

# Our Impact Story

THE COUNCIL FOR BLACK MALE SUCCESS

One Village. One Goal. One Destiny.

A Community Impact Initiative of Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations

# Acknowledgements

**I**t takes vision, creativity and patience to produce a masterpiece. Graphic design entrepreneurs Jakai James and Laschelle Jameson of Youth Lens 360 created a way to honor the richness and complexity of the Council for Black Male Success (CBMS), a community impact initiative of Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations. Their mosaic themed image reflects those who have made valuable contributions to the initiative while making a visual statement about its ultimate goal — centering Black male youth and young men ages 11 – 32 in Saint Paul.

The following organizations made the Council for Black Male Success Impact Story possible:

**CBMS FUNDED ORGANIZATIONS:**

Above the E.D.G.E.  
ANEW BAM  
Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood  
Development Corporation  
Bolder Options  
Every Body's In  
Guadalupe Alternative Programs  
High School for the Recording Arts  
I AM Resources, Inc.  
Irreducible Grace Foundation  
J.K. Movement  
Mentoring Young Adults  
Past Athletes Concerned About Education (PACE)  
Ramsey County Community Corrections\*  
St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium  
St. Paul Youth Services  
SoulTouch Productions  
The Sanneh Foundation  
Ujamaa Place  
Youthprise  
YWCA St. Paul

*\*Community Member*

**INITIATIVE PARTNERS:**

Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations  
Propel Nonprofits  
Wilder Research  
Creative Catalysts, Inc.

**IMPACT STORY CREATIVE TEAM:**

Creative Catalysts, Inc.  
Third Sector Creative, Inc.  
Youth Lens 360

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Youth Lens 360



**“Give youth a chance to do something great  
and they will.”**

**DARIO OTERO,  
CEO/FOUNDER, YOUTH LENS 360**



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**The best time to plant a tree  
is twenty years ago.  
The second best time is now.**

**AFRICAN PROVERB**





# Foreword



We seek to dismantle the belief in a hierarchy of human value, with a focus on racial equity. Strengthened by a deeper understanding of the many facets of identity, we will work toward a community where all people experience justice and equity.

SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATIONS

# What difference did \$3 million make?

In February 2016, 26 Twin Cities area out-of-school time and economic opportunity program providers were invited to share insights with Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations (hereafter referenced as the Foundations) about ways to improve life outcomes for Black male youth and young men ages 11 – 32 in Saint Paul.

From the beginning, the African American Boys & Young Men Initiative, later named the Council for Black Male Success (CBMS), was under no illusion that \$3 million would significantly change the trajectory of 6,603 Saint Paul citizens who are Black males ages 11 – 32 (estimated data provided by Wilder Research). During its formative stage, the Council estimated that their agencies were, collectively, serving only about one third of the Black male population in that age range in Saint Paul. Changing a landscape and the negative patterns that have resulted from 400 years of oppression and marginalization in three years and \$3 million was considered an unrealistic expectation.

**We can't close a gap in three years that has existed for 400 years.**

As Twin Cities law professor and civil rights leader, Dr. Nekima Levy-Pounds stated:

***“African-American men...represent fewer than 5 percent of our state population but are more than 35 percent of our state prison population. They are more likely to have contacts with police and probation officers than college recruiters and job interviewers. They are also more likely to live in prison housing than on college campuses in our state. This has to change.”<sup>1</sup>***

The Council set out to answer a different impact question: ***What does it take to change the opportunity landscape for Black males in Saint Paul?***

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**Editorial Note:** “African American boys and young men” was used in Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations’ initial recommendation to the Board of Directors and throughout the first year of the initiative. The language “Black male youth and young men” was recommended by the Council and was adopted in Year 2.

# The Council for Black Male Success today:

## Who We Are

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The Council for Black Male Success (CBMS) is a Community Impact Initiative of Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations. Launched in 2016 as the African American Boys & Young Men Initiative, the Council is a network of 19 nonprofits dedicated to:

***Changing the opportunity landscape for Black male youth and young men between ages of 11 and 32 in Saint Paul.***

### **OUR VISION:**

A bigger world of opportunity that we can ALL navigate.

### **OUR PURPOSE:**

**One Village.** Believing in the spirit of Ubuntu: *I am because we are.* It takes all of us.

**One Goal.** Keeping Black males at the center, we are committed to the establishment of an opportunity framework and a policy framework that sets conditions for all the young men we serve to succeed.

**One Destiny.** Changing the **opportunity landscape** for Black male youth and young men between the ages 11 and 32 in Saint Paul.

### **OUR AREAS OF FOCUS:**

**Employment | Education | Mental Health | Housing**



# What differences made the most difference?

**C**entering Black males and connecting people and agencies that, until the start of this initiative, had not worked together were key factors in producing the tangible and intangible results that are described in this story.

*The Impact Story* is organized into four sections:

**Foreword:** This section introduces the intent of the African American Boys & Young Men Initiative.

**Key Insights:** An Impact Q&A – This section addresses specific questions related to the work and lessons learned:

- What did we set out to do?
- What happened?
- What resulted?
- What has changed?
- What did we learn?
- Where are we now?
- What is needed to achieve the next level of success?
- How did our collective work impact the lives of Black male youth and young men?
- What tells us that this model works... or not?

**Reflections:** Impact Points of View – This section highlights the vision, values and voices of agency leaders who were dedicated to the three-year journey. Their reflections are identified by four levels of impact:

- Individual Level Impact
- Organization Level Impact
- Collective Level Impact
- Systems Level Impact

**Afterword:** This section provides a forecast of where CBMS sees the work going in the near future and addresses questions including:

- Where do we grow from here?
- What is needed for the next level of success?
- What's the next work plan?

*Our Impact Story* is a story of determination. It is a compilation of insights and reflections about the differences that made a difference from the point of view of the people leading critical work on the frontlines. It is filled with hard truths and lessons learned, and it is being shared at a time when the CBMS is pivoting to more focused and deliberate action to collectively improve the lives of Black male youth and young men in Saint Paul.

# THE COUNCIL FOR BLACK MALE YOUTH ONE VILLAGE. ONE VOICE.

A COMMUNITY IMPACT INITIATIVE OF SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATIONS

**PURPOSE:** CHANGE THE OPPORTUNITY LANDSCAPE FOR BLACK MALE YOUTH AND YOUNG MEN



*Desired Outcome:*

- Better life outcomes for Black Male Youth & Young Men (Ages 11 – 32) in Saint Paul

*Focus Areas:*

- Employment • Education • Mental Health • Housing

**6,603 BLACK MALE YOUTH & YOUNG MEN**

Source: Wilder

• 2016 •

## CULTIVATING CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

**26 Nonprofit Leaders & Community Advisors**  
Inform the Initiative

**GOAL:**

Implement an African American Boys & Young Men Initiative to change the opportunity landscape

**KEY STRATEGIES:**

- Grounded in continuous learning with a person-centered approach.
- Intentionally collaborate with community partners in the design and implementation of social priority investing.
- Listening • Collaboration • Collective Impact • Targeted Investments

**KEY EVENTS:**

- February 24, 2016: First Convenings
- March 2016: Foundations Invest \$3M in Initiative
- June 10, 2016 Convening: Organizing for Impact
- July 26, 2016 Convening: Visioning for Impact
- November 18, 2016 Convening: Agreement on Propositions for Action
- December 16, 2016 Convening: Mapping Current Impact

• 2017 •

## PLANTING SEEDS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

**15 Agencies**  
1,752 African American Boys & Young Men

**GOAL:**

Strengthen capacity to implement social priority investing

**KEY STRATEGIES:**

- Collectively
- Capacity

**KEY EVENTS:**

- March 17, 2017 Convening
- May 17, 2017 Convening
- July 19, 2017 Convening
- September 28, 2017 Convening
- November 16, 2017 Convening

• KEY RESULTS •

- **Report: Discovering Transformative Opportunities for African American Youth & Young Men**
- **First Investments in Pilots & Projects**
- **Visioning & Common Agenda Framing**
- **Agreement on Propositions for Action**

- **Retained 2017**
- **Naming: The Council for Black Male Youth**
- **Steering Committee**

## • ORGANIZATIONS •

- Above the E.D.G.E. • ANEW BAM • Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development
- I AM Resources, Inc. • Irreducible Grace Foundation • J.K. Movement • Mentoring
- St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium • St. Paul Youth Services • SoulTouch Pro

# BLACK MALE SUCCESS GOAL. ONE DESTINY.

SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATIONS



**VISION:** A BIGGER WORLD  
OF OPPORTUNITY THAT WE  
CAN ALL NAVIGATE

## Key Results:

- 19 agencies: sustained commitment & active involvement
  - 80 grants: \$2.1 million awarded
- 12 agencies: capacity improvement grants awarded
  - 15 projects

2017 •

## COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Agencies Serve  
Black Youth & Young Men in Saint Paul

**GOAL:**  
To achieve outcomes.

### STRATEGIES:

• Impact  
• Building

### EVENTS:

• Planning: Impact Framing  
• Planning: Evaluating Impact  
• Planning: Evolving Collective Impact  
• Planning: Impact Storytelling  
• Planning: Planning for Year 3 Action

• 2018 •

## DEEPENING OUR ROOTS: GROWING THROUGH COLLECTIVE IMPACT

### GOAL:

More Black Youth & Young Men in Saint Paul are DIRECTLY INVOLVED in the CBMS initiative & we are able to collectively demonstrate BETTER OUTCOMES

### KEY STRATEGIES:

- Collective Action - Take action together to achieve measurable impact.
- Inform a New Narrative - Black Youth & Young Men served by CBMS member agencies learn about, envision and create narratives about their identities and dreams.

### KEY EVENTS:

- January 30, 2018 Convening: Kick-Off & Orientation
- March 21, 2018 Convening: Developing an Opportunity Framework
  - May 15, 2018 Convening: Developing a Public Framework
    - July 13-14, 2018: Healing Retreat
  - July 19, 2018 Convening: Co-creating a New Narrative
  - September 13, 2018 Convening: Exploring Sustainability
  - November 1, 2018 Convening: Sharing Our Impact Story

## RESULTS •

11 Agencies  
for Black Male Success  
Committee Launched

- Retained 19 Agencies
- Implemented Work Group Structure
- Optimal Development Framework
- Public Policy Framework
- Impact Story

ent Corporation • Bolder Options • Every Body's In • Guadalupe Alternative Programs • High School for the Recording Arts  
g Young Adults • Past Athletes Concerned About Education (PACE) • Ramsey County Community Corrections  
roductions • The Sanneh Foundation • Ujamaa Place • Youthprise • YWCA St. Paul





The Council for Black Male Success  
acknowledges the generous support of Saint Paul &  
Minnesota Foundations for its commitment to  
and active involvement in this initiative .

Our hope is that *Our Impact Story* will help to ensure  
a sustainable future for the continuation of  
the vital work that has been seeded by  
the Foundations and our partnership.

# Insights



AN IMPACT Q & A

**“To sustain a healthy community, we must look beyond the numbers; we must holistically examine the layered concept of connectedness... We will look for ways for communities to inform and form the work we do to strengthen the connectedness of the entire East Metro.”**

**ERIC JOLLY, PRESIDENT & CEO,  
SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATIONS**

**SOURCE: EAST METRO 2016 PULSE REPORT**



# What did we set out to do?

The three-year journey began in February 2016 by listening to and learning from 26 nonprofit agencies delivering out-of-school time and economic opportunity programs in Saint Paul. During the initial listening sessions, agency leaders identified the following blocks to equitable thriving among Black male youth and young men:

- Structural racism
- An education system that does not prepare young Black men for success
- Various forms of trauma/mental health issues
- Homelessness and lack of a safe space
- The need for trusting relationships

They articulated the need to...

- Change the narrative for African American boys and young men
- Heal as a community while we work to transform our youth. Need a growth mindset and to create patterns of resilience.
- Change baseline conditions of racial equity, homelessness, mental health, lack of education and skills
- Create sustainable pathways for success in education, employment and housing to support connectedness and self-sustaining patterns which promote male youth and young men's well-being and economic security.

## March 2016: Foundations Commitment

### POPULATION FOCUS:

Black male youth and young men ages 11–32

### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS:

Saint Paul

### INITIAL INTENDED OUTCOME:

African American boys and young men are ready to pursue a living wage career and/or career pathway education plan.

### INITIATIVE PARTNERS:

- **Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations** — Investment in participation and project grants and project support
- **Creative Catalysts** — Facilitation and Dream Support
- **Wilder Research** — Evaluation
- **Propel Nonprofits** — Capacity-Building

## ***“Stop using deficit language to define us or design initiatives in our communities.”***

Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations proposed a *new initiative to address education and economic racial disparities affecting African American boys and young men in partnership with a network of organizations serving and primarily led by African Americans.*

As a result of community insights, Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations committed \$3 million to focus on:

## **Changing the opportunity landscape for African American boys and young men.**

### **CORE WORK PROPOSED**

- Build a cohort of providers that will identify ways the Foundations can support them in building their own capacity
- Provide capacity building support for nonprofit partners based on provider input (grants & consulting services)
- Convene regular facilitated conversations

# What happened?

## Targeted Grantmaking Over Three Years

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Since 2016, 80 grants totaling more than \$2,100,000 were awarded to Council member organizations, of which 65 grants totaling more than \$1,000,000 were for participation and 15 grants totaling approximately \$1,050,000 were for project grants. In addition, 12 Council member organizations received capacity-building support through Propel Nonprofits and/or a third party vendor totaling more than \$125,000, and nine members received \$2,500 in funding to attend the 2017 Minnesota Council for Nonprofits Annual Conference. Other investments have included facilitation (Creative Catalysts, Inc.), convening expenses and evaluation (Wilder Research).

## Focused Engagement Over Three Years

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We recommended and followed through on our recommendations to regularly come together as a community of leaders focused on the needs of Black male youth and young men. Other African American-focused community summits and forums exist, but in the group emphasized the importance of doing things differently.:

- During each convening we shared information about our organizations and our work.
- Larger organizations paid attention to and supported smaller organizations

### 18 Full-Day Convenings

Total Over Three Years

### 19 Core Agencies

Demonstrated Sustained Commitment

#### YEAR 1:

### 26 Nonprofit Agencies Participated

#### FOCUS:

*Cultivating Conditions for Collective Impact*

#### YEAR 2:

### 21 Agencies Participated

#### FOCUS:

*Planting Seeds for Collective Impact*

#### YEAR 3:

### 19 Agencies Participated

#### FOCUS:

*Deepening Our Roots & Growing for Collective Impact*

# What resulted?

## How did our collective work impact the lives of Black male youth and young men?

- **We created a network that has sustained for three years.** We believe that the CBMS is better positioned now to help more Black male youth and young men because 19 agencies have built a foundation for ongoing collaboration and healing.
- **We created a shared vision for collective impact and a community-based platform** that is focused on the success of Black males that did not exist.
- **We co-created a set of recommendations about specific opportunities** to improve outcomes for Black male youth and young men. It is a holistic and responsive framework that suggests the necessary key assets needed for Black male success and greater impact across the age spectrum. (*Read CBMS Document: The Optimal Development Framework*)



- **We developed a policy framework that outlines targeted policies** to improve the health outcomes and health care, reduce over-incarceration, promote educational success as a community norm and promote economic equity. (*Read CBMS Document: A Public Policy Framework*)
- **We generated an impact narrative that affirms that the work of the Council for Black Male Success had an impact in immeasurable ways** — on the people who committed to the journey and consistently engaged in the experience, on their organizations and on the Black male youth and young men that they serve. (*Read CBMS Document: Our Impact Story*)

- **We were successful in taking the first steps toward our shared vision** of changing the opportunity landscape by mapping a continuum of support.



# What has changed?

In *Working Narratives*<sup>1</sup>, author Paul VanDeCarr writes, “It is difficult, even impossible for grantees to conclusively answer broad questions about their impact...Instead grantmakers might identify more specifically where impact can be observed.”

CBMS member reflections (see pages 26 – 31) demonstrate how the initiative had a transformational effect on individual, organizational, collective and systems levels. We adapted and applied seven **social impact indicators**<sup>2</sup> developed by Americans for the Arts to highlight key changes that were observed:

- **Knowledge:** We gained new awareness and understanding about what is required to be and work as a collective.
- **Behaviors:** During our convening and our first healing retreat, we were supported in practicing new behaviors together that are essential for collective work.
- **Dialogue:** We challenged each other through deeper conversations that centered on transforming how we work together, how we work with funders and how our organizations are doing the work of improving the lives of Black male youth and young men.
- **Mindset:** We consistently worked within a positive — strengths-based vs. deficit model. We recognized that a different mindset is required to create a new narrative about the Black community and the youth and young men we serve. Convenings began and ended with rituals and affirmations that are rooted in our cultural traditions.
- **Organization Capacity:** Twelve of our organizations were able to improve our effectiveness through capacity-building grants and support from Propel and several organizations were able to serve more people as a direct result of new partnerships that were formed through this initiative.
- **Collective Capacity:** This was a unique opportunity to actualize and be supported. Most of our organizations had not been in the same room let alone work together. Nineteen of our organizations participated in the three-year experience. Through our ongoing engagement, we strengthened our ability to work together, we began a healing process and we built productive partnerships.
- **Policy:** We developed our understanding of public policy and prioritized key areas for action.

1 VanDeCarr, P. (2013). *Storytelling and Social Change: A Strategy Guide for Grantmakers*. Working Narratives. Retrieved from: <https://workingnarratives.org>.

2 Continuum of Impact: A guide to defining social and civic outcomes and indicators (2017). Retrieved from: <http://animatingdemocracy.org/continuum-impact-guide>

# What did we learn?

## What Worked?

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- Time and space to learn about the problem
- What brought us together and kept us together: the focus on Black males
- Collective impact worked to an extent. However, it doesn't always work in culturally specific contexts. Culturally grounded approaches are needed to be effective.
- Capacity-building support
- Having consistent guidance and facilitation support
- Good work happened in spite of the difficulties



- Having the opportunity to work so closely with a group of brilliant people of the same origin
- We took the risk to work in a new way — honoring the wisdom of the community and collective capacity
- Conversations and building new relationships
- Data we gathered — a good starting point
- Forming four work groups around top priorities identified in Year 2: Engagement, Policy, Opportunity, Sustainability. Working in smaller groups enabled us to pivot.

**“Our organizations need to act together to be successful.”**

**“Knowledge changes the narrative.”**

## What Didn't?

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- The funding approaches were a loud and reverberating pain source.

*“The first round of money was like, ‘Hey, here’s your attendance check.’ You show up at the table you get \$10,000. End of 2016 into 2017, it was write an RFP. Some groups wrote together. You didn’t get the same amount of money. Some got \$40K, some got \$25K, some got \$75K. I mean it was all over the place. A year later, everybody gets the same amount no matter what your size, right? We’re unhappy and the money is pain.”*

- Evaluation became negative factor in the experience. The presence of an evaluator worked for some and it caused an unproductive dynamic that took up a lot of space.

*“The Council has been in conflict with evaluation from the very beginning, because Wilder was assumed to be the evaluator for the Foundations, but not the evaluator for our group. If they are getting paid this much money out of the money allocated to this group, they should be the evaluator for the work of group. This was an unacceptable violation of trust, and the group never healed.”*

- Most of us seemed to operate under different assumptions, expectations and understandings. Being intentional AND transparent is vitally important in collective work.
- While there was facilitation support for convenings, the initiative needed a solid backbone structure outside of the Foundations.
- The lack of youth perspective. We didn’t do a good job of orienting and engaging the youth and young men. We wound up focusing on ourselves which, in some ways, was more important and necessary.

*“Almost all of our meetings were without the young men in the room. I think that was because of the level of fragility that organizations felt inside themselves and then with each other. So trust had to be built. Bonding had to be built. A sense of a bigger collective. I think now we’re there.”*

**“We achieved a spiritual ‘yes’ but not an embodied ‘yes’ regarding the collective model.”**



## What Were the Key Challenges?

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Every new movement confronts overwhelming problems.

- Not focusing on healing on personal and interpersonal levels
- There were healthy and unhealthy tensions from the beginning that lingered throughout the three years around power, roles, ownership, accountability and transparency. These tensions got in the way of progress.

***“The ongoing tension and conflict we experienced must be acknowledged for what it truly was. This is what oppression does.”***

- Facilitating a collective is challenging. The line between facilitating and leading sometimes was blurred and this caused tension.
- There were different expectations at different times.
- We were not always unified. Part of this was due to attempting to working collectively without agreements.
- There were divided interests.



- Funding criteria was not clear and became the root of ongoing conflict and dissatisfaction with the experience.
- Counter-productive interpersonal and group dynamics.
- Ambiguity and communication gaps. Hidden patterns that slowed progress.
- Ongoing mistrust of process and each other
- We didn't consistently include young men in the work of the Council

**“For some, this [initiative] was an unfamiliar slope.”**

# Key lessons:

## Relationships matter.

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### **The village can only grow if we spend time together listening.**

The bottom line is that **the village needs a village**. We who are holding the ecosystem for young men also need to be an ecosystem with each other. Part of the missing ingredient before is that people building those deeper bonds of collegiality with each other through the work groups. This allows us to be a resource for young men in a way we could have never been a resource for the young men before.

## Trust matters.

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There were times when the Foundations didn't seem to trust us, we didn't trust each other, and we didn't trust the Foundations. Lack of trust (fueled by a perceived lack of transparency) was a seed that nearly corroded our root system.

## How we are matters.

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### **Core needs: Safety...honesty...hope.**

In order to be effective and be the village that our Black males need, we need to create conditions that allow us to develop a pattern of resilience.

***“We are not out of ideas or solutions. We need to deal with tough things with a different spirit.”***

- Find, determine and demonstrate success as we see it.
- Create our own entrepreneurial funding, or pathway to fund our work.
- Recognize historical impact of social and cultural racism.
- Create a collective space for our work.

This work is really about what WE want to create.

**“Being with like-minded people is important. Leadership gets lonely. Through the CBMS, I am able to reimagine.”**

## Learning & adaptation matter.

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- This is not a linear process.
- An emergent strategy is a better approach.
- Continuous adaptation is key – “Going back to go forward.”

## Healing matters.

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### We have to heal in order to heal others.

The Healing Retreat (July 2018) revealed to us that historical trauma runs deep. CBMS healing and resolution must be funded and supported so that we can continue listening and building trust.

***“We acknowledge that we haven’t always given our best. We’re doing the best we can.”***

***“You can’t pour from an empty cup.”***

***“Systems are designed for oppression so we turn on ourselves.”***

We must acknowledge and address the huge need for healing within communities of color as a prerequisite for success in working with Black male youth and young men.

- We experience the effects of history, pain and trauma as a community.
- There is internal work to be done within the community. Always be mindful that we do have baggage with ourselves and each other. Don’t pull each other’s coattails in a negative way.
- African Americans are taught from a young age to be strong and not show any emotion or hurt. How do you create a healthy community if you are not healthy yourself? We need to come to a place of self-care and keep pushing to change ourselves. How do we heal as communities and organizations?
- There are divides in the community around age and social economic status. We must bridge the differences between organizations and among community leaders.

**“The biggest threat to the success and impact of this initiative is our own woundedness.”**



# What tells us this model works... or not?

## New Growth

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Organizations showed that they could rally together to help remove barriers for those that could not access resources on their own.

***“This was a powerful experience.”***

Constructive discomfort created opportunities for individual and collective learning and growth.

- We CAN come together.
- We CAN work together.
- We have to have difficult conversations.
- We were able to get to new levels of understanding by allowing space to “sit in it.”
- Collective work is harder for some. This initiative requires learning how to play together in the sand box.
- Anger was fuel (was about passion).
- New energy
- New ideas
- Even the storming had value.

***“It may not have been a perfect experience, but everybody learned something as individuals and organizations. Yes, there was a little bit more money and there’s been a strengthening of the fibers around the organizations that participated.”***

## New Capacity

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Now that we’re in Year 3, we get that we really have to take a collective approach. We get that we have to have shared measurements. We also get that we’re uncomfortable with the measures that matter being defined externally. We need to define what the measures are.

So, the challenge with limited resources and time, face time, spirit time with people, is to generate the conditions for this ‘we’ to emerge. And some of that ‘we’ is here now; it was not here before but some of that ‘we’ is here. So what is that ‘we’ saying?

**“Finally, people are seeing my value. That’s transformative. I think that’s an important story.”**



This initiative provided tangible resources to do the work. Organizations were able to fill gaps in order to serve more people – e.g., providing stipends for involvement and paying people for their time and skills who for years have been volunteering.

Participants were compensated for their expertise and time, which enabled leaders to spend full days developing their own capacity and doing the critical developmental work that it takes to be in a collective.

## New Hope

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# “Nothing without us is for us!”

The 19 agencies that committed to the three-year journey can now see the potential for greater impact.

## New Questions

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Through the best and most challenging parts of the journey, 19 of us stayed engaged and kept asking questions and challenging the process in the spirit of achieving better results for our Black male youth and young men because they deserve nothing less from us. As we prepare for our next chapter, following are new questions that we have posed to help shape the work ahead:

- What would it take to authentically inform, form, benefit?
- What’s our role and obligation to a changing landscape?
- How do we manifest the highest impact narrative?
- What’s our dream strategy?
- How do we nourish positive energy?
- What if there was more support?
- How do we manifest the highest potential that we have uncovered in the first three years?
- How do we handle toxic grief?

# Where are we now?

**“Something happened here. We need to stay in the process. Keep pushing.”**

We are at the end of the Foundations’ initial three-year commitment. While not everything we intended to do was accomplished, we met the core work of the initiative that was proposed by the Community Impact Staff to the Foundations’ Board including:

- Building a cohort of providers that will identify ways the Foundations can support them in building their own capacity
- Providing capacity-building support for nonprofit partners based on provider input (grants & consulting services)
- Convening regular facilitated conversations

The CBMS steering committee and working groups are now in the process of formulating a proposal to submit to Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations and we have requested the Foundations’ support to secure additional funding to grow the initiative.

***“We can’t just be happy to be here. This work is important and urgent. It’s valuable to our people, city, state and world.”***

# What is needed to achieve the next level of success?

**“We have an obligation to the village. We need to honor the future we want to create.”**

**“We know that we need to be generative for the sake of our young men. We want to stay engaged.”**

**“Our currency needs to be about energy not just money.”**



## The words that best describe our journey:





The greatest need we have  
is for more time and more resources  
to demonstrate that what we are doing  
is different and impactful.

Our work needs to go deeper not wider.

# Reflections



IMPACT POINTS OF VIEW

## The Council for Black Male Success

Reflections of participants listed in order by organization name.

**“In this space  
I am seen,  
I am heard,  
I am powerful.”**



**Quadree Drakeford**  
*CEO*  
**Above the E.D.G.E.**

**“Our struggle is against our own weakness.” — Almicar Cabral**



**Kevin Robinson**  
*Executive Director*  
**ANEW BAM**

**“Transformational!”**



**Damone Presley**  
*Program Director*  
**Aurora St. Anthony  
Neighborhood  
Development  
Corporation**

**“Black lives matter for which we can make a difference as a community! I’ve been with the project from the beginning, and it was beautiful seeing representatives at the table that were of color doing work for people of color.”**





**Rob Lyons**  
*Outreach Director*  
**Bolder Options**

“Black boys and young men are coming even closer to ‘living their best life’ because we are creating a community that embodies systems that promote equity, justice and responsiveness that nurtures and uplifts them. They are celebrated for the assets, strengths, values and innovations that they have always provided and will continue to provide in making our communities and our country great.”



**Mary K Boyd**  
*Co-Founder*  
**Every Body's In**

“Due to the opportunity to pause and come together we learned about each other, our respective agencies/ programs, built trust, respect and established a confirmation that we all want success for our Black males. Emanating from a community of caring people evolved the understanding that collectively and collaboratively we have a better chance to transform the lives of more Black men... Hopefully other foundations will listen and learn from this work.”



**Corey Byrd Sr.**  
*Director of Welcome and Keep Program*  
**Guadalupe Alternative Programs**

“As long as people are living on *Earth* they will need a place to stay/live and if we can be the *landlords* they will come to *us*.”



**Tony Simmons**  
*Executive Director*  
**High School for Recording Arts**

“Setting a new course regarding the current unrecognized genius and untapped potential of black boys and young men is what this work is all about!”



**Cornelius Sangster**  
*Youth Leader*  
**High School for the  
Recording Arts/  
Individuals with Dreams**

**“We are restructuring the narrative in a positive light.”**



**Iris Cornelius, Ph. D**  
*Executive Director*  
**I AM Resources, Inc.**

**“Remember, all that is human is mine.”**



**Darlene Fry**  
*Executive Director &  
Founder*  
**Irreducible Grace  
Foundation**

**“We have come together to work for improvement on multiple levels of the current community barriers for Black males and boys. We have grown immeasurably individually, as organizations and as a forming council. Watch out!!!”**



**Johnny Allen Jr.**  
*Founder/Executive  
Director*  
**JK Movement**

**“Teamwork makes the dream work!!!”**



**Dora Jones**  
*Executive Director*  
**Mentoring Young Adults**

**“Our frontline warriors and soldiers are still at the table, still fighting the fight. You either fight or flight, we have chosen to fight the fight!!”**



**Clyde Turner**  
*Executive Director/  
President*  
**PACE (Past Athletes  
Concerned About  
Education)**

**“The Initiative gave us funding and support to motivate students’ eagerness to learn and to look beyond graduation for a successful journey in the long term.”**



**Michael R. Steward**  
*Program Specialist/Hiring  
Coordinator*  
**Ramsey County  
Community Corrections**

**“Working together (as the Council for Black Male Success) we’re equipping Black males for their roles in becoming stronger fathers, helping to develop more mature young men desiring better lives. I’ve personally witnessed growth and determination of several participants attending programs sponsored by organizations within the Council for Black Male Success who have become better husbands, better sons, better brothers, better uncles for their families, and are now working and living as successful members of our community.”**



**Robin P. Hickman**  
*CEO and Executive  
Producer*  
**SoulTouch Productions**

**“On this journey, I most valued the vision of possibilities. The vision that there is this level/ volume of work being done on behalf of Black males; to be able to visually see that. I value knowing that the efforts are happening, and I can be a part of advocating; I can bear witness to say it’s happening and to see Black men (and women) that look like the young men (that we are serving) are in leadership roles contributing to their lives, I truly value that.”**



**Tom Cytron-Hysom**  
*Facilitator*  
**St. Paul Community  
Literacy Consortium**

**“CBMS has provided a forum for the community to come together in concrete support of Black boys and youth.”**



**Dr. Tracine Asberry**  
*Executive Director*  
**St. Paul Youth Services**

**“Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations’ Council for Black Male Success (CBMS) demonstrates the Foundations’ commitment to advancing racial equity in proportion to the heartbreaking data the East Metro Pulse highlighted when it was launched, 2017. It’s not enough to expose the disparities in Saint Paul. The Foundations via the CBMS proves that philanthropy must lead and act in creative and urgent ways to decrease and yes, eliminate these disparities simply because it’s within their circle of influence and power to do so. The CBMS has amplified the Foundations’ efforts to face race for 3 years by creating the best conditions to achieve measurable and sustainable outcomes in education, economic development, mental health and comprehensive wellness, housing stability, and social entrepreneurial destiny. This is not merely a passing fad. Rather a philanthropic movement for Black Male Success led by Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations that others in their sector will soon follow.”**



**Christian McCleary**  
*Program Assistant*  
**St. Paul Community  
Literacy Consortium**

**“A high moment for me was being able to see the passion and knowledge that’s at the table. We have so many patient beautiful council members at the table which reminds us that we are not in this work alone and we have different tactics that advocate for our community. The fact that we are doing things for black young men in our community is beautiful. One Village. One Goal. One Destiny.”**





**Todd Barnes**  
*CBMS Representative*  
**The Sanneh Foundation**

**“The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations stepped out on a limb, believed in the community they are serving, and the dividends are about to come pouring in!”**



**Kedar Hickman**  
*Program Director*  
**Ujamaa Place**

**“Our organizations are stronger, we are more effectively and intentionally working together and most importantly, we are serving Black boys and men in a way they can get closer to living their optimal lives.”**



**Maurice Nins**  
*Grants & Compliance Officer*  
**Youthprise**

**“My response as a funder would be that the work around Black male success has deepened my organization’s relationships with many of the organizations that we fund and has helped to educate me and my staff on not only the obstacles that young Black males face, but also the obstacles that organizations that serve young Black males face.”**



**Tom Ellis**  
*Manager of Workforce Development*  
**YWCA St. Paul**

**“The Council for Black Male Success has inspired meaningful community engagement thus allowing us to identify as well as learn from each other about practices, needs as well as service gaps among African American men and boys. Through community organizations primarily led by African Americans we have and will continue to explore how to create strategies thus providing resources that address such barriers.”**

## YOUTH VOICES:

# What says “Successful Black Male”?

- 
- Being physically, mentally, emotionally well
  - Being a provider and role model
  - Taking care of family
  - Someone who can do whatever he pleases in a positive way
  - Stability
  - Having wealth for health
  - Work ethic
  - Being supportive
  - Knowing who you are, love yourself more and hate yourself less
  - Fulfill purpose and reach full potential
  - Getting to where we want to be in life without working so hard
  - Maintaining everything I have acquired without working so hard to get it
  - Being proud of their success and want to teach others to be successful
  - Has a job and takes care of others around him
  - A suit and good communications skills
  - Someone who finds something they really want to do in life and actually does it – and helps others with a similar task
  - Being free men — when you can say you’re a free man — no strings attached — doing what you love do
  - Not playing the victim
  - Keeping your head up
  - Black male who has a goal; he’s in a state of mind where he’s building, in the grind, wants something and will work to get it
  - Having confidence in himself...Material success is extra; self-esteem and confidence is first part of success
  - Having internal power; he is a producer, not a consumer
  - Someone who has their own business



## YOUTH VOICES:

# What are barriers to becoming a “Successful Black Male”?

- Being Black
- Being put in a place where we [Black males] have to sell drugs in order to feed our families, stealing in order to eat. Risking jail for basic necessities.
- Lack of entrepreneurship/ability to liberate self and family through economics. Black people have the skills to hustle but no education to turn it into wealth — “I know it [entrepreneurship] is important because they’re teaching it in the suburbs.”
- Lack of knowing transferable skills; taking knowledge from one lower-rung job and applying it to something better/more lucrative
- Lack of action — moving past the negative to think about what can I/we do
- Being under-estimated
- Drug use
- Attitude
- I am my own obstacle
- Blaming the system
- Procrastination
- People you’re around
- Home and life problems
- Opportunities don’t show themselves
- Getting put in prison for nothing
- Getting shot by the police for no reason
- Segregation
- Knowing yourself as a person; if you don’t know who you are, how can you be successful?







# Afterword





# Where do we grow from here?



Sankofa is an Akan word that translates as “return and collect it.” Sankofa expresses the importance of reflecting on and searching the past in order to bring back its lessons, principles and stories as seeds for the future.

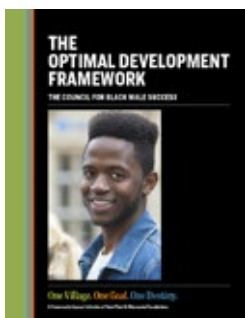
The seeds of what began as the African American Boys & Young Men Initiative grew to what has become the Council for Black Male Success. In each stage of the three-year journey, we were intentional about the need to create conditions for seeds to be planted and germinate and grow regardless of what happened.

## What’s the next work plan?

*“The clearer you are as a group about where you’re going, the more you can relax into collaborative innovation around how to get there. You can relax into decentralization...what is easy and sustainable.”*

— ADRIENNE BROWN, AUTHOR, *EMERGENT STRATEGY*

The two action frameworks that were produced by CBMS work groups in 2018 Year (3), the *Optimal Development Framework* and the *Public Policy Framework* are solid paths toward changing the opportunity landscape for Black male youth and young men.



### The Optimal Development Framework:

Guidelines for the journey toward success and thriving for every Black male youth and young man.



### A Public Policy Framework:

To change the opportunity landscape with a focus on employment, education, mental health and housing.

## Other future planned actions include:

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- Continued learning and practice about how to work together as a “beloved community” and mirror values and respect that honor who we are and what we aspire to do.
- Intentionally engaging youth in the future work. Tap more into Black male ingenuity for perspective and problem-solving.
- One scenario in development is the formation of youth-led council of Black male youth and young men — people who are being served in this ecosystem, being nourished in this ecosystem. The current Council would continue serving

as a “village trust” to co-craft the ecosystem of supports, so that young Black men are a part of the process of addressing the persistent challenges that are blocking our success.

- An opportunity to implement the frameworks that we developed in Year 3 in order to create an ecosystem that is hyper-focused on the needs of Black male youth and young men.
- Define the evaluation agenda that WE want and develop the strategies and skills to measure and articulate our impact.
- Being our “collective best” will require a sustainable backbone organization to carry out the next level of work.
- New allies and resources in the form of a collective investment strategy and an expanded funding base to include not only philanthropic entities. We need the wealth of Black people to help grow our movement.

***We need to be in a better position to deliver what one nonprofit or agency strategy cannot. We know that we cannot rely on one funder.***



A circular mosaic pattern composed of many small, square tiles. The tiles are arranged in concentric rings, with the outer rings being a darker green and the inner rings being a lighter green or white. The pattern creates a sense of depth and movement, resembling a tunnel or a well.

**“If we do this well,  
we’ll shape a  
new trajectory.”**





# One Village. One Goal. One Destiny.

The Council for Black Male Success  
is a Community Impact Initiative of Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations



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