

investment summary

Making Connections Providence

For nearly a decade, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked with a broad range of partners in Providence to demonstrate through the *Making Connections* initiative that when families are strong, outcomes for even the most disadvantaged children will substantially improve.

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Our work in Providence and in other sites across the country seeks to help:

- *Families work, earn, and save their way toward self-sufficiency; and*
- *Ensure that their children are healthy, prepared to succeed in school, and read proficiently by the end of third grade.*

These goals advance a “two-generation” approach—promoting economic success and simultaneously ensuring that children get a good start in life. Casey’s investments in Providence since 1999 have demonstrated how these results can be achieved by building communities’ capacity to connect families to economic opportunities, strong social networks, and effective services and supports.

Moving forward, *Making Connections* Providence is placing this two-generation strategy at the heart of future work. Through strong partnerships with Providence Mayor David Cicilline’s *Pathways to Opportunity* initiative, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, the Providence

Public School District, and others, Casey investments are focused on expanding family economic and early grade success strategies in the Elmwood, South Providence, and the West End initiative neighborhoods at scale across the city.

A PLATFORM FOR SUCCESS

Early investments by the Casey Foundation through *Making Connections* have strengthened the capacity of a broad range of partners in Providence to achieve results for children and families living in the city’s poorest neighborhoods. Among the returns on these investments:

- *Widespread use of data as a tool for advocacy, planning, and accountability.* The Providence Plan, which has served as the Local Learning Partner for *Making Connections* for nearly a decade, provides data analysis for a range of community, city, and statewide initiatives working to better assess the impact of student mobility on academic achievement,

Making Connections Providence Local Management Partnership

John Hope Settlement House Named after a founder of NAACP, John Hope Settlement House has supported low-income families in Providence for more than 80 years. John Hope serves 10,000 neighborhood children and their families annually, offering coordinated child care, before- and after-school programs, summer camps, and social services.

City of Providence Providence Mayor David Cicilline is a prominent champion of *Making Connections* and has committed substantial resources to assuring the initiative’s success. In 2008, the mayor announced the *Pathways to Opportunity* initiative to reduce poverty and create opportunity for the city’s low-income families, and which recommends many of the strategies of *Making Connections*.

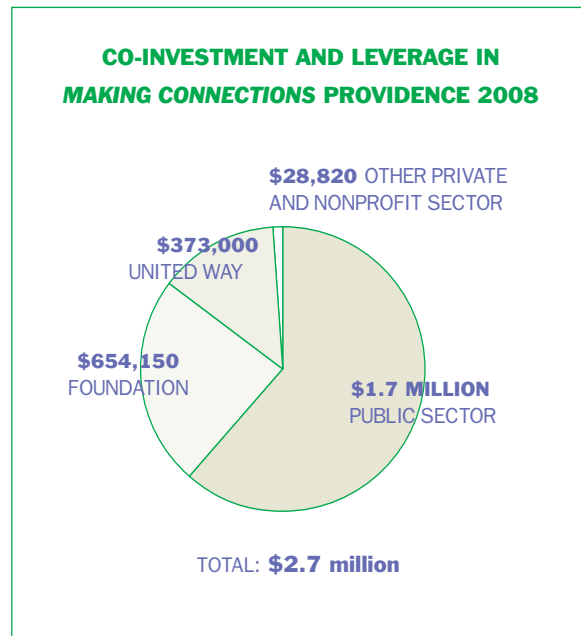
connect men and women returning from prison to jobs and other social services, prevent teen pregnancy, and cut crime. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT also has helped *Making Connections* and its partners use data to drive policy advocacy for increased early grade success and economic opportunity.

- **Stronger resident leadership.** The *Making Connections* Leadership Institute (MCLI) has trained more than 220 residents on how to use data, communications, and Result Based Accountability to better advocate for vulnerable children and families. MCLI engaged resident leaders in the city's *Pathways to Opportunity* task force and in the development of a Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) child care provider network. The Casey Foundation was instrumental in helping the Providence Plan secure a \$1 million federal Compassion Capital Fund grant in 2005 to launch the New Roots initiative, which provides local organizations with technical assistance to sustain programs that get results.

- **Shifts in services to strengthen families.** *Making Connections* Providence made early investments that helped Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center improve sector-based employment strategies, strengthen its Career Academies by expanding ESL and Vocational ESL programs, and connect residents to new asset building opportunities. The initiative also has helped the Family Life Center address employment and housing barriers faced by former prisoners.

- **Establishment of the Providence Asset Building Campaign.** Launched by *Making Connections* in 2001 with support from the mayor, the United Way of Rhode Island, and other local community groups, the campaign has grown tenfold since 2002, with total returns increasing from \$200,000 that year to \$3.3 million in 2009.

- **Increased co-investment.** To date in 2009, *Making Connections* Providence has leveraged a total of \$2,655,911 in co-investment, including \$508,500 from local foundations, \$1.5 million from the public sector, \$358,000 from the United Way, and \$165,000 from businesses and corporations.



Building on the above achievements, *Making Connections* Providence in 2008 transitioned management of the initiative to John Hope Settlement House and the City of Providence—combining the credibility of one of the oldest neighborhood organizations in Providence with the influence and resources of city government. This partnership positions early grade success, economic opportunity, and resident leadership strategies to go to scale across the city, to have influence on policy at the state level, and to secure additional federal resources.

A TRACK RECORD OF RESULTS

The partnership of high-capacity, credible, and influential partners with residents' leadership and support is achieving significant results for children and families:

More Families Have Increased Earnings and Income

Making Connections Providence has established strong jobs pipelines that help even the hardest-to-employ residents get on track to family-supporting jobs, with a special focus on immigrant and refugee populations and formerly incarcerated residents.

More residents are getting connected to jobs. Working through the city, the United Way of Rhode Island, labor unions, and workforce training partners, *Making Connections* helped place a total of 450 residents from the initiative neighborhoods into construction, health care, and other jobs in 2007–08, even though the city has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

More residents have reliable “on-ramps” to jobs that offer good wages and career advancement. *Making Connections* worked with numerous partners to establish the Building Futures and Stepping Up initiatives, which connect low-skilled, low-literacy residents to jobs in the health care and construction trades. In partnership with the Family Life Center, *Making Connections* also supports job placement strategies for men and women reentering the workforce after prison.

RESULT	2007	2008
Residents from the initiative neighborhoods placed in jobs	229	221

More Families Have Increased Levels of Assets

Making Connections Providence has helped secure strong support for the city’s EITC campaign and for efforts to assure that residents have access to mainstream banking products and financial education courses.

More residents are opening savings accounts. Washington Trust, which received a Casey Mission-Related Deposit (MRD) in 2006, has helped open savings accounts for more than 1,000 residents who used free tax preparation services and/or completed financial education courses.

The EITC campaign is returning more dollars in tax refunds to the Making Connections neighborhoods. Providence’s EITC/VITA campaign for the 2009 tax season returned more than \$3.3 million to residents—including nearly \$300,000 to the initiative neighborhoods—an increase of 18 percent over last year’s campaign.

PROMOTING FAMILY ECONOMIC SUCCESS: PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–11

- *Further integrate and expand jobs pipelines.* With the *Pathways to Opportunity* initiative, *Making Connections* aims to place at least 330 residents into jobs during the next two years—with more placements likely when American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and a city initiative to revamp career and technical education take hold.
- *Leverage the federal Second Chance Act and Food Stamp and Employment Training (FSET) programs to provide long-term funding for jobs pipelines.* *Making Connections* and the City of Providence expect to receive up to \$2.2 million in Second Chance Act federal funds to place more men and women returning from prison into family-supporting jobs. *Making Connections* also will work to secure long-term funding for jobs pipelines using federal Food Stamp Employment and Training funds awarded to the state.
- *Establish an online system to help low-income working families access EITC, Food Stamp, child care, housing, and other benefits.* *Making Connections* will help 10 community partners test an online benefits system to help more families supplement their earnings.
- *Ramp up the Bank On Providence initiative to help more families save.* *Making Connections* Providence will help 2,030 residents open savings or Individual Development Accounts during the next two years through the local launch of the national Bank On model, which is designed to increase family access to low-cost, reliable financial products.
- *Assist families facing foreclosure.* Through policy initiatives at the city and state levels, protections will be increased for homeowners and tenants in foreclosed properties. In addition, the city is using \$2.3 million in ARRA funds to help homeowners avoid foreclosure.

PROMOTING SUCCESS IN EARLY GRADES: PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–11

- *Accelerate progress toward reading success at the Bailey Elementary focus school, where 42 percent of third-graders scored proficient in reading in 2008–09, up from 27 percent in 2006–07. To increase scores to the target goal of 63 percent proficiency by 2010–11, Bailey Elementary will work with *Making Connections* to (1) enhance instruction through professional development, (2) provide specialized after-school instruction to more than 100 striving readers, and (3) assure that all students have health insurance, medical homes, developmental screenings, and follow-up services. *Making Connections* also will partner with district officials to fund parent liaisons at all schools.*
- *Expand after-school, family literacy classes, Play and Learn groups, and family support services to four other neighborhood schools using funds from the federal Full Service Community School grant and in partnership with the YMCA, Dorcas Place, and John Hope. This effort will spread interventions for struggling readers that prove successful at the Bailey Elementary focus school, creating an opportunity pipeline that connects children and families to schools as places that support lifelong learning.*

More Children Are Healthy and Prepared to Succeed in School

Making Connections Providence works with a strong coalition of partners—including Ready to Learn Providence, a citywide school readiness initiative—committed to improving reading proficiency by improving access to quality preschool and child care, strengthening after-school programs, interventions for

striving readers, and statewide policy advocacy. These efforts were recognized in 2008, when the U.S. Department of Education awarded five schools in the initiative neighborhoods—including Bailey Elementary, the focus school for *Making Connections*' early grade success efforts—\$2.3 million to become full-service community schools by 2012. This designation will help assure that successful strategies are applied across the school district.

More children are gaining quality preschool experience.

In the initiative neighborhoods, the percentage of children engaged in quality preschool has increased from 35 percent in 2004–05 to 39 percent in 2007–08, following widespread implementation of Play and Learn groups by Dorcas Place and faith-based organizations and quality improvements by more than 150 FFN child care providers supported by Ready to Learn Providence and *Making Connections*.

More children are engaged in literacy enriched after-school programs. *Making Connections* Providence has helped focus partners on the importance of after-school programs to success in early grades. The number of children from the initiative neighborhoods participating in literacy enriched after-school programs at the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs has increased from 90 in 2006 to 361 in 2008. This success has leveraged \$800,000 in multi-year support from the federal 21st Century Schools program.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

Led by the mayor's *Pathways to Opportunity* initiative, aggressive policy advocacy by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, committed school district officials, dedicated community-based organizations, and strong resident leaders, a powerful group of stakeholders has come together in Providence to achieve and sustain increases in income, assets, and success in early grades for some of the city's most vulnerable families. *Making Connections* is working with these partners to build a pathway to change that starts in the initiative neighborhoods and ends at the statehouse with better practice, more effective policy, and equitable funding for all of the state's children and families.