



TRANSFORMING
SOLIDARITY

RESILIENCE AND REIMAGINING

A Multi-Partner Framework for Nonprofit
Wellbeing and Structural Adaptation



Dear Partners in Philanthropy,

Detroit knows what happens when philanthropy decides to fund the system, not the projects. In 2007, a coalition of foundations seeded the New Economy Initiative (NEI) and - over time - committed **\$159 million** to build a **small-business ecosystem**: connectors, advisors, capital pipelines, data and coaching. That infrastructure didn't simply help entrepreneurs; **it lifted a market**. That ecosystem has generated an estimated **\$2.9 billion in economic output** and **23,000+ jobs** - proof that **system investments** pay civic dividends.

This impact was demonstrated again through the **Detroit Community Development ecosystem**, where philanthropy pooled dollars through Enterprise Community Partners, alongside CDAD and local foundations. The Detroit CDO Fund deployed **more than \$10 million** in flexible operating support to community development organizations across neighborhoods and proves that **pooled capital + intermediary coordination = stronger, more durable organizations**.

When philanthropy invests in the system - not just the frontline - everything downstream becomes stronger and more sustainable. Today, our region's nonprofit sector needs the same kind of **bold infrastructure investment**.

Nonprofits are the operating system of community well-being. Yet the intermediaries that knit this sector together are asked to deliver at scale while competing for short-term dollars against the very organizations we exist to support.

That is a structural flaw we can fix together.

The Ask: A multi-year, pooled investment in Intermediary Infrastructure and Nonprofit Resilience.

The Transforming Solidarity Collective, made up of Michigan Community Resources (MCR), Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW), Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA), Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD), and Co.act Detroit, invites Detroit's philanthropic leadership to underwrite the backbone of nonprofit resilience in a moment in our history when nonprofits are on the frontline of preserving our democracy.

We are facing policy headwinds, funding volatility, online/offline harassment and leadership churn across the sector. Nonprofits report being over extended while demand rises.

The Resilience & Reimagining Framework functions as a continuum of care for nonprofits—connecting legal defense, crisis stabilization, capacity-building, leadership transition support, digital safety, advocacy protection, mental health, and data foresight.

To make this real, we are seeking a minimum investment of \$2.8 million per year for 3 years.

(\$8.5M total with inflation + cost-of-living).

Join us in underwriting the infrastructure needed for Southeast Michigan's nonprofits to not only withstand the storm but lead us through it.

In solidarity and resolve,

Shamyle Maya Dobbs, and the Transforming Solidarity Collective.

Michigan Community Resources. CDAD. Co.act Detroit. MNA. NEW



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Executive Summary

Southeast Michigan's nonprofit sector is navigating a period of significant strain, facing economic instability, political polarization, and heightened community need—within a support ecosystem that is often fragmented and uneven. These conditions demand a response that is both immediate and enduring, that meets nonprofits where they are and strengthens the field as a whole.

The Transforming Solidarity Collective (TSC), a network of Southeast Michigan intermediary organizations, has reconvened to address these challenges in partnership with funders, policy advocates, and other sector leaders. Formed as a coalition of the willing during the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice uprisings of 2020, the TSC leverages deep community relationships, shared values, and proven collaboration to protect and strengthen the nonprofit ecosystem during this period of instability.

This proposed framework brings together a diverse network of intermediary organizations, funders, and other allies to activate a “continuum of care” that addresses the full range of nonprofit needs. Unlike approaches that prioritize a single structural pathway, this framework recognizes that resilience is built through honoring nonprofit choice and agency, by offering a spectrum of solutions tailored to each organization's mission and context.

The framework is modular by design, enabling partners and funders to engage with the components most aligned with their missions while contributing to a unified, equity-centered infrastructure. This approach ensures nonprofits can access timely, relevant support.

Strategies are organized into four integrated categories:

- **Advocacy & Voice** – Builds nonprofit capacity for safe and effective advocacy.
- **Capacity & Resilience** – Strengthens nonprofit infrastructure and adaptability.
- **Crisis & Stabilization Supports** – Provides fast-turnaround funding, legal assistance, and operational resources for organizations facing acute threats.
- **Information & Foresight** – Equips nonprofits with knowledge and tools to anticipate and adapt to change in real time.

Those who support and participate in implementing this framework are investing in comprehensive, elective solutions for nonprofits and the communities they serve, rather than prescribed, one-size-fits-all strategies. By centering governance with the field leaders who work most closely with nonprofits and by integrating partner strengths into a coordinated system, we can ensure that support is equitable, relevant, and sustainable.

This is an invitation to funders, partners, and allies to join us in strengthening Southeast Michigan's nonprofit ecosystem—protecting its diversity, amplifying its collective voice, and building the resilience needed for both today's challenges and the opportunities ahead.

Background

Since the inauguration of President Trump, the scrutiny facing our organizations and the most vulnerable members of our communities has increased each day. Collectively, we are facing a period of programmatic censorship and service interruption because of political targeting. Nonprofits on the front lines must be equipped to continue to provide direct support to their constituents, especially in the face of government funding cuts and rhetorical attacks on our intrinsic value and efficacy.

In the spring of 2025, the Transforming Solidarity Collective (TSC) reconvened. The Transforming Solidarity Collective is a group of Southeast Michigan based intermediary nonprofits that include leaders from Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD), Co.act Detroit, Michigan Community Resources (MCR), Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA), and Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW). This group was initially formed as a collective of Black and brown women leaders with heart and passion for community, decades of experience working in the social sector, and shared challenges and accomplishments. In 2020, these leaders came together formally to strategize ways to ensure the communities they lived, worked, and served in would not be forgotten amid the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice uprisings in the U.S.

The necessity of reconvening the TSC in 2025 is clear: our sector is at risk again and requires a networked, collaborative response. To respond to our sector's needs, on behalf of the TSC, MCR invited aligned and interested funders to a joint meeting to inventory nonprofit needs and response capacity. Attendees included TSC organizations as well as representatives from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Hudson-Webber Foundation, Kresge Foundation, McGregor Fund, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, and the Skillman Foundation. Other interested funders who could not attend the gathering in June include the Ann Arbor Community Foundation, Erb Family Foundation, Ford Philanthropy, Gilbert Family Foundation, Transforming Power Fund, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Introduction

The nonprofit sector in Southeast Michigan faces a confluence of complex challenges: funding volatility, leadership transitions, political pressure, and growing demand for services. At the same time, organizations are expressing urgent needs for safe spaces, collaboration, and meaningful support. In response, this proposal outlines a unified framework that synthesizes Southeast Michigan's strongest assets and strategies. For the purposes of this proposal, we're defining Southeast Michigan as including the seven counties of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

We're proposing an intentionally coordinated continuum of care, rather than an inventory of standalone programs or services. The following sections outline how the TSC can collaboratively and holistically support the nonprofit sector in navigating a period of new systemic instability by integrating healing centered capacity building and organizational resilience services, strategic adaptation, narrative change, and formal repositioning resources

and tactics. These will be carried out within a unified, flexible infrastructure that can be replicated and implemented beyond Southeast Michigan.

As the first layer of this support network, the organizations that make up the TSC remain committed to being in ongoing relationship and partnership with each other and the rest of the social impact sector and will continue to work from our shared foundational value of real time, responsive iteration.

This interwoven structure ensures that nonprofits don't fall through the cracks or face crisis alone. Instead, organizations move through a supported, informed, and adaptive ecosystem—one that values healing as much as strategy, and which offers continuity and celebrations of resilience and collaboration in a time of disruption.

In addition to this proposal, after the conclusion there are several linked addendums. These further detail the potential individual roles, as well as the existing capacities and relationships of partners and funders.

Response Themes

At present we've identified four high level themes for tactical responses to the pressures and challenges facing nonprofits in 2025. Each category includes under it at least two subsequently detailed categories of services and responses.

- **Advocacy & Voice**

Equips nonprofits to engage in advocacy, narrative change, and movement building safely and effectively. Includes training on lobbying rights, political safety, strategic communications, and collective storytelling to elevate the sector's voice in public discourse.

- **Capacity & Resilience**

Strengthens nonprofit infrastructure, adaptability, and sustainability through coaching, governance support, succession planning, volunteer network mobilization, mental health and conflict resolution services, collaboration and joy-centered gatherings, a coordinated nonprofit legal support network, and tools and services that augment digital safety and security.

- **Crisis & Stabilization Supports**

Delivers fast-turnaround funding, legal assistance, and operational support when nonprofits face sudden destabilization. The Solidarity Stabilization Fund and crisis response channels ensure that organizations can respond decisively to financial, legal, political, or reputational threats.

- **Information & Foresight**

Provides nonprofits with the intelligence and tools needed to anticipate and adapt to change. Includes ecosystem mapping, funding flow analysis, ongoing sector surveys,

scenario planning, and economic advocacy to strengthen organizational foresight and preparedness.

Each of the following components is a node in a connected system that shares data, can refer nonprofits across services, and which aligns priorities, strategies and organizations to reduce service duplication and maximize impact.

These response tactics are intentionally modular, allowing participating partners and funders to engage in specific components aligned with their missions, expertise, and funding priorities. Whether contributing to data infrastructure, wellness programming, capacity support, grants, or convenings, each partner can opt in at either the component level or across the full continuum.

These nodes may not be perpetually relevant, and the components named below are neither an exhaustive inventory of potential resources or responses to needs, nor will the tactics below be static. The TSC is practiced at iterative and responsive strategic programming, and our strong cross-organizational and interpersonal relationships as well as our deep relationships with community uniquely position the Collective to lead a coordinated response in this dynamic nonprofit policy landscape.

Response Components and Tactics

1. Navigating Information

Supports ecosystem understanding, informed decision-making, and proactive planning.

Navigating Information is the backbone of the framework. This node generates ecosystem maps, funding flow analyses, diagnostics, and scenario forecasts that inform every other component. This node also coordinates resources to support nonprofit communications services. These tools enable better decision making across legal, capacity building, and planning activities.

Core Tactics:

- Map the nonprofit ecosystem and public funding flows to identify gaps and assets across Southeast Michigan
- Conduct ongoing surveys of social impact stakeholders to monitor trends and needs
- Create a field intelligence hub featuring diagnostics, risk dashboards, and funding forecasts
- Offer services and resources to nonprofits to communicate about their work in a dynamic policy environment
- Share backend data and tools across partners to reduce duplication and enhance coordination

- Scale up Dovetail, an existing digital ecosystem platform created by TSC partners, to operationalize this strategy by connecting nonprofits to vetted support, surfacing real-time ecosystem data, and integrating field intelligence tools into a single access point

2. Capacity Building & Organizational Resilience

Strengthens nonprofit infrastructure, adaptability, and long-term sustainability through healing-centered and equity-rooted strategies.

This node supports nonprofits as they navigate change, uncertainty, and increasing demand with limited resources. It brings together technical assistance, scenario planning, and legal guidance alongside relational and wellness interventions. While ongoing coaching and planning support remain central, this approach also includes rotating in-person gatherings that serve as accessible, trust-building moments of capacity exchange.

Core Tactics:

- Equity informed coaching and peer learning focused on adaptive leadership, strategic planning, board development, and succession preparedness
- Tools and engagements that reflect nonprofit realities and are grounded in local context, utilizing mobile or pop-up models, volunteer networks, and shared staffing strategies
- Healing centered wellness and conflict resolution tools such as mental health stipends, peer mediation, trauma-informed facilitation, and burnout prevention practices
- Resilience Convenings – resource fair style gatherings that:
 - Bring nonprofits into direct contact with essential resources and services in a way that is responsive and iterative
 - Serve as flexible entry points into deeper coaching, funding, or repositioning support
 - Prioritize accessibility, safety, and security for organizations and communities that are the most vulnerable
 - Balance building confidence and relationships with content knowledge
- Capacity-building and resilience supports to be coordinated through the regional digital ecosystem platform (Dovetail) to ensure streamlined referrals, visibility of services, and communicate shared learning

3. Leadership Transition Support

Supports organizational continuity and succession, particularly during periods of change.

Leadership Transitions are supported by the capacity and organizational resilience services as well as scenario planning resources. Nonprofits facing executive turnover or structural shifts should receive tailored, integrated support that includes succession peer groups, legal guidance, and, where needed, funding for repositioning or restructuring.

Core Tactics:

- Develop peer group or cohort models and succession planning tools for boards and executive leadership
- Support nonprofits navigating lifecycle transitions with legal and risk management guidance
- Align repositioning strategies with readiness assessments and co-created road maps
- Offer a support fund and/or cohort program to transitioning leaders to offset the loss of leaders in the field to the private sector
- Offer catalytic funding for exploration, collaboration, and dissolution phases

4. Scenario Planning

Enables nonprofits to prepare for and respond to structural shifts, crises, and opportunities.

Scenario planning is not a one-size-fits-all tool. This component prioritizes co-design with trusted intermediaries to ensure approaches are reflective, relational, and usable under stress. This node serves as a strategic engine. It receives insights from the capacity building, legal, and data nodes to directly inform any necessary resources for planning around repositioning, emergency funding campaigns, and up-to-date preparedness in response to shifts in compliance requirements. It ensures nonprofits aren't just reacting but adapting with foresight.

Core Tactics:

- Provide scenario planning coaching and strategic foresight resources:
 - Partner-led tool development to ensure scenario guides reflect community wisdom and organization-specific constraints
 - Facilitated sessions or workshops co-hosted with partners to guide nonprofits through structured planning exercises
- Offer legal support around mergers, dissolution, and organizational restructuring, with special consideration to the delicate context in which these decisions will be made
- Embed legal toolkits into planning guides to ensure preparedness for lease exits, workforce shifts, and other changes
- Coordinate with repositioning funders to align technical assistance with planning outcomes
- Field feedback loops that use aggregated planning data to identify emerging risks or resource gaps in the sector

5. Advocacy & Visibility

Supports nonprofits to navigate public discourse, practice safe and legal advocacy, and tell their stories with clarity and confidence. Enhances nonprofit voices in public discourse and strengthens civic engagement.

This node is strengthened by legal partners and healing practitioners, ensuring nonprofits can safely speak out and engage in movement work. This node aligns naturally with other components including convenings, narrative strategies, and policy campaigns.

Core Tactics:

- Launch narrative strategy and storytelling training with an equity lens
- Train nonprofits in lobbying rights, advocacy, and community organizing
- Build collective sector visibility and amplify a unified voice for Michigan's nonprofits
- Provide guidance on political visibility and safety in polarized contexts
- Expand legal clinics to include support for First Amendment protections, advocacy compliance, and immigration-related legal needs

6. Mental Health & Conflict Resolution

Promotes organizational wellness and conflict resilience.

The Mental Health & Conflict Resolution node supports frontline staff who are under pressure, especially those navigating political scrutiny or burnout. This component draws on inputs from capacity builders and conveners and supports leadership transition and scenario planning by helping teams stay grounded and whole.

Core Tactics:

- Cultivate peer networks, mentorship, and relational support as resilience infrastructure
- Embed rest into nonprofit culture norms and policies: collective breaks, no-email days, protected off-time
- Promote the integration of healing-centered practices (wellness activities, peer circles, somatic check-ins) into standard operations
- Integrate healing-centered strategies across response services, including mental health stipends and wellness programming
- Address conflict and safety concerns for frontline staff navigating political backlash or scrutiny
- Monitor wellbeing and conflict trends, adjust tactics and tools via feedback loops

7. Collaboration & Joy

Fosters community, connection, and cultural nourishment within the nonprofit sector.

This node is the heart of the framework, intentionally touching all other areas. Through convenings, mutual aid networks, and shared space, it creates conditions for relational trust and collective resilience. These connections are essential to resilience in our sector at this moment. This component ensures nonprofits have intentional, meaningful ways to build relationships, celebrate milestones, and share support.

Core Tactics:

- Rotate hosting roles and coordinate gatherings to avoid duplication and maximize impact

- Co-design convenings facilitated by relational partners that prioritize cultural responsiveness, accessibility, and healing
- Host inclusive gatherings that blend policy insight, peer learning, and celebration
- Activate mutual aid and shared service networks that redistribute capacity in ways that are community led, low burden, and cost-saving/cost-sharing
- Create joy-centered experiences such as shared meals, artistic reflections, and other celebration activities to balance transactional relationships with trust-building

8. Nonprofit Legal Support Network

Ensure nonprofits have timely access to legal expertise across their lifecycle, particularly in moments of public scrutiny, transitions, or advocacy activity.

The Nonprofit Legal Support Network ensures that community-based nonprofits—especially those led by and serving marginalized communities—have timely, affordable access to legal expertise across their lifecycle. It operates as both an input and output. It is activated by referrals from capacity and scenario planning nodes and connects nonprofits to support with compliance, repositioning, advocacy protection, and leadership transitions.

Core Tactics:

- Pro Bono Legal Services
 - Partner with law firms, legal aid organizations, and law school clinics to offer dedicated hours for nonprofit support
 - Legal guidance on compliance, risk navigation, advocacy protections, structuring, and organizational transitions
- Anchor General Counsel Services
 - Provide standing monthly office hours, board meeting participation, and on-demand counsel during crises or strategic pivots
- Strategic & Preventative Legal Infrastructure
 - Develop compliance roadmaps tied to advocacy campaigns, merger/dissolution scenarios, and succession planning
 - Provide legal toolkits for protecting nonprofits under heightened political scrutiny (e.g., audits, IRS inquiries, attorney general investigations, donor challenges)
- Partnerships & Ecosystem Building
 - Train funders and intermediaries on the importance of underwriting legal services as core infrastructure for grantee stability
- Education & Leadership Transitions
 - Offer regular training on nonprofit entity formation, governance, employment law, and advocacy compliance
 - Guide organizations through leadership changes, including founder transitions, executive exits, and interim leadership structures
- Public Resources

- Develop and maintain an accessible statewide Legal Resource Library for nonprofits, featuring templates, checklists, compliance guides, and scenario-based FAQs on governance, DEI, lobbying, and dissolution

9. Solidarity Stabilization Fund

Flexible financial support for nonprofits experiencing destabilization due to financial, legal, political, or reputational threats.

The Solidarity Stabilization Fund provides fast-turnaround, trust-based support to nonprofits facing acute disruption. Designed for moments when timing and affirmation matter most, the fund offers a combination of flexible grants, responsive technical assistance, and coordinated triage. It is embedded within the broader continuum of legal, planning, wellness, and advocacy supports—ensuring that no organization navigates crisis alone.

Core Tactics:

- General operating grants to stabilize organizations at risk of layoffs, loss of space, defunding, or targeted attacks
- Low-barrier access through a brief and universal application, referrals to other support organizations
- Non-financial resources such as legal counsel, communications coaching, trauma-informed mediation, or interim leadership coverage
- Learning and equity feedback mechanisms to track trends in crises and ensure communities most at risk are prioritized in planning and advocacy

10. Rapid Response Team

Cross-organizational partners that can quickly review requests for support and refer to other nodes across the support network.

This node is the one that helps nonprofits navigate the support network and relevant resources in real time – we cannot predict in full what kinds of support will be needed by which organizations when, but this team will serve as the toolbox for organizations facing emergencies. It will be composed as a cross-organizational standing committee that can quickly mobilize to evaluate and triage urgent requests for support.

Core Tactics:

- A crisis triage team of intermediaries, funders, and advisors to assess requests and match nonprofits with appropriate support pathways
- Utilize Dovetail as a shared intake and referral platform to expedite triage
- Establish a communications channel for nonprofits facing urgent threats to request assistance (e.g., audits, political scrutiny, actions targeting an organization's mission or service population)

- Establish an emergency fund separate from the stabilization fund that allows direct assistance to organizations who need paid representation or services to respond to organizational crisis

11. Sector Economic Advocacy

Reframes nonprofits as economic infrastructure and civic employers to build public goodwill, protect against funding cuts, and elevate investment. Makes the case for long-term investment in the nonprofit workforce, infrastructure, and civic value of the sector.

The Sector Economic Advocacy node synthesizes insights from across this framework, especially data and advocacy partners—to support the case for nonprofit job protection, long-term investment, and narrative change. It communicates the broader economic and civic value of the nonprofit sector to policymakers and funders alike.

Core Tactics:

- Collect and share regional data on nonprofit job creation, wage impact, and public service value
- Co-create narrative frameworks that clarify nonprofits' role as essential infrastructure (like transit or hospitals)
- Equip local, state, and federal leaders with sector data and testimony from nonprofit workers
- Partner with advocacy coalitions and media allies to humanize and spotlight nonprofit frontline workers
- Align with industry associations, labor, public sector, and community investment advocates to strengthen cross-sector protection
- Monitor and influence budget decisions and legislation that affect nonprofit funding flows

12. Digital Safety & Security

Protects nonprofit organizations from technology-based threats and strengthens their capacity to operate safely in increasingly digital environments.

This node overlaps with and supports the Capacity & Resilience node as well as the Advocacy & Visibility node, as organizations will need support to harden their digital infrastructure and practices, particularly if their advocacy or speech makes them more likely to be targeted by hostile actors, lawsuits, or the government itself.

Core Tactics:

- Provide training and toolkits for staff and boards on cyber hygiene, phishing prevention, and secure data storage practices.
- Offer subsidized or pro bono technology assessments from trusted IT security providers to identify vulnerabilities.

- Develop response protocols and rapid support channels for nonprofits experiencing digital harassment, data breaches, or online disinformation campaigns.
- Integrate digital security considerations into advocacy safety planning, communications strategy, and scenario planning guides.
- Coordinate with media, legal, and technology partners to address the intersection of digital threats, political targeting, and reputational risk.

Collaborative Ecosystem Overview

This framework intentionally aligns the roles of existing social impact ecosystem partners to prevent duplication and maximize impact. Each response tactic leverages the core strengths of participating partners while contributing to a coordinated continuum of care. Nonprofits will receive referrals between services, and all partners will co-design tools, learning opportunities, and communications strategies to align efforts in practice as well as intention.

To realize the goals of this multi-partner framework, a broad and diverse coalition of organizations is needed—each contributing their unique strengths to a shared vision of nonprofit resilience, equity, and structural adaptation in Southeast Michigan. Together, these organizations form a distributed yet integrated support system – one that is modular, equity centered, and responsive to the real time challenges nonprofits face.

The following tables organize key organizations into two categories:

1. Anchor & Implementation Partners

These are organizations that will deliver direct services, support nonprofit leaders, coordinate gatherings, and provide targeted expertise such as legal guidance, coaching, mental health, or advocacy training. This group will include nonprofit intermediaries and other service providers, such as consultants.

2. Infrastructure & Funding Partners

These entities play critical roles in mapping the ecosystem, aligning funders, designing collaborative funding tools, and providing the backbone infrastructure that supports coordination, learning, and sustainability across the framework. This group will include funders but also philanthropy serving organizations (PSOs) who often also serve as intermediaries. This group may also include consultants.

Anchor & Implementation Partners

Organization	Potential Role
Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD)	Place-based support, civic infrastructure, grassroots access

Organization	Potential Role
Co.act Detroit	Convening and coworking space, peer networks, strategic coaching, capacity referrals
Michigan Community Resources (MCR)	Legal guidance, network convening and facilitation, cohort facilitation, incorporation and compliance, structural transitions, ethical dissolutions
Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA)	Board development, back-office support, advocacy training, policy alignment
NEW (Nonprofit Enterprise at Work)	Executive coaching, restorative practices informed support, governance, peer learning, fiscal sponsorship, back-office support

Infrastructure & Funding Partners

Key: Confirmed Interest; Exploring Concept

Organization	Framework Alignment
Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan	Systems backbone, data infrastructure, funder convener
Ford Foundation	Very aligned with political safety, organizing infrastructure, and sector voice building
Hudson-Webber Foundation	Supports civic infrastructure and may be interested in political safety, legal defense, and shared services
Kresge Foundation	Anchor funder, aligned with capacity equity and system transformation
McGregor Fund	Strong alignment with structural change, capacity equity, and Detroit-region focus
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation	Especially strong fit with sustainability, scenario planning, and nonprofit adaptation
Skillman Foundation	Youth, education, and civic engagement-focused funding

Organization	Framework Alignment
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Strong value alignment; would resonate with healing justice, succession, mental health, and racialized funding disparities

Potential Infrastructure & Funding Partners

Organization	Framework Alignment
Ann Arbor Community Foundation	Regional funder with strong ties to Washtenaw County nonprofits and community initiatives. Could share regional data and trends and support local capacity & resilience work
Erb Family Foundation	More issue-specific (environmental focus), but could engage in scenario planning or economic advocacy infrastructure
Gilbert Family Foundation	Alignment with structural supports, stabilization, capacity building, and systems change, especially in Detroit.
Transforming Power Fund	Movement-aligned funding, narrative campaigns, grassroots organizing ecosystem support

Governance and Structure

This proposed framework will be guided by a collaborative governance model that centers the experience and leadership of intermediary organizations, whose work is intertwined with nonprofit needs. A representative Leadership Circle of these intermediaries will coordinate shared decision-making, strategic direction, and equitable resource distribution. Instead of creating new working groups, individual components of the framework will be led by trusted partners with deep programming expertise, ensuring efficient design and implementation rooted in existing strengths. A dedicated finance function will oversee fair and transparent funding allocation, while an Accountability & Learning Council composed of intermediaries, nonprofit leaders, and advisors will reflect on outcomes and ensure the work stays aligned with values of equity, responsiveness, and sector-wide care.

Conclusion

This framework is rooted in the belief that Southeast Michigan's nonprofit sector deserves a response that is as diverse, adaptive, and interconnected as the communities it serves. While

some approaches may focus on singular strategies, such as structural consolidation, this framework addresses the full spectrum of nonprofit needs, from stabilization and capacity building to advocacy, foresight, and long-term resilience.

By leveraging the strengths of multiple partners and centering governance within the intermediary organizations most connected to the field, we ensure that solutions are not one-size-fits-all. Our approach equips nonprofits with the information, resources, and relationships to make decisions that are right for their missions, circumstances, and communities.

Funders and partners who invest with us to implement this framework are supporting:

- **Choice and Agency** – Nonprofits receive tailored support to explore a range of strategies, not a single predetermined outcome.
- **Comprehensive Support** – A continuum of care that integrates crisis response, capacity building, and advocacy alongside structural tactics like collaboration or merger.
- **Shared Accountability** – A governance model rooted in equity, transparency, and partner-led decision-making.

The future of our sector will be determined by whether we invest in its complexity and diversity—or narrow its possibilities. This framework offers a way to safeguard both, ensuring nonprofits are not only surviving but shaping the solutions that will carry us into a transformative future. We invite funders and partners to join us in advancing this shared vision for a resilient, responsive, and equitable nonprofit ecosystem.

Next Steps

1. Confirm broader partner (intermediaries and funders) interest in proposed activities and align partner roles across framework components
2. Draft more comprehensive program plans for each initiative, identify funding sources and opportunities
3. Pilot 3–5 events that combine capacity building, legal guidance, narrative support, and response funding
4. Share the framework publicly for sector feedback and refinement
5. Reconvene existing and new stakeholders to assess and iterate based on learning

Addendums

Partner Bios and Website

- I. *Executive Summary*
- II. *FAQ*
- III. *Budget & Funder Menu*
- IV. *TSC Members Services Chart*
- V. *Technical Assistance Values*

Transforming Solidarity Collective - Partner Bios



Will Jones III (he/him) succeeded Yodit Mesfin-Johnson as President and CEO of **NEW (Nonprofit Enterprise at Work)** in July 2025. In his years at NEW, he has served in program administration, led fund development efforts, championed the evolution of NEW's communications, and represented the organization in key partnerships. Will's relational leadership style celebrates creativity, and leans on lessons learned as an Eagle Scout and #girldad.



Shamyle Maya Dobbs (she/her) is Co-CEO of **Michigan Community Resources**, where she has served in a variety of roles in her 15+ year tenure, from intern to c-suite. Today, she leads external relations and communications alongside her co-CEO.



Alisha Butler (she/her) serves as Co-CEO of **Michigan Community Resources**. Alisha leads program strategy and operations for the organization toward its mission of equipping small nonprofits and grassroots organizations with the tools and resources they need to thrive.



Ezekiel Harris (he/him) serves as Executive Director of **Co.act Detroit**. In this role, she provides strategic leadership through collaboration. Prior to joining Co.act Detroit, Ezekiel served as Founder and Principal Consultant of Freedmen's Lab, as well as having served as Executive Director of MACC Development. He brings a deep commitment to building ecosystems that foster collaboration, innovation, and economic mobility.



Madhavi Reddy (she/her) serves as Executive Director of **Community Development Advocates of Detroit**, a membership-centered organization serving the community development ecosystem in Detroit. Madhavi's commitment to inclusion is connected to her experiences as the child of immigrants. She has taught community development courses at the University of Detroit Mercy and Wayne State University.



Kelley Kuhn (she/her) is President and CEO of **Michigan Nonprofit Association**, where she leads efforts to support nonprofits and the communities they serve. Kelley is dedicated to ensuring nonprofits have the necessary resources to fulfill their missions and drive positive change in Michigan. "A solid and resourced nonprofit sector makes the world a better place," Kelley believes.

Learn More about the [TSC online.](#)

Resilience and Reimagining: Intermediary-Led Support for Nonprofit Wellbeing and Structural Adaptation

Prepared by Michigan Community Resources on behalf of intermediary partners Community Development Advocates of Detroit, Co.act Detroit, Michigan Nonprofit Association, and Nonprofit Enterprise at Work

Southeast Michigan's nonprofit sector is navigating a period of significant strain, facing economic instability, political polarization, and heightened community need—within a support ecosystem that is often fragmented and uneven. These conditions demand a response that is both immediate and enduring, that meets nonprofits where they are and strengthens the field as a whole.

The Transforming Solidarity Collective (TSC), a network of Southeast Michigan intermediary organizations, has reconvened to address these challenges in partnership with funders, policy advocates, and other sector leaders. Formed as a coalition of the willing during the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice uprisings of 2020, the TSC leverages deep community relationships, shared values, and proven collaboration to protect and strengthen the nonprofit ecosystem during this period of instability.

Our proposed framework brings together a diverse network of intermediary organizations, funders, and other allies to activate a *continuum of care* that addresses the full range of nonprofit needs. Unlike approaches that prioritize a single structural pathway, our framework recognizes that resilience is built through honoring nonprofit choice and agency, by offering a spectrum of solutions tailored to each organization's mission and context. Our framework is modular by design, enabling partners and funders to engage with the components most aligned with their missions while contributing to a unified, equity-centered support infrastructure.

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- **Advocacy & Voice** – Builds nonprofit capacity for safe and effective advocacy.
- **Capacity & Resilience** – Strengthens nonprofit infrastructure and adaptability.
- **Crisis & Stabilization Supports** – Provides fast-turnaround funding, legal assistance, and operational resources for organizations facing acute threats.
- **Information & Foresight** – Equips nonprofits with knowledge and tools to anticipate and adapt to change in real time.

Investing in this framework is an investment in comprehensive, elective solutions for nonprofits and the communities they serve. By centering governance with the field leaders who work most closely with nonprofits and by integrating partner strengths into a coordinated system, we can ensure that support is equitable, relevant, and sustainable.

This is your invitation to join us in strengthening Southeast Michigan's nonprofit ecosystem—protecting its diversity, amplifying its collective voice, and building the resilience needed for today's challenges and the opportunities ahead.

Transforming Solidarity Collective: Funder & Leadership FAQ

This briefing sheet provides concise responses to key questions raised by funders and organizational leadership regarding the Transforming Solidarity Collective's (TSC) Resilience and Reimagining Framework. It outlines distinctions, governance, accountability, and sustainability strategies to support shared understanding and confidence in the initiative.

1. What's new or different about this? Is it duplicative?

It connects existing assets into a coordinated continuum—not another silo. Legal, capacity, stabilization, wellness, advocacy, and foresight supports are linked through shared intake, warm referrals, and joint governance. This prevents duplication and accelerates help for nonprofits.

2. Why intermediaries—why not fund nonprofits directly?

It's a both/and, not an either/or. Direct grants fund programs; intermediaries sustain the scaffolding that keeps organizations stable. We're the trusted connectors nonprofits already call on for audits, transitions, and crises. Investing in this backbone ensures direct dollars yield lasting results.

3. What is being funded now?

The three-year projected cost is \$8.5M, with \$2.8M sought for Phase I implementation. This includes:

- Outreach and engagement with nonprofits
- Digital infrastructure & resources
- Legal and other supportive programming expansions
- Partnership infrastructure

4. How are funding decisions made, and equity ensured?

A **Leadership Circle** (intermediaries) co-sets priority; an **Accountability & Learning Council** (nonprofit leaders + advisors) monitors equity and outcomes.

Low-barrier applications, relationship-based referrals, and BIPOC-led representation ensure access for grassroots and BIPOC-led orgs.

5. How will grants and funds be managed?

Investments may flow directly to lead partner organizations or, when pooled giving is the preference, through **Michigan Community Resources** as fiscal sponsor, distributing subgrants per approved scopes.

A shared finance and reporting system ensures transparency and fairness.

6. What outcomes will we see?

Four reporting buckets with annual dashboards:

- Stabilization: organizations kept open through rapid legal/financial aid.
- Resilience: stronger governance, reduced burnout, better digital safety.
- Advocacy & Voice: nonprofits trained for safe civic engagement.
- Ecosystem Coordination: faster referrals, less duplication, higher trust among partners.

7. How will success be measured and communicated?

Shared dashboards track cost and impact per tactic, referral times, and governance gains. Qualitative indicators—joy, healing, collaboration—capture community-defined success. Public annual reports show funder ROI and community benefit.

8. How will this help Detroit and the region?

Detroit and SE Michigan are the anchor focus, aligning with priorities like resident-centered revitalization, youth opportunity, and neighborhood stability.

The model already spans seven counties (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, Monroe, Livingston, St. Clair) and can scale.

9. How is duplication avoided?

Each partner leads from its strengths with shared tools and a single intake system. Transparent data mapping prevents service or program overlaps; coordination replaces competition.

10. How will this be sustained long-term?

Through blended financing, cost-sharing across partners, and integration into regular grant budgets (e.g., legal stabilization as a standard cost).

Multi-year commitments and embedded infrastructure make it durable beyond pilot phase.

11. How does this connect to youth, housing, health, and neighborhood goals?

Legal and stabilization supports to nonprofits prevent interruption of programs serving youth, families, and housing needs—keeping core community pipelines intact amid leadership or funding disruptions.

12. How is equity embedded?

BIPOC-led representation, set-asides within stabilization tactics, and participatory learning ensure the framework advances equity, consistent with local funders' commitments.

13. What are the biggest risks and mitigations?

- **Funding volatility:** pooled, multi-year fund and scenario planning
- **Capacity strain:** shared staffing and triage routing
- **Duplication creep:** single intake + governance guardrails
- Built-in redundancy and adaptive partnership infrastructure allows one intermediary to step up if another is stretched

14. How do nonprofits have a voice?

Nonprofits co-create priorities through the Accountability & Learning Council and feedback loops that inform funding, evaluation, and adaptation.

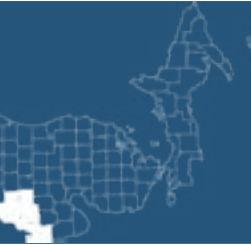
15. What do you need from funders beyond dollars?

- Multi-year, flexible commitments
- Partnership in learning and data transparency
- Advocacy to normalize stabilization support/ legal costs as routine infrastructure support for nonprofit work
- Signal amplification to elevate the value of infrastructure investment

Addendum 3: Funder and Budget Menu

Tactic	Phase	Lead	MCR	CDAD	MNA	NEW	Co.act
Navigating Information							
Scale up Dovetail, an existing digital ecosystem platform created by TSC partners, to operationalize this strategy by connecting nonprofits to vetted support, surfacing real-time ecosystem data, and integrating field intelligence tools into a single access point	1	MCR	\$70,000				
Capacity Building & Organizational Resilience							
Equity informed coaching and peer learning focused on adaptive leadership, strategic planning, board development, and succession preparedness	1	CDAD, Co.act, NEW, MCR	\$87,500	\$17,500		\$87,500	\$17,500
Capacity-building and resilience supports to be coordinated through the regional digital ecosystem platform (Dovetail) to ensure streamlined referrals, visibility of services, and communicate shared learning	1	MCR	\$17,500				
Leadership Transitions							
Scenario Planning							
Provide scenario planning coaching and strategic foresight resources.	1	CDAD, NEW, MCR	\$70,000	\$70,000		\$70,000	
Offer legal support around mergers, dissolutions, and organizational restructuring.	1	MCR	\$35,000				
Embed legal toolkits into planning guides to ensure preparedness for lease exits, workforce shifts, and other changes	1	MCR	\$8,750				
Advocacy & Visibility							
Expand legal clinics to include support for First Amendment protections, advocacy compliance, and immigration-related legal needs	1	MCR	\$17,500				
Mental Health & Conflict Resolution							
Collaboration & Joy							
Co-design convenings facilitated by relational partners that prioritize cultural responsiveness, accessibility, and healing	1	MCR					
Host inclusive gatherings that blend policy insight, peer learning, and celebration	1	MCR					
Create joy-centered experiences such as shared meals, artistic reflections, and other celebration activities to balance transactional relationships with trust-building	1	MCR					
Nonprofit Legal Support Network							
Partner with law firms, legal aid organizations, and law school clinics to offer dedicated hours for nonprofit support	1	MCR	\$35,000				
Legal guidance on compliance, risk navigation, advocacy protections, structuring, and organizational transitions	1	MCR	\$87,500				
Offer regular training on nonprofit entity formation, governance, employment law, and advocacy compliance	1	MCR	\$35,000				
Develop and maintain an accessible statewide Legal Resource Library for nonprofits, featuring templates, checklists, compliance guides, and scenario-based FAQs on governance, DEI, lobbying, and dissolution.	1	MCR	\$70,000				
Solidarity Stabilization Fund							
Rapid Response Team							
A crisis triage team of intermediaries, funders, and advisors to assess requests and match nonprofits with appropriate support pathways	1	MCR	\$70,000	\$35,000		\$35,000	\$35,000
Utilize Dovetail as a shared intake and referral platform to expedite triage	1	MCR	\$52,500				
Sector Economic Advocacy							
Digital Safety & Security							
			\$516,250	\$318,500	\$25,000	\$385,000	\$120,000

Addendum 4: TSC Members Services Chart

Organization	Constituency	Model	Area	Eligibility	Services
	Nonprofits and Community Organizations	Physical Space Centered Nonprofit Capacity Builder and Event Facilitator		Revenue Caps for Some Programs	Events Convening Space 1:1 Consulting Peer Learning Tailored Programs
	Community Development Organizations/ Block Clubs/ Neighborhood Assc. Members	Membership Based Community Development Advocate and Trainer		Detroit Service	Policy Advocacy Technical Assistance Issue Convenings Field Building Workshops
	Nonprofits and Community Organizations	Nonprofit Capacity Builder and Legal Support Provider		Population or Revenue Requirements for Some Programs	Pro Bono Legal Technical Assistance 1:1 Coaching Cohort Convening Philanthropic Advising Resource Navigation Workshops
	Nonprofit Members	Membership Based State-wide Trainer, Convener, & Consultant		501c3 Status or Fiscal Sponsorship	Nonprofit Support & Convening Tech Support Policy Advocacy Statewide Network Access
	Nonprofits and Community Organizations	Consultant IT Provider Financial Advisor Physical Space		501c3 Status or Fiscal Sponsorship	Governance Consulting Strategic Consulting Financial Consulting IT Support Convening Space Events

Addendum 5: Technical Assistance Values



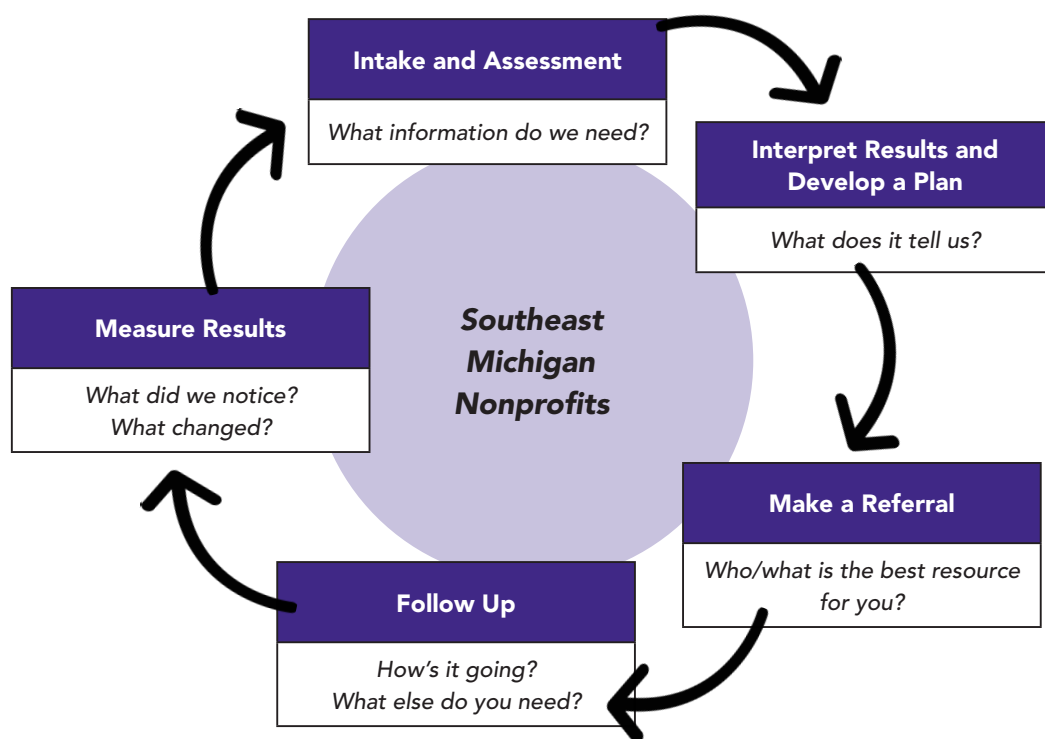
MCR staff at a Co.act event in 2018. PHOTO COURTESY OF CO.ACT DETROIT.

Our process for TA continuously asks the questions, "What's next?" and "What's changed?" for the nonprofit organization. Our model is grounded in listening to and learning from nonprofit organizations, working with them as partners to identify needs and goals, formulate action plans, connect them to relevant resources, and measure progress towards success.

Though more resource- and time-intensive, effective TA provides more customized, relevant support to address organizational needs. As organizations' needs are met and their internal functioning is strengthened, they are better equipped to contribute to network capacity for social change.

Later in the chapter, a series of case studies will illustrate how TA and other capacity building interventions have been put into practice by partners of the Collaborative.

FIGURE 2.
Technical Assistance Process⁶



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

While our approach to TA is not new, it is guided by key standards of practice:

Effective Communication

TA providers and nonprofits should communicate early and often to establish and maintain clarity about goals for the TA engagement.

Mutual Learning

TA providers and nonprofit leaders both possess expertise. Respect and value for the knowledge and experience of both the service provider and the nonprofit should be reflected in the TA engagement. TA should be offered in such a way that mutual learning can occur to inform both the service provider and the nonprofit.

⁶ Adapted from a graphic created by Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW)

FIGURE 3. Technical Assistance Process⁷



Co-creation

TA providers should work collaboratively with nonprofits to determine the scope of the TA engagement. TA providers should not prescribe goals or action plans for nonprofit organizations. This can include working together to identify and prioritize areas of need, identifying goals, and/or plans for connecting nonprofits to additional service providers to address those needs.

Independence and Choice

Nonprofits should have autonomy in working with consultants. In a TA engagement, the nonprofit organization should have the freedom to choose its consultant, which helps foster trust and accountability.

Strength-Based

TA providers need to recognize, engage, and build upon nonprofits' strengths through the TA engagement.

Customized

TA providers must recognize that organizations may require different tools and approaches based on the lifecycle of the organization, the cultural context in which they operate, or other factors. They should not deliver services based on a "one-size-fits-all" model. In short, they should recognize the value of meeting nonprofit organizations where they are.

Outcomes-Driven

TA providers need to work with nonprofit organizations to identify desired outcomes and progress measures, and to track improvements. TA providers should not prescribe what success looks like for nonprofit organizations.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AT CO.ACT DETROIT

As a hub for nonprofit support that will be working with a pool of TA providers (as well as other capacity building providers), Co.act will need to define standards of practice with its network of providers. We believe that the standards above are a great place to start.

Co.act's network of providers will also need to outline and systematize a shared TA process flow. A sample TA process flow for the center is shared in Figure 3 above.

⁷ Adapted from a graphic created by Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW)