage of the grant cycle. Teams need time to plan, pilot, adapt and scale. We provide support through communications, media resources, evaluation consulting and technical assistance as needed to build toward adoption and sustainability.

“bi3 is keenly aware of the importance of validating program outcomes to help ensure long-term viability. Importantly, proof of StartStrong’s success was key in attracting more than \$5 million from the state of Ohio to fund more community health workers to support pregnant mothers and their babies, and expand the model into additional neighborhoods.”

– Ryan Adcock, Executive Director, Cradle Cincinnati

“D” for Drive Cross-Sector Collaboration

Overcoming cultural and social barriers between systems, organizations and neighborhood communities is challenging. While collaboration may be an overused word, bi3 intentionally looks for cross-sector

collaborations and opportunities to bring unlikely partners together to address deep-seated community health issues. To achieve success, each partner must understand they are part of a larger eco-system and feel comfortable sharing challenges, learnings and aspirations. bi3 often awards one-year planning grants to foster collaboration and plan for work ahead.

Moving the needle on health outcomes and equity for all isn’t possible without incorporating the perspectives of Greater Cincinnati’s most vulnerable neighborhoods and citizens, many of whom are minorities. Having the voice of the patient, client and/or care provider fundamentally guides the work to create responsive models of care and increase a program’s chance for success.



Springfield Twp. Fire Department members collaborate with TriHealth team members to provide residents with onsite mental health evaluations and referrals in their homes.

StartStrong Partners:

- TriHealth
- Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center
- UC Health
- Every Child Succeeds

Example: StartStrong, an initiative to reduce infant mortality in the Cincinnati community of Avondale, **began by talking with Avondale women and families** to gain insights into preferences, attitudes, behaviors and beliefs about maternal health, pregnancy and prematurity. The initiative was led by four key partners: TriHealth, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, UC Health and Every Child Succeeds.

To break down “tall walls” of distrust, apathy and judgment between healthcare providers and women, the project team hosted monthly “feasts” for pregnant women, new mothers, family members, residents

and healthcare providers. The goal: having these groups come together to share a meal, get to know each other and provide opportunities for understanding and empathy building.

On average, 45 parents, children, healthcare providers and community residents attended “feasts” each month throughout the life of the grant. Some of the greatest benefit was seen by healthcare providers who returned to their practices with renewed empathy and commitment to serve Avondale residents.

For more information on StartStrong, read our Learning Series paper at bi3.org/reports/.



“E” for Emphasize Learning and Share Lessons Learned

bi3 approaches its projects by emphasizing learning and continuous improvement. We ask our grant recipients to participate in “learning calls” versus “status reports.” We encourage them to share their challenges with us. In return, we are willing to adapt throughout the lifecycle of the grant by modifying project goals and objectives, adjusting budget line items and/or bringing in additional resources to support the team. A clear evaluation plan with explicit outcomes and process measures is the best way to guide a project toward achieving its goals—including attracting new dollars or other forms of support.

Data Collection is Essential

Projects must have the capacity to gather and analyze data for purposes of learning, measuring impact and building a case for sustainability. bi3 taps evaluation expertise internally and externally to assist with the development of metrics and to provide guidance throughout the life of the grant.

Process measures and outputs inform project operations, ensuring patients or community beneficiaries can access high quality and efficient services. Outcomes demonstrate the impact of the interventions.

This includes, but is not limited to, behavior change for patients and healthcare providers, patient satisfaction and health improvements. Measures of organizational capacity change (e.g., the ability to bill for services) can inform the funded partner’s progress toward sustainability.

Good data builds ownership and illuminates opportunities for improvement. It helps create buy-in among organizational leaders, which in turn develops champions and guides sustainability. Good data also helps bi3, as the funding partner, ensure accountability, learning and transparency.

Example: bi3’s planning grant to First Step Home, an addiction treatment center for women and their children, supported the development of a new care model for pregnant and new mothers.

This program offers a needed alternative for moms and babies, who may otherwise be separated at birth, by providing a supportive environment where medical and social needs are met.

“bi3’s funding provided us with the time and resources we needed to fully examine the needs of our clients and build the capacities and systems for a high functioning, impactful and sustainable program to serve at-risk mothers and their infants.”

– Margo Spence, President & CEO, First Step Home



Grant resources **enabled the organization to hire an evaluation consultant** to identify key process and outcome measures, develop data collection tools, create a monitoring system and conduct a pilot test.

The year-long project generated important learnings that led to deeper partnerships among Good Samaritan Hospital, Cincinnati Children’s and Jobs & Family Services–Child Protection Services, and an expanded vision for the program.

It also identified the need to build the organization’s capacity to bill Medicaid for its expanded services. bi3 has provided an additional year of funding to support the transition to a more sustainable revenue model.

“A” for Attract and Engage Diverse Leaders

Community change requires leadership at many levels and from diverse sectors. We’ve identified four types of leaders who play essential roles in successful health transformation projects.

Two of these leadership types—*visionaries and champions*—are the inspiration behind an idea. Two others—*system leaders and service providers*, including physicians—bring the ability and passion to translate an idea into successful care models. While an individual can play more than one role, each of the functions has an important part in a project’s success.

Visionaries



Champions



System Leaders



Service Providers
(including physicians)



Visionaries see the big picture. They articulate the transformative idea that will improve health outcomes for the community. Visionary leaders collaborate to develop consensus around the shared goals and key strategies to accomplish them.

Champions draw others into the work. They rally others to the cause and build strong teams grounded in mutual respect. When the project is faced with challenges, a champion provides encouragement and leverages their connections to smooth the way.

System leaders must buy into and support community efforts to create change. These leaders facilitate the engagement of system team members in the work of designing and executing projects. Their buy-in helps prioritize work and allocate necessary resources. Without system leaders, projects can stall or fail.

Service providers, including physicians, manage and deliver services to patients and community members. They operationalize the vision and strategies. They are on the frontlines of delivering best practices in care and have valuable insight into patients' needs and experiences. They are a trusted source of information for patients and can help engage the community in project design and participation. They ensure timelines are met and are most often the source of key learnings because of their close contact with service delivery.

Stable leadership at all four levels accelerates the success of a project while turnover of key leaders can slow, and even stall, the execution of a project.

“At bi3, we have adopted the mindset of Nelson Mandela: We believe we never fail. We either win or we learn.”

Example: Key leaders in our community created and launched M-HeLP, the maternal health and legal partnership funded by bi3.

Through the StartStrong project referenced earlier, healthcare providers identified the need to address legal determinants of health for pregnant mothers. Visionaries from Legal Aid Society, TriHealth and Cincinnati Children's Hospital developed a shared goal and built support within their organizations. System leaders provided in-kind resources to achieve the vision.

The leadership team, which originated and has continued throughout the program, identified metrics and processes for which all organizations are responsible. They built systems of accountability and communication to ensure opportunities for continuous improvement are leveraged and the project is achieving its outcomes while documenting its learnings. The result: **M-HeLP is recognized nationally as a leading medical-legal partnership program.**

LEVERAGING OUR OWN *IDEA*

bi3 believes learning is key to success. We discuss and debate and invite others to share their perspectives on our work. bi3 identified four activities to operationalize IDEA principles going forward:

Identify opportunities to leverage our strengths, particularly our ability to connect healthcare systems and community leaders to create and pilot new models of care that address clinical and non-clinical needs. We will continue to take informed risks and build upon our learnings to achieve systems and culture change.

Drive cross-sector collaboration to address barriers to care and better health, particularly for vulnerable populations. We will convene and support health and community-based organizations to build collaboration. We will strengthen our own collaborative relationships by forming networks with other funders, health systems, community organizations and change agents. Through our grantmaking, we will encourage and support our partners to authentically engage community members in model design.

Emphasize learning and continuous improvement via convening, reporting and sharing lessons learned. More specifically:

- Convene grantee learning sessions—semi-structured meetings between grantees working on similar issues or facing similar challenges. The learning sessions will facilitate sharing between grantees, help us capture lessons learned and promote networking.
- Refine our evaluation and reporting processes to ensure they provide reciprocal value and stay true to our grantmaking values and project goals.
- Build our communications strategy with an emphasis on co-branding projects with our grantees. We are proud to be partners in this challenging work and want to share with the community the hard work and resources that create transformative initiatives.
- Share our learnings and the learnings of our funded partners with a broad audience through the bi3 Learning Series. The work being done in Cincinnati can be an example to other communities around the country. We commit to sharing our knowledge and developing best practices from our work, while sparking conversation and action in other sectors and communities.

Attract and engage diverse leaders and champions with a passion for innovation and improving the health of our region. In addition, we seek opportunities to connect and work with other local, regional and national funders.

^{1,2} Original estimates from the Robert Wood Johnson-funded County Health Rankings and Roadmaps: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/our-approach>; graphic adopted from the Bridgespan Group's "The Community Cure for Healthcare," in the Stanford Social Innovation Review: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_community_cure_for_health_care. "Going Beyond the Clinical Walls" is a set of resources produced by the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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About bi3

bi3 is Bethesda Inc.'s grantmaking initiative to transform health in Greater Cincinnati. Bethesda Inc., in partnership with Catholic Health Initiatives, is a co-sponsor of TriHealth, Greater Cincinnati's largest integrated health system.

bi3 invests in innovative ideas with the ability to spark and scale new approaches to improving community health and healthcare.

Since 2010, bi3 has made more than \$36 million in grants to fund innovative ideas to transform health and healthcare, ranking it as one of Ohio's largest health-focused funders. Our work has helped reduce Cincinnati's infant mortality rate, increase access to better care, elevate the importance of planning for end-of-life care, and leverage additional funding to spread successful efforts to transform health.

Learn more at bi3.org.