

# Developing Proximate Leaders to Drive Place-Based Partnerships in Rural Communities

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At Harlem Children's Zone

EdRedesign  
OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL



#PowerofPlace

We advance two critical strategies that engage both systems and individual children and youth

## OUR MISSION

To ensure the social, emotional, physical, and academic development and well-being of all children and youth, especially those affected by racism and poverty



Amplifying the impact of local governmental and non-governmental systems and programs serving children, youth, and families through **place-based, cross sector collaboration** to remove structural barriers and open pathways to opportunity



Meeting the needs of each individual child and youth through **personalized, relationship-based opportunities and supports** for them to reach their full potential

Housed at a world-class research university, we are well-positioned to serve as a field catalyst and trusted thought partner across our key areas, leading to long-term positive change in practice, policy, and systems to deliver equitable opportunity for all children and youth to thrive in school and in life.



## Talent and Leadership Development

Developing **community leaders and teams** who can manage complex, cross-sector, place-based-partnerships that yield positive outcomes for children and youth at scale



## Actionable Research

Meeting the demand for case studies, toolkits, and other **resources** driven by the growing momentum in our field and expanding the **evidence base** for collaborative action and personalized supports



## Movement Building

**Convening** practitioners, community leaders, thought leaders, policymakers, and funders from around the country to enable **peer learning**

**Showcasing** promising Practices

**Accelerating** impact through narrative, policy, and systems change

INSTITUTE FOR  
SUCCESS PLANNING

By **All** Means

# Our talent work spans the continuum

## OUR APPROACH ➡ CURRENT EFFORTS

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### Building awareness about the field

- Engaging undergraduate and graduate students via University-wide courses on C2C field (e.g., [Collaborative Action for Cradle-to-Career: An EdRedesign Colloquium](#))
- Collaborating with other initiatives and centers to expose leaders across a variety of roles across the U.S. to the field and leading practitioners (e.g., Chief of Staff convening with Bloomberg Center for Cities)

### Filling the pipeline with talent

- Cradle-to-Career Summer Fellowship for Harvard undergraduates, currently placed at WJWI, Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL), MEDA (ST Network Member), and Focused Community Strategies (PBC network member)
- Research assistantships, internships, and fellowships for Harvard graduate students with EdRedesign, national partners, and C2C PBPs
- Placing Harvard Graduate School of Education Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.LD) students in full-time 3rd year residencies with partners from our field (including PBC, ST, WJWI, EdRedesign)

### Supporting recruitment and hiring

- Supporting matchmaking opportunities between Harvard students interested in pursuing careers in the C2C field, national partners, and C2C PBPs aiming to attract top talent

### Retaining & developing current leaders

- Developing Executive Directors and senior leaders of place-based backbone organizations or intermediaries through flagship Fellowship for C2C Partnership Leaders
- Building capacity of cross-sector teams to develop and implement systems and strategies for integrated personalized support through Success Planning Community of Practice
- Supporting exemplary senior leaders of place-based collaborative action to amplify the impact of their work and the field in the By All Means Senior Fellows Program
- Exploring standardized certification for professional development pathways for practitioners across multiple roles (e.g., emerging collaboration with StriveTogether Training Hub)

# Supporting Proximate Leadership

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Transforming Place through Neighborhood Leadership Summer Institute 2025

ballmer

# Ballmer Group Place-Based Partnership (PBP) Talent Strategy

## NORTH STAR GOAL

Racially diverse and proximate leaders are equipped with the skills and supports needed to help place-based partnerships (PBPs) achieve measurable and lasting change in communities.

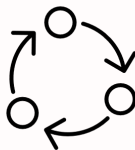
Pillar	Description
I. Building Awareness	Raise awareness and generate excitement and interest in the PBP field
II. Filling The Pipeline	Fill the pipeline with racially diverse and proximate talent trained and/or exposed to PBP competencies
III. Recruit & Hiring	Support recruitment and hiring for key PBP positions
IV. Retain & Develop	Support development and retention of existing PBP talent while planning for the future

# Three Key Focus Areas



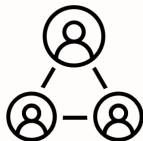
## Time & Capacity

- Talent is generally under-resourced in the nonprofit sector with CBOs often allocating the marginal dollar toward direct service.
- Talent-specific investments can help CBOs allocate the requisite time & capacity needed to develop strategies for proximate talent recruitment.



## Internal Systems

- Effectively identifying, hiring, onboarding, and retaining proximate leaders requires strong internal talent systems.
- Talent Well provides tailored capacity building supports to 26 PBPs nationally. Supports include 1:1 capacity advising, diagnostic assessment, action planning, and expert matching all subsidized on a sliding scale.



## Local Recruitment

- Prioritizing local partners & networks is key to unlocking proximate talent, especially from historically marginalized communities with deep local knowledge and community ties.
- Local Talent Pipeline Pilot investments fund 8 regional backbones to each pilot 2-year projects focused on strengthening local talent pipelines with a special focus on executive, data, and facilitator roles.

# Local Talent Pipeline Pilot Examples

Design



seeding success

Memphis, TN

## DESIGNING LOCAL PBP TALENT CREDENTIALING

Seeding Success is creating a PBP talent **curriculum and certification program** at the University of Memphis for local professionals to build PBP data, policy, and implementation skills

Early Implementation



Dallas, TX

## GROWING YOUNG PBP DATA SCIENCE TALENT:

Alongside its 4 college talent partnerships, CPAL has built a **high school intern partnership** with Code2College that has trained and placed 20 high school interns to date in data projects

Scaling



Dallas, TX

## MOBILIZING A REGIONAL HUB FOR TALENT:

Commit has systematized partnerships with **leading national Fellowship** programs, bolstered **in-house** talent supports, and accelerated **educator** effectiveness initiatives

# Key pilot insights: Talent Training & Development

Area

Talent Sources

Talent Career Stages

Talent Roles

Talent Training & Development

## Case in Point



- **Partners for Rural Impact (PRI)** primarily serves Appalachian Kentucky while expanding a national footprint. They oversee **hundreds of full-time staff** at the PBP backbone, their support network, and across partner schools and service providers.
- Via the BG grant, PRI has redesigned **internal staff training, development, and career pathways** into a **certification and ladders of opportunity** that enable staff to develop at PRI or, for temporary AmeriCorps-funded staff, **transition into local education** roles. The certification program has yielded **better self-reported training, retention, and job effectiveness**.
- As federal **AmeriCorps cuts** pose challenges, PRI is innovating its program and **pursuing new grants (e.g., Direct)** to keep momentum going

## Additional talent training & development insights

- **Commit in Dallas** is building a **Regional Talent Department** overseeing both internal PBP and external talent priorities, including districts' **educator effectiveness**. The work includes PBP talent **recruitment & retention** supports and strong **people operations** to set a standard for backbones.
- **SAM in Spartanburg** expects to be **poised**, given its credibility and the compactness of its region, to drive a **local talent** plan fostering growth and sustainability. Its BG-funded investments span pillars of the talent strategy.

**Numbers to know: ~130 staff, interns, or PBP talent in general have benefited to date through training, placement, hiring, or retention supports.**

# Proximate Leadership Development

**Dr. Shanda Crowder**

*Vice President of Capacity & Implementation*



*Partners for*  
**Rural Impact**

# Centering Proximate Leadership in Rural Partnerships



Rural Leadership

- Talent = local brilliance + lived experience + potential to lead.
- PRI defines **proximate leaders** as individuals rooted in the places we serve—parents, young adults, faith leaders, service providers, and grassroots champions.
- Our focus: Build a rural leadership bench across **education, community schools, health, workforce, and youth development.**
- We ask: Who is already doing the work without the title?



# Meeting the Moment with Creative Talent Strategies

- **Shifted hiring requirements:** AA degrees + lived experience now meet qualifications for roles like Community School Coordinators.
- **“Grow your own” mindset:** Prioritize people already embedded in rural communities.
- **Time & capacity constraints** addressed by:
  - Aligning job expectations with community realities.
  - Leveraging flexible funding to increase staffing where needed.
- We don't gatekeep opportunity—we co-create it with community.



# A Multi-Pronged Approach to Rural Talent Growth



<i><b>Vehicle</b></i>	<i><b>Description</b></i>
<b>AmeriCorps</b>	On-ramps for local leaders to serve and stay in community.
<b>Higher Education Partnerships (i.e. HBCU Giveback Initiative)</b>	Partnership for long-term rural talent pipelines.
<b>Ballmer Alt-Cert Pathway</b>	Employees earn credentials to become teachers—expanding the local educator pool.
<b>Internal PD &amp; Coaching</b>	Ongoing leadership development for PRI staff + rural partners.
<b>Policy Adjustments</b>	Adjusted job requirements to remove unnecessary barriers.

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**We invest in people, not just positions—because proximate leaders are the power source of sustainable change.**

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**Dr. Shanda  
Crowder**

