

REIMAGINE LEARNING IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED

Grantmaking and Capacity Building

For over twenty years, New Profit has provided unrestricted growth capital and strategic support to help scale and strengthen innovative nonprofit organizations. Reimagine Learning harnessed that approach and expertise to invest in increasing the effectiveness and impact of organizations focused on transforming K-12 learning environments to better serve the diverse needs of underserved students. In addition to providing New Profit's traditional leadership development and organizational capacity building supports, Reimagine Learning advised grantee-partner organizations on making programmatic changes to enhance their capacity to meet the needs of our most underserved students, such as students with learning differences and students whose exposure to trauma impacts their ability to learn. We invested both in organizations seeking to scale innovations focused on these underserved students as well as organizations seeking to shape general education innovations—such as personalized learning and project-based learning—to meet the needs of all learners. Through these efforts, we sought to ensure that innovations in general K-12 education are optimized to support diverse learners and that innovations in special education are bridged into general education so they can support all students.

When we entered the field in 2012, we did a landscape analysis and saw two trends in the education ecosystem that guided our efforts. First, there were very few organizations focused on serving students with learning differences operating at scale and as a whole, the field was nascent and had low levels of entrepreneurial activity. Second, we found that there were general education organizations who were at scale and poised to infuse a focus on serving specific subpopulations into their programs but were in very early stages of determining how to do so.

To address these trends, we took on two parallel tracks. We provided unrestricted grants to early-stage organizations who were testing, iterating, and scaling an innovation focused on serving diverse learners or bringing a research-backed insight on diverse learners into practice (e.g. bringing to market research-informed insights generated in universities, which were challenging to scale due to different funding structures, incentives, culture, and skill sets). In tandem, we funded general education platform organizations to support their efforts to infuse a focus on better serving diverse learners into their organizational practices

and integrate innovations designed for diverse learners into their programs, which already had significant scale and reach. A major part of this work was walking these general education organizations through the continuum from curiosity to capacity when it came to explicitly serving diverse learners.



Although we faced barriers at each stage, we prompted organizations serving millions of students across the country to commit to both integrating specific supports into their programs for underserved students and to disaggregate data for student sub-groups and see trends around student performance that helped them hone in on strategies for student supports.

Impact

CAPITAL INFUSION

Invested over \$15M in unrestricted grants in [25 social entrepreneur-led organizations](#) that collectively serve over 7 million students nationwide

STRATEGIC ADVISORY SUPPORT

Enhanced strategic clarity and organizational capacity of grantee-partners by:

- Providing 1:1 strategic advisory support through New Profit deal partners;
- Leveraging over \$9M in pro bono strategic consulting from Deloitte-Monitor and Vantage Partners;
- Organizing fishbowl advisory sessions where over 60 members of the Reimagine Learning network served as expert advisors to help address acute strategic questions facing grantee-partner organizations; and
- Facilitating four convenings for grantees and practitioners to create opportunities for peer-to-peer learning focused on organizational capacity building in areas such as partnerships, policy, and continuous improvement.

CROSS-ORGANIZATION COLLABORATIONS

Reimagine Learning grantee-partners reported 52 formal collaborations and 90 informal collaborations between grantee organizations.

Lessons Learned

FLEXIBLE FUNDING FUELS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Unrestricted grants were an important tool to enable innovation and organizational risk-taking and learning on how to better serve diverse learners, incentivize deep participation in the Reimagine Learning network, and encourage cross-organization collaboration.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL

It was critical to leverage both New Profit's expertise in organizational capacity building and network members' expertise in programmatic approaches to serving diverse learners to achieve Reimagine Learning's goal to enhance grantee-partners' ability to better serve the diverse needs of all learners and to influence the broader field to do the same.

COORDINATED FUNDING CAN SERVE AS A WIN-WIN FOR ALL PARTIES

In a collaborative funding initiative, there is an opportunity to strategically coordinate funding. In Reimagine Learning's case, the Fund provided unrestricted grants that grantee-partners could direct toward organizational capacity building, while individual funders provided additional programmatic funding to the Fund's grantees most aligned with their grantmaking focus. These types of investments were mutually reinforcing and necessary in accelerating the organizations' impact.

ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO GO ON A JOURNEY TO GET TO ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO SERVE DIVERSE LEARNERS

We sought out to walk grantee-partner organizations through a behavior change continuum from curiosity, to mindset shifts, to commitment, to capacity to serve diverse learners. During every step in that continuum, there are barriers so it takes a persistent and intentional effort to move organizations along it. One lever that helped was the positive effects of organizations being a part of a broader network, because once leaders saw other organizations in the network who were committed to change, they started to develop curiosity about how they could adapt their own organization to better serve diverse learners.