



## **GREAT FAMILIES 2020 AND THE FUTURE OF THE TWO-GENERATIONAL APPROACH IN INDIANAPOLIS**

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2016, the United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI) was awarded a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grant to develop and implement the Great Families 2020 (GF2020) service delivery model in Indianapolis. GF2020's goal was to improve financial stability among families in Indianapolis by using a two-generational (2Gen) approach that simultaneously addressed the needs of parents/caregivers and their children. Specifically, GF2020 is based on the 2Gen model developed by Ascend at the Aspen Institute, using family case management to direct families to evidence-based interventions and wraparound services.

The model was implemented across eight subgrantees and their partners located within five geographic areas of Indianapolis. During the past five years, researchers have assessed levels of collaboration as well as the impact on participating organizations. This brief examines how participating subgrantees and partner organizations have benefited from their collaboration in GF2020, with particular emphasis on leveraging and sustaining collaborative efforts for 2Gen programming.

### **2GEN GF2020 PROGRAM**

A parent or caregiver's educational attainment, employment, parenting challenges, and mental health issues are some of the main environmental factors that impact how a family's financial instability affects children. These structural factors also negatively impact opportunities for parents/caregivers to attain financial stability and self-sufficiency. The GF2020 2Gen model was implemented to reduce these

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Participating organizations spoke highly of GF2020 collaborations.
- GF2020 increased service capacity within participating organizations by sharing resources and knowledge.
- GF2020 created new organizational partnerships and strengthened existing partnerships.
- Participating GF2020 organizations learned more about services provided by their partners.
- Subgrantees believe partnerships with service providers will continue after GF2020.
- Staff turnover limited collaboration success.
- The efficacy of partnerships varied by subgrantee site, with subgrantees giving different ratings by site.

negative outcomes associated with persistent childhood poverty by focusing on addressing the needs of parents/caregivers and children simultaneously.

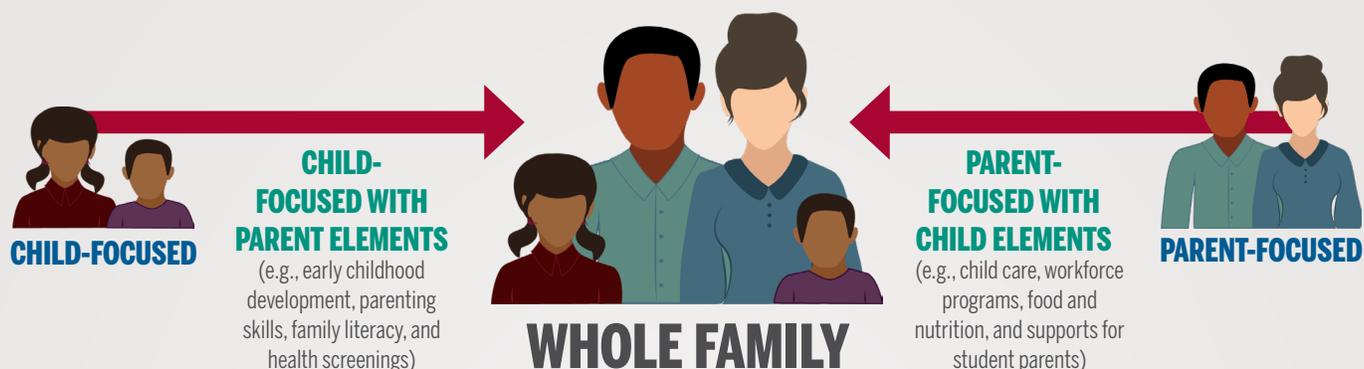
The program focused on five key components of the 2Gen approach: early childhood education (ECE), postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets, health and well-being, and social capital (Figure 2). Participating families received wraparound services which consisted of

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A Subgrantees: the eight organizations that were awarded the grant by UWCI to implement GF2020. Subgrantee organizations included the Community Alliance of the Far Eastside, East 10th United Methodist Church Children and Youth Center, Englewood Christian Church, Edna Martin Christian Center, John Boner Neighborhood Centers, Hawthorne Community Center, Marion County Commission on Youth, and Martin Luther King Community Center.

# GF2020 2GEN PROGRAM

**FIGURE 1.** Aspen Institute’s 2Gen model<sup>1</sup>



**FIGURE 2.** Five key components of 2Gen approach in the GF2020 program<sup>1</sup>



family coaching, social capital events, income supports, adult educational and job training opportunities, parenting skills, ECE services and activities, mental health services, and many others. Families would work with coaches to develop a success plan and set individual and family goals. Family coaches then connected participants with services and supports within the five key components of the GF2020 program that addressed multiple family needs (Figure 2). Participants were also encouraged to attend social capital activities hosted by subgrantees, which encourage peer-to-peer networking.

Ultimately, 2Gen programs like GF2020 are most effective when all organizations can work collaboratively to provide wraparound services for the families.

## METHODOLOGY

Throughout the five-year grant period, researchers surveyed subgrantees three times to examine how they worked with community partners. Survey results were supplemented with interviews and focus groups with subgrantees and some of their community partners to further highlight the benefits and challenges of GF2020 collaborations. Data also conveyed participating organization's insights into elevating and sustaining partner collaborations beyond GF2020.

## FINDINGS

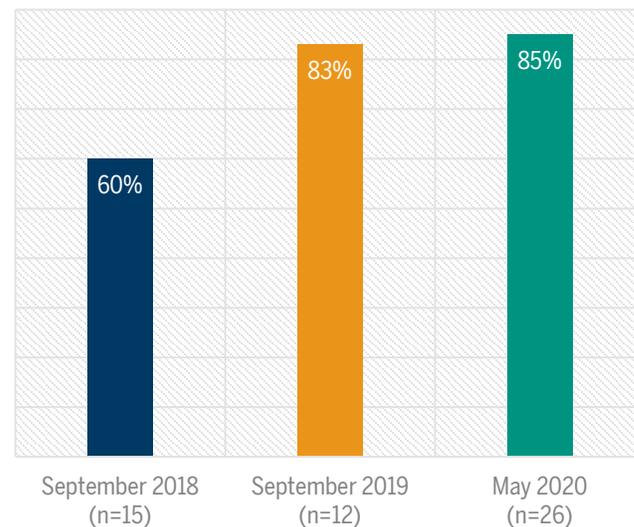
### BENEFITS OF GF2020 COLLABORATION

Collaboration between participating organizations was a key part of the implementation of the GF2020 program. GF2020 set out to improve coordination between organizations tasked with service provision. Subgrantees identified 77 community partners with which they worked to successfully implement GF2020.

#### Increased capacity to serve families

Subgrantees praised GF2020 for creating a framework to learn more about organizational partners. Many subgrantees said monthly peer-learning sessions helped to make them more aware of the benefits of 2Gen efforts, to build organizational capacity to successfully implement GF2020, and to learn, share, and exchange ideas on how to effectively meet the needs of families. UWCI hosted peer-

**FIGURE 3. The partnerships developed as a result of GF2020 have improved my organization's ability to serve families, % agree (N =53)**



learning sessions to provide subgrantees and their partners with tools and information to improve the effectiveness of GF2020 programming. Topics covered an array of subjects, such as partnership development, recruitment, capacity building, data management, grant writing, and operations during COVID-19.

Subgrantees and their partners noted that the wealth of knowledge and skills gained through these peer-learning sessions improved their capacity to serve more families. For instance, subgrantees and their partners learned more about the services that organizations within the GF2020 network offered, thereby increasing their knowledge of resources with which they can connect families in need of specific services. This is noteworthy as some subgrantees and their partners were not fully aware of the gamut of services families could access through their partner organizations. These factors bolstered organizational capacity, which increased as GF2020 progressed. As seen in Figure 3, the percentage of subgrantees who agreed that GF2020 increased their ability to serve families rose from 60 percent in September 2018 to 85 percent in May 2020.

*“The peer learnings that we attend monthly have given us the opportunity to meet other organizations, the employees of those organizations, and build relationships with*

*them so that we could provide families with the best services. Peer learnings gave us the opportunity to learn about other organizations' services and build long-lasting relationships as well. This will be helpful for us when [GF2020] ends."*

–Subgrantee staff member

### Stronger organizational partnerships

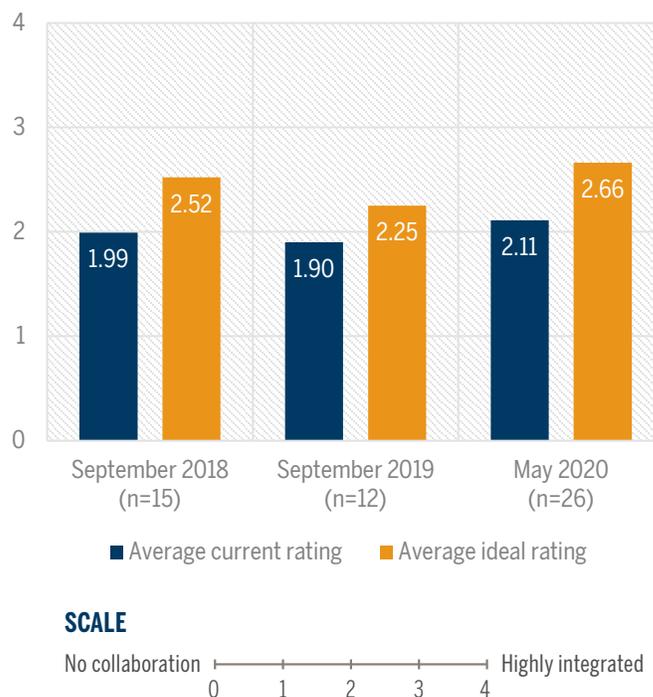
Community partners included organizations with which subgrantees have both formal and informal relationships, such as partnerships with ECE providers, mental health agencies, and other community-based organizations that span the core of 2Gen domains. The GF2020 model's emphasis on creating meaningful and intentional partnerships allowed subgrantees to solidify relationships with partners throughout GF2020. Using an adaptation of the Levels of Organizational Integration Rubric, subgrantee staff compared their current level of partner collaboration with their ideal level on a scale of no collaboration (0) to highly integrated (4).<sup>2</sup>

As seen in Figure 4, subgrantees rated collaborations with program partners higher in May 2020 than in September 2018, indicating shared and frequent communication, defined roles, and shared decision making. GF2020 allowed subgrantees and their partners to build better relationships, grounded in mutual benefits and shared goals. Subgrantees noted that the opportunity to robustly coordinate and expand services enhanced the experiences of organizational partners and families in the program.

*"One of the greatest benefits of GF2020 for us has been really deepening our partnership with [child care centers] and having their families aware of all the services and supports that are available through [subgrantee]. I think the interesting thing is, some of our partners, we do not necessarily consider a partner through GF2020 since they were existing partners. I think, what it really allowed is for stronger connection and more coordination. And I would say now because of GF2020, we are now coordinating resources, services, and problem solving."*

–Subgrantee staff member

**FIGURE 4. Subgrantee perception of ratings of collaboration with partners**



### BARRIERS TO GF2020 COLLABORATION

Subgrantees and their community partners also described challenges with collaboration. Several themes about barriers to better collaboration emerged, the foremost of which was staff turnover.

#### Staff turnover

Staff turnover is a widespread and persistent challenge in human services organizations. Turnover often imposes a large financial cost on these organizations and can limit organizational performance.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, turnover can interrupt cross-disciplinary partnerships in human services, making collaboration more difficult and time-consuming.<sup>4</sup>

Subgrantee staff consistently expressed that intentional and effective partnerships take time to foster. According to subgrantees, the high staff turnover experienced during the GF2020 program affected both interagency and cross-agency relationships. The introduction of new staff into preexisting roles affected relationships with both partners and participants. More specifically, subgrantees noted that filling vacant positions can be lengthy and time-consuming, resulting in inadequate staffing and additional

responsibilities for remaining employees. This limits internal capacity and, as a result, the ability of partner organizations to effectively collaborate in addressing the holistic needs of families.

*“One of our challenges has been staff overturn. So [an ECE provider] had [staff member] who was a huge part of their center and she worked really well with her families . . . and [two of the staff members from the ECE provider] left. Then we had a long period of time before we had anybody with us . . . We are starting to get back on track. But there was a period of time where families weren't really getting connected to the [subgrantee] as fast as they could have been or should have been and we were not collaborating in the ways that we used to.”*  
—Subgrantee staff

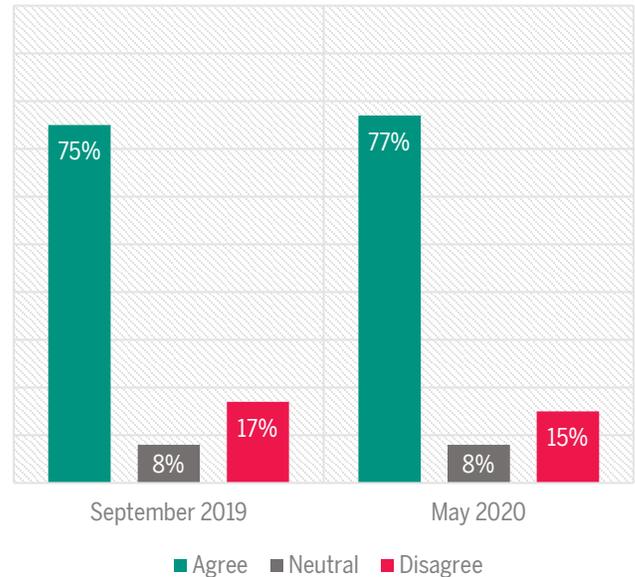
## IMPLICATIONS

A crucial point conveyed by subgrantee staff is that while GF2020 is a specific program model, the 2Gen framework can extend beyond GF2020. Subgrantees overwhelmingly believed partnerships will continue after GF2020. As seen in Figure 5, in September 2019, 75 percent of subgrantee survey participants indicated that partnerships would continue. This number rose to 77 percent in May 2020. Continuing these partnerships, even in a less formal capacity, has large implications for local 2Gen policy and organizations working to enhance family self-sufficiency and financial security for economically struggling families.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF 2GEN WORK

Some important considerations in expanding 2Gen programming beyond GF2020 is applying lessons learned through GF2020 implementation and leveraging the work of other organizations using a 2Gen or multi-generational approach to address family needs. Holistically minded 2Gen programs are experiencing a large growth, both among social service nonprofits and government institutions. Connecticut and Utah have pursued multi-gen legislation,<sup>5</sup> and Colorado has piloted an 11-county 2Gen adaptation of

**FIGURE 5. The partnerships developed as a result of GF2020 will continue after the program ends, % agree (N = 53)**



its Division of Child Support Services.<sup>6</sup> Local policy makers can benefit greatly from the wealth of evidence-based practices emerging from 2Gen and multi-gen programming in developing policies that attend to the needs of the entire family.

Organizations that have participated in GF2020 can partner with community-based organizations outside GF2020 and integrate 2Gen collaboration principles. Subgrantees and organizational partners can share their insights learned from GF2020 to improve collaboration. In fact, this is already happening through the Family Opportunity Fund<sup>B</sup> commissioned by UWCI to address persistent family poverty. UWCI, subgrantees, and their community partners have utilized lessons gained throughout GF2020 to improve service delivery coordination and enhance cross-agency collaboration. Specifically, UWCI has worked to strengthen organizational capacity and help community-based organizations serve the needs of the whole family.

<sup>B</sup> [The Family Opportunity Fund](#) was developed to break the cycle of poverty by addressing the entire family's needs through providing financial, education, physical, mental, and emotional health services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy makers and social service providers can take several steps to enhance effective cross-agency collaboration in future 2Gen programming. These recommendations encompass creating local opportunities for 2Gen implementation and facilitating 2Gen collaboration.

### CREATING LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2GEN PROGRAMMING

To create opportunities for 2Gen implementation in Indianapolis, policy makers and local service providers should leverage success of GF2020 partnerships for ongoing 2Gen programming. This entails increasing awareness among local nonprofits of the benefits of 2Gen programming for organizations, building organizational capacity to implement 2Gen efforts, and strengthening existing initiatives. Another aspect is identifying opportunities for implementation by partnering with service providers and potential organizations who can conduct 2Gen programming. There are many opportunities for 2Gen collaboration in the greater Indianapolis area. A 2017 survey of 263 nonprofits in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Area<sup>c</sup> uncovered that 26 percent provided human services and 17 percent provided services with public and societal benefit.<sup>7</sup> However, human service nonprofits are not the only possible 2Gen program partners. Subgrantees named a diverse array of partners, including governmental entities, educational institutions, and community development corporations that they worked with throughout GF2020.

### FACILITATING 2GEN COLLABORATION

As subgrantees stated, successful 2Gen programming is a highly collaborative goal, and requires constant effort on the part of staff in learning and relationship building. Future 2Gen programming in Indianapolis should emphasize ongoing learning and networking opportunities among partnering organizations to increase capacity and relationships among subgrantees and partnering organizations. These learning opportunities would also grant organizations the chance to network and share ideas about how to improve 2Gen programming.

Additionally, future 2Gen programming should address the barriers to successful collaboration. Most important, social service providers engaged in 2Gen programming should promote policies to address staff turnover. An idea suggested by a subgrantee to decrease turnover was hiring staff who buy-in to 2Gen collaborative principles. An emphasis on reducing staff turnover would facilitate better organizational collaboration.

### DEVELOP AN ADVISORY BOARD WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Organizations interested in developing and implementing 2Gen efforts should consider developing an advisory board with local community organizations, policy makers, and stakeholders that functions to inform the ongoing work of 2Gen programming. This advisory board can also alert staff and leadership within community-based organizations about opportunities and changes in the broader community, which could help them tailor their programming to better adapt to ongoing needs. GF2020 participants who receive services as stakeholders—and their lived experiences—should also be included in the advisory board decision-making process.

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<sup>c</sup> Indianapolis Metropolitan Area includes Boone, Brown, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Marion, Morgan, Putnam, and Shelby counties.

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This brief is the first in a series of three briefs discussing trends and findings from the implementation study conducted on United Way's Great Families 2020 program. The four-year initiative aimed to improve family stability for vulnerable children and their parents living in five neighborhoods in Indianapolis.